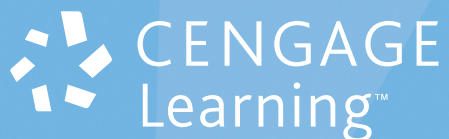


Drama

**A resource for Year 11 Atar/
Year 12 General**



Nicole Stinton



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A Resource for Year 11 ATAR/Year 12 General

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May you find the resource informative, motivational and especially fun to use. Most importantly, I hope that it helps you to experiment with drama, to create wonderful drama works and to experience the inspirational feeling that only theatre can bring.



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CHAPTER I

Acting Fundamentals

Key Concepts

☛ The Voice

- Posture
- Breathing
- Pace
- Pitch
- Pause
- Projection
- Phrasing
- Tone
- Accents
- Vocal misuse

☛ Voice in representational drama

- Voice in realism
- Voice in naturalism

☛ Voice in presentational drama

- Voice in Ancient Roman drama
- Voice in Renaissance drama
- Voice in expressionism
- Voice in epic drama
- Voice in musical theatre
- Voice in contemporary presentational drama

☛ Movement

- Facial expression
- Posture
- Gesture
- Gait
- Weight
- Space
- Time
- Energy
- Proxemics

☛ Movement in representational drama

- Movement in realism
- Movement in naturalism

☛ Movement in presentational drama

- Movement in Ancient Roman drama
- Movement in Renaissance drama
- Movement in expressionism
- Movement in epic drama
- Movement in musical theatre
- Movement in contemporary presentational drama

VOICE

The actor's voice is a tool fundamental to the craft of acting. It's generated by the actor so that they can functionally interact with others during performance, artistically reflect their character, as well as creatively and often psychologically communicate meaning. Perhaps only a mime artist is able to survive without voice, although if they are ever working with other performers, creatives, crew members or producers, they will certainly benefit from having effective vocalisation techniques when exchanging information.



Voice

The utilisation of the vocalisation system and vocal techniques to audibly express meaning, create role or character, and have an impact on the other elements of drama.

Mime

Using stylised movement and physical control in performance to create and communicate dramatic action.

To be effective vocally as an actor, it's important to remember that whether onstage or in real life all human beings communicate not only through *what* they say, but also through the *way* they vocalise the words and *how* they share these words with other people. At this stage in studying drama there are nine main techniques to consider in voice production:

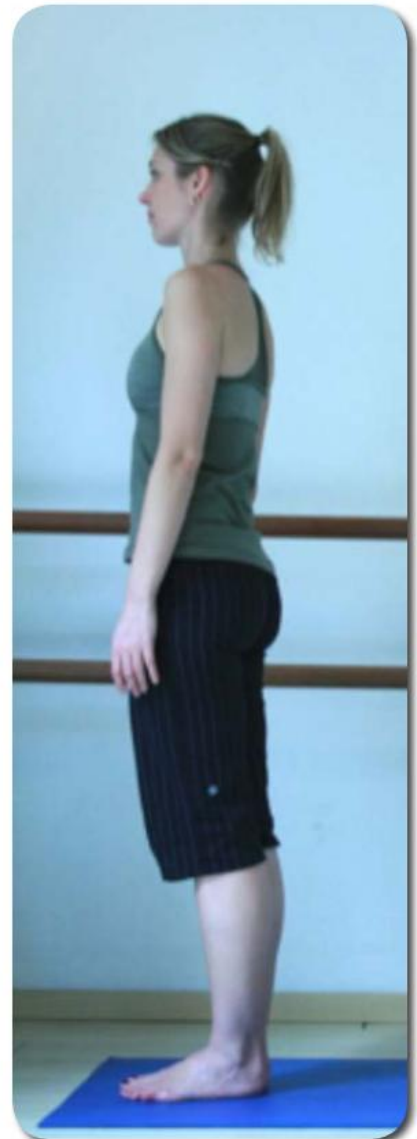
- Posture
- Breathing
- Pace
- Pitch
- Pause
- Projection
- Phrasing
- Tone
- Accents

Posture

When actors are training sometimes they find it strange that the first voice technique they need to work on is adopting an effective posture. To understand why, it's vital that actors remember the voice *is* the body, and the body *is* the voice. Muscles and other physiological tissues make up the vocal instrument and it is through these that voice is created. Therefore, if actors are going to be able to produce a high quality vocal sound that is audible to all who need to hear it and appropriate for their character, they need to have effective body posture.

To have effective posture means making the body relatively straight and tension-free, with the least amount of physical strain on supporting muscles and joints, whilst the body remains fluid. Posture refers not only to when the actor is moving, but also when in a standing, sitting or lying position. Actors need to master posture techniques when they are still, if they are then going to be able to maintain a certain posture when they're moving through space.

Interestingly a standing position is *not* an inactive one, or at least it should not be for healthy bodies, including actors' bodies. Whilst there may not be visible forward movement (nor backwards, side-ways, downwards or elevated movement), good posture requires a sense of dynamism internally. It's often helpful for actors to think of keeping the body active inside the body, whilst their outside remains inactive.



Only when the actor's posture is effective can they breathe, accessing and controlling their entire lungs and breathing system. Only when they can access and control their entire breathing system, can they voice well and produce a high quality vocal sound.

One of the easiest ways to develop effective posture is to take on a neutral body position. In order to adopt such a position the body needs to be aligned in certain ways. This includes:

1. Feet that are shoulder width apart with toes pointing straight forward
2. Feet that are directly underneath the knees, so that when the knees bend they travel forward over the top of the toes. When standing the heels are directly underneath the hips, which are directly underneath the shoulders
3. Knees that are 'soft' without pushing or locking the kneecaps backwards
4. A spine that's erect, fluid and drawn gently up to the ceiling in a straight position
5. Arms that hang loosely by the actor's side
6. A neck that's soft and relaxed in a straight position, without crunching down on the spine, and whilst being drawn gently up to the ceiling
7. A head that's gently balanced and floating on top of the spine facing forwards

Adopting a neutral position is easier than then maintaining that neutral position over a period of time. For actors who wish to improve their posture and to make lasting physical and vocal change, they need to practise the neutral position daily.

Hint

A straight spine and neck is not the same as a straight line. The spine naturally has slight curves in it and an actor needs to lengthen the distance between each vertebrae of the spine very gently and without tension, whilst drawing up (again without tension) to the ceiling. The spine will 'feel' straight to the actor, even though in reality it has curves in it.

Internet exploration

Hear from a New York actor on posture at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tH7cKJEACg

Activity 1.1: Adopting a neutral position

1. Stand in front of a full-length mirror at a profile (side on) angle. Gently turn your head to the mirror (without turning your body) and notice your regular posture. Don't change a thing yet, but simply make note of the details of each muscle, bone and joint.
2. Now turn your head back towards the front (not looking in the mirror) and step-by-step adopt a neutral body position, following the seven steps above in order.
3. Take three slow, long breaths in and out, remaining in the neutral position whilst you do so.
4. Keeping this new position, turn only your head to look at your body once again in the mirror. Notice what has changed.



Write a paragraph describing what changed in your:

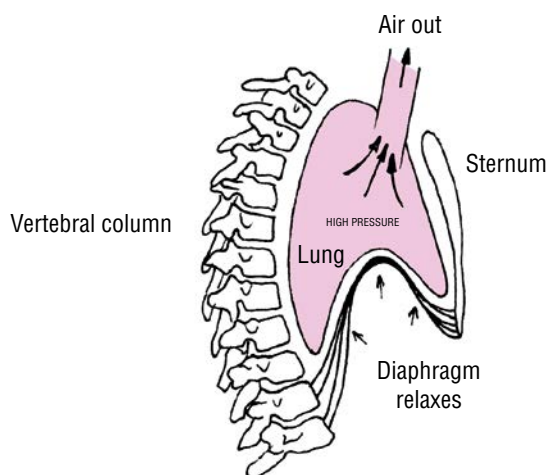
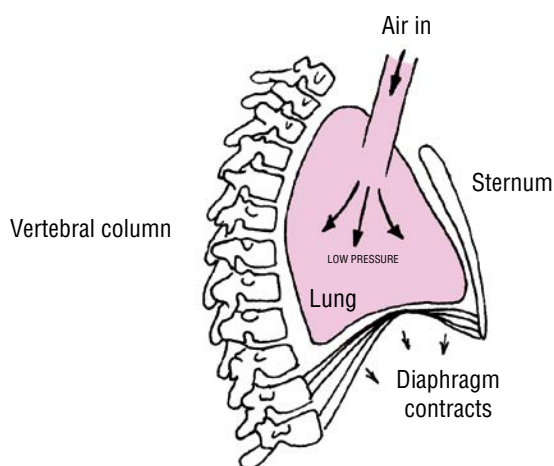
- feet
- knees
- hips
- spine
- shoulders
- arms
- neck
- your overall height.

Breathing

The next very important foundation in having an effective, efficient and high-quality voice is to develop an adaptable and healthy breath support system. Breathing, like posture, can seem like a strange starting place for vocalisation. Yet without breath, sound would not be able to be created. Going one step further, without a top-quality breath and a top-quality system to support it, top-quality sound would not be able to be created.

Breath support system

The organs that collectively work together in respiration and vocalisation.



Breathing is something most people don't spend a lot of time thinking about. When they do reflect on it, it's typically only to think about filling their lungs with air and then expelling it again through the nose or mouth. Little consideration is given to the way breathing takes place or the control that people have over their breathing. Breathing is one of those rare physiological processes that can be both an involuntary reflex and a voluntary action. People breathe automatically when they don't think about it, but when they *do* think about it they're able to control some parts of their bodies that are used to generate the breath.

Breathing technique

A method to engage in the process of respiration where muscles are contracted to inhale air into the lungs through the nose or mouth and then relaxed to exhale air from the body.

Actors need to be able to utilise all of their support system and learn to manage and manipulate their breathing, and thus develop a sound breathing technique. Only then will they be able to use their breath effectively and with flexibility as part of their characterisation and communication in performance.

One important factor in developing such a technique is to ensure that the diaphragm is used effectively to draw in deep breaths. When actively engaging the diaphragm properly actors are more able to draw a large amount of air into the lungs, enabling them to then vocalise for a lengthy period without running out of breath.

The diaphragm is a series of interconnected muscles and ligaments that sit at the base of the lungs. Its role is to provide a partition between the lungs and the lower-torso organs and, of course, to aid in the respiration process. When the diaphragm contracts it basically moves down, causing the lungs to expand. This in turn creates a vacuum that draws air into the chest cavity. When the diaphragm relaxes it moves back upwards, causing the lungs to diminish. This then pushes the air up through the trachea and back out of the body.

Hint

Remember it is the actual movement of your diaphragm that causes you to breathe, and not your breathing that causes the diaphragm to move. Thus when you are trying to develop a better breathing technique, start by focusing on your diaphragm. Similar to developing good posture, great breathing takes daily practice.

Internet exploration

For more information on breathing go to:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WMt_1jw47Q

Activity 1.2: Developing better diaphragmatic breathing

1. Stand in a neutral position and take a few slow breaths in and out. Notice how much your diaphragm and ribs move (or don't move).
2. Bring your upper and lower teeth together very gently so that they are barely touching.
 - Breathe slowly in through your mouth for as long as you can.
 - Breathe out all the air in one quick sigh or silent huff.
 - Hold your breath (ie – don't breathe) for two seconds.
 - Repeat the sequence several times. As you do, notice how much your diaphragm and ribs move.
3. Now concentrate on your out-breath.
 - First take a deep relatively quick breath in.
 - Then as slowly as you can, breath out your air through pursed lips as if you were blowing a floating feather away from you.
 - Hold your breath for two seconds.
 - Repeat the sequence several times.



4. Finally put the two sequences together:

- Breathe slowly in through your mouth for as long as you can.
- Hold your breath for two seconds.
- Then as slowly as you can, breath out your air through pursed lips as if you were blowing a floating feather away from you.
- Hold your breath for two seconds.
- Repeat the sequence several times, noticing the movement in your diaphragm and ribs.

Pace

The rate of speed at which an actor talks is their voice pace. Actors need to be able to talk at a speed that is easily understood by the other actors and audience members. They also need to pace their vocalisation appropriately for their role or character. Sometimes marrying these two things is difficult for actors when their character needs to speak extremely fast. Their increased pace might make it difficult for them to project their voice effectively (see the section on projection to follow), or they might start mumbling and be incomprehensible to others.

Pace

The speed of vocalisation communicating intended and non-intended meaning, as well as meeting audibility needs.



If an actor does need to speak extremely quickly and is having difficulty in remaining clear, they must work on improving their articulation. The more adept they are at pronouncing each and every syllable, as well as every consonant and vowel that make up each syllable, the more their clarity of speech will improve. Saying tongue twisters aloud multiple times, whilst exaggerating the consonants, is an excellent way to stretch the articulators and improve vocal clarity.

Articulation

Using the vocal system in specific ways to vary air flow, with particular attention to consonant mechanics, to produce speech.

Pitch

Pitch is the level of highness or lowness at which the voice is placed. Pitch can refer to the exact placement of a single word or syllable or it could refer to a range of placements where a character or role tends to vocalise most, if not all, of the time. When playing some characters, actors will use a wide range of pitches (many different pitches), but for others

Pitch

The highness or lowness of vocalisation produced by varying the intensity of vibrations communicating intended and non-intended meaning.

they will use a very limited range with only a few pitches. They may even choose to continuously repeat a specific pitch causing them to speak in a monotone voice. Whether an actor chooses to vocalise with a wide or a small vocal range, their choice must always reflect the character they're playing, the time and space of the inner world of the play, the style of the dramatic work and its overall creative vision.

When opting to use a range of pitches actors may place their voices primarily with the high-, mid- or the low-pitched ranges. Just as in real life, few characters are truly dexterous with vocal pitching. Even when they have a wide range from low to high notes available to them, they are more likely to rely on a subset of sounds. On the other hand, the vocal range of the actor needs to be extremely wide so that they have multiple choices available to them and can appropriately match their pitching to their character.

Inner world of the play

The imagined setting, including the time and space of a drama work, reflective of real cultural, socio-economic, political, historical and environmental landscapes.

Creative vision

The purpose and overall meaning of a dramatic production. It is an amalgamation of the director's vision with that of key members of the creative team.

Internet exploration

To find out about pitching and auditioning voice tips go to:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WMt_1jw47Q

Pause

A pause is when there is a gap in the vocal sound. This can be a mid to long break after one character or role finishes speaking, and before another one starts. It can also occur during one character's dialogue at the end of a sentence or paragraph, before they themselves continue speaking with a new sentence. The most frequent use of a pause is within a sentence where the speaker makes a small, even miniscule break, between two words.

Pauses are often used for characters to:

- think
- hesitate
- assert self-control
- assert control over others (or a situation).

From a communication perspective pauses create meaning. Actors utilise them, both consciously and unconsciously, to transfer (or attempt to transfer) meaning to others.

Pause

A break within vocalisation that the speaker plans or is unaware of, communicating intended and non-intended meaning.

There is a great deal of difference between:

‘I ... won’t do it.’

Compared to

‘I won’t ... do it.’

Or even

‘I won’t do ... it.’

Similarly when elongating or decreasing the pauses between sentences, the meaning behind the words will change. For example:

‘I won’t do it. It’s not right. You’re asking the wrong person.’

By shifting the pause when saying the lines, the meaning changes:

‘I won’t do it. ... It’s not right. You’re asking the wrong person.’

Or

‘I won’t do it. It’s not right. ... You’re asking the wrong person.’

If the two pausing techniques (within the sentence and between the sentences) are combined, the actor can create further new meaning:

‘I won’t do it. It’s... not right. ... You’re asking the wrong person.’

Or

‘I won’t do it. It’s not right. ... You’re... asking the wrong person.’

The meaning possibilities utilising pause are endless for an actor.

Activity 1.3: Pause

1. Working with a partner choose an excerpt from a script you’re studying in class that has a section of dialogue between two characters (or roles).
2. Run the dialogue excerpt without any pauses.
3. Discuss the meaning of the section with your partner. Write a paragraph capturing your discussion.
4. Run the scene again with each of you placing one pause after one of the other person’s finished sentences, before you start talking. Don’t tell your partner in advance where you’re going to place your pause.
5. Discuss how the meaning of the scene has changed and write some notes about your discussion.
6. Finally run the scene for a third time eliminating the end-of-sentence pauses. Instead have each of you add two or three within-sentence mini pauses with the aim of deliberately changing your meaning to what it was in version 1 or 2.
7. Once again discuss the activity and then capture your thoughts in a written paragraph.

Hint

If there are too many pauses the meaning can easily become lost. In most dialogue interchanges only a few mid to long pauses should be used at the ends of sentences (at most). Within-sentence mini-pauses are dependent on the character, situation and style of the play. When in doubt, ask someone to listen to you speaking and give you feedback about the pausing. Remember it's almost always important to keep a scene flowing forward.

Internet exploration

Investigate pausing at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfJ2-lAwLcY

Projection

Voice projection is when the breathing and vocal systems are used well together to speak audibly and safely on stage. An actor needs to discern at what level they need to project their voice so that they can fill the playing space and the seating area and be heard effectively by the other characters and audience members.

Projection

Utilising the breath support system to adequately carry vocal sound across space, including variations in volume.

Projecting the voice should not be confused with shouting. Projection is about accessing the diaphragm, filling the lungs with the breath necessary and opening up the voice system to simply let out the sound. There should be no pushing or squeezing to make sound at all. How much sound an actor lets out, and therefore how much breath they take in to prepare for that vocalisation, is dependant on how many words they need to say, the size of the auditorium they need to send their voice out into, and the style and volume at which they want to speak.

An actor who projects effectively lets out their sound after a high-quality breath and then supports that sound as they speak with an active and flexible diaphragm, lungs and ribcage.

Internet exploration

For more information on projecting safely take a look at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynmemxQicQk

Phrasing

Phrasing is the way in which the words of a sentence, part of a sentence or even several short sentences are grouped together and expressed as a single entity. From a characterisation or acting viewpoint, one phrase most usually has one thought associated with it.

Phrasing

The grouping of spoken words together, communicating intended and unintended meaning.

A new phrase tends to start directly after a breath intake. Long phrases will be supported by one deep breath. A series of short phrases may be supported by an initial deep breath, and then, only if needed, 'top-up' breaths between some of them.

Tone

Vocal tone refers to the emotional features that colour a character's voice and reveal insights about their feelings and inner life to other characters and audience members. Whilst others may not be able to explicitly recognise or name the emotional qualities of a particular voice, they will get a sense of whether that voice is warm or cold, as well as whether it seems rich or thin.

Sometimes these qualities are appropriate for the character and style of the play, and therefore the actor is effectively vocalising. Often, unfortunately, they are not appropriate and come about simply because the actor has not worked hard enough in rehearsal to adequately open up their voice and access layers of emotional colour.

Tone

Varying the space within the muscles of the mouth, nose and throat areas to add emotional characteristics to vocalisation.

Vowels can be useful in developing dexterous vocal tone ability. Vowels are the sounds usually made with some kind of open space between the lips and inside the mouth. In the same way an Italian is great at saying, 'piiiiiiiizza' (instead of 'pizza') or 'caaaffè laaaaaatte' (instead of 'caffè latte'), actors too need to be able to stretch their vowels. By stretching their vowels they are able to not only let out their sound and project more effectively, but from a tonal perspective they're able to colour their voice emotionally. This doesn't simply work for Italian words, but for English and the vowels of all languages.

For example if the speaker was to stretch out the vowel of the previous phrase they might speak like this:

vowels = vooo-wels

of = oooo-ve

all = aaaall

Llanguages = laaaan-guaa-geees ('geees' is pronounced like 'jairs')

By stretching out the vowels when speaking an actor is more likely to naturally allow their character's emotions to have an impact on their voice quality.

Hint

Sometimes people colloquially refer to a vocal tone as a pitch. In some languages pitching is used to create meaning, where the same word will mean totally different things when pitched high compared to when it's pitch low. This practice refers to language tones.

In studying drama it's best that you only use the term 'pitch' to refer to the highness or lowness of the voice, and 'tone' to describe the emotional qualities of the voice.

Accents

Sometimes actors work with a script that has characters who speak with an accent. The play could be set in Australia with tourists or first-generation immigrant roles or characters. Perhaps some characters are native-born but come from different parts of Australia and so have either a broader (or a more neutral) Australian accent than the one associated with the play's setting. Actors might be part of a production set in another country or perhaps be working with a script that was written during a much earlier time period. In any of these situations, it's likely that at least some of the characters will speak with an accent, that uses some kind of vocal style, rhythm or pronunciation that is different to the actor's own. One of the ways that an actor can create a life-like character, and/or one that helps establish the time and space the play is set in, is to adopt an accent for the role.

Ideally to learn and take on an accent it would be best to travel to the location where the associated language or linguistic style is spoken every day, but of course this is almost always impractical. The next best thing would be to use a recording of the accent, either a visual or an audio sample. It is possible to purchase standard accent recordings online or in some specialty stores. But if these are not available then actors need to create their own recording.

Below there is a step-by-step guide on how actors can go about creating and using an audio recording to assist them in speaking with a believable or effective accent other than their own.

Accent


The way a group of people in a particular geography distinctly, consistently and collectively pronounce syllables, consonants and vowels.

Linguistics

The study of the structure, grammar, patterns and sounds (phonetics) of language.

Activity 1.4: Developing an accent

1. Find several speakers who originate from the same location as your character. That is, when they speak the same language that's in your script, they do so with the exact accent you need to adopt in performance. If you can't find native speakers, at least search for actors who can speak extremely convincingly with the required accent.
2. Record each speaker reading an excerpt of everyday text, such as a newspaper article or a page from a novel. Make a second recording of each of them telling a story or recounting an interesting event from memory. Try to get them to include statements, questions, changes of intention, a range of moods and emotions and so on.
3. Let the recording run over and over again in the background whilst you are doing other things such as chores, homework and talking to friends on the phone or the computer. You will be likely to subconsciously absorb the sounds of the accent without even knowing it.

- 
4. Next listen to the recording without doing anything else, focusing only on what you hear. At this stage just listen, don't try to speak yet.
 5. Then listen to the recording without doing anything else and try speaking along with it, imitating each sound the speaker makes.
 6. Next try speaking the dialogue alone without the recording playing in the background. Even if you can't remember all of the sentences, try vocalising the ones you can.
 7. Then you're ready to speak with the accent using some new material such as reading a book or newspaper aloud.
 8. Next try improvising telling a story or describing an event from memory.
 9. It's then time to record yourself speaking with the accent. Listen to the recording and identify what you do well and what still needs work.
 10. Once you have worked further on the weaker areas, it is finally time to try the accent with the lines from the play.
 11. Make sure you keep checking yourself by recording your speech and going back over any areas that need improvement. You can repeat the earlier listening and speaking steps as many times as you need to until you crack the accent.

Internet exploration

Find out some helpful hints from an accent specialist at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJyTA4VIZus

Hint

A good way to remember the nine techniques to use for an effective voice on stage is the 6P BAT:

Pace
Pause
Phrasing
Pitch
Posture

Projection
Breathing
Accents
Tone

Vocal misuse

It is very important that actors learn effective ways to use their voice instrument. If they do not they will risk damaging it, which will in turn have negative ramifications on their ability to perform. Excessive strain and tension in the muscles and tissues that form the voice system can harm the voice.

Similarly tiredness, lack of healthy food and dehydration can damage the physical part of the voice (and the rest of the body), whilst also making the actor less likely to have the energy to try to use their voice well.

The human body is designed to naturally vocalise safely and effectively. Even so people form bad habits, often over many years, which interfere with the way they produce sound. These habits can even cause physical damage to their respiratory and vocal systems. Ineffective and unsafe voice habits often take a long time to reverse.



VOICE IN REPRESENTATIONAL DRAMA

In the performance style of representational drama, it is important that the performance, and the characters that make up that performance, imitate life in some way. The characters' voices are one of the main contributors to making a production seem life-like to an audience. If the voices are not believable or don't sound natural, then the audience will be unlikely to forget that they're watching a performance, unable to feel as if they're looking in secretly at the inner world of the characters. This suspension of disbelief is one of the key conventions of representational drama. Actors must use their voice in such a way that it sounds natural, life-like and believable.

Performance style

Acting in a certain way that either focuses on imitating life or presenting ideas.

Representational drama

Drama that imitates life as it explores human psychology by placing characters in life-like situations and relationships on stage. Because it's an imitation of life the characters don't know the audience is there.

Suspension of disbelief

The acceptance of something unreal being real for a period of time.

Voice in realism

Within the overall representational drama voice approach, each historical style has its own unique conventions for vocalising and using spoken language to communicate.

In realism:

- In general, realism uses dialogue that is highly conversational and follows the basic rules of grammar.
- At times of increased emotion, the conversation heightens and becomes more stylised with more use of adjectives, adverbs and so on.



- During heightened emotion actors need to be more flexible with their vocal tone to connect the voice effectively with their feelings.
- The characters are always talking to other characters (and not to the audience). Soliloquys, used in many other presentational forms, are abandoned.
- Characters speak with an explicit or implicit objective behind their speech and actors should justify every word that their characters say.

Soliloquy

Speaking one's thoughts aloud to oneself to gain new understanding.

Historical style

The drama developed by a particular culture at a specific period in time that has a set of characteristics, conventions and, often, delivery techniques unique to that artistic type.

Voice in naturalism

In naturalism:

- Accents due to language and to dialects are extremely important.
- True to reflecting real-life, if appropriate to their character actors might mumble, garble, stammer, lisp and so on, even if the words are not easily understandable to others.
- Vocal, nonverbal sounds that are specific to a character, and the time, space, class and situation they're in, need to be embraced.
- If nonverbal sounds are not included in the script, actors may add them if appropriate.
- If appropriate crude language, colloquialisms, cursing and so on are used.

Dialect

A specific form of language unique to a particular geographical region or cultural group.

VOICE IN PRESENTATIONAL DRAMA

It is sometimes said that vocalising in presentational theatre requires even more flexibility and control than that which is needed for representational forms. This is because non-realistic drama does not focus on being true to life and thus often demands actors go beyond the realms of everyday speech, which could require more training, preparation and practice.

Typically an actor will be required to work with vocabulary, grammar and punctuation that are different to their own. The speech patterns may be unusual with stylised rhythms or poetic sections requiring heightened vocal expression. In some presentational genres an actor has to switch between different uses of language during the play or even within the same scene. Because of this, a contemporary actor needs to have a highly developed vocal instrument, which they can then use with great diversity and control.

Presentational drama

Drama that shows itself as a theatrical experience to the audience whilst the dramatic action unfolds. Because it focuses on the communication of ideas or the offering of a theatrical experience it often makes contact with the audience during performance.

Voice in Ancient Roman drama

Similarly to naturalism and realism having unique voice conventions, each presentational drama style has its own specific voice characteristics too. In Ancient Roman drama:

- Speech is declaimed in a heightened style, especially in tragedies.
- Actors often speak directly to the audience, even when their role is technically talking with another role.
- The focus is on communicating the meaning of the words, rather than impacting others with any emotion that might be relevant at that point.
- Language is typically poetic using a metered verse of alternating strong and weak pulses.
- Actors need to accentuate the flow of the rhythm and stylised patterns of the speech in order to make the language work.

Voice in Renaissance drama

- Words and sounds often evoke the mood they are associated with, thus actors need to connect emotionally with the sound and shape of the words, as well as the meaning.
- Similar to the Ancient Romans, although longer in line-length, some passages of dialogue and monologue were written in verse.
- In the verse sections, actors need to actively utilise phrasing, and accentuate the flow of the rhythm and stylised patterns, in order to make the language work effectively.
- Other passages were written in prose in a more colloquial style, and actors should experiment with finding phrasing, pause and pace that is different to the verse sections.
- Pitch range and tonal dexterity are needed to fully heighten the emotion of some lines and incite the audience.
- In some monologue sections in late-Renaissance drama, a rather monotonous, declamatory delivery, at a relatively fast pace, with little pause or expression variation can often be used, especially when the dialogue is putting forward one's views or complaining about something in detail.

Internet exploration

Hear about original pronunciation of Shakespearean text at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPlpphT7n9s

Voice in expressionism

- The language can change between realistic and nonrealistic, short/detached and poetic styles (often changing within the same section).
- Vocal staccato and clipped speech are often used.
- The dialogue is regularly cut right back to only include the absolutely necessary words/sentences. This means short words, such as 'the', 'a', 'and', 'it', 'we' and 'he', are often missing from a sentence.

- Alliteration, onomatopoeia, repetition and other poetic devices are often included and need to be relished by the actor when vocalising to make the lines work.
- The delivery of the language as a whole tends to work best when the voice has a musical characteristic to it. This means the actor must have great control and dynamism with their volume, pitch, phrasing, pace, pause and tone.

Staccato

Sounds that are detached or sharply separated from each other.

Alliteration

The initial consonant of two or more adjacent or neighbouring words or syllables is the same.

Onomatopoeia

The sound of a word when vocalised imitates that of the object, person or occurrence that it is referring to.

Voice in epic theatre

- A combination of everyday and heightened speech is used.
- Consonants and vowels need close attention with purposeful delivery.
- The everyday language needs to be spoken as colloquially as possible and seem to roll off the tongue naturally.
- Contrastingly, each word of the lyrical and poetic speech sections should be relished with more attention to phrasing, tone and pitch.
- Singspiel (sung dialogue and monologue) is often included where actors can approximate the pitch and almost half speak the sung words, rather than use a polished or refined singing voice.
- Dexterity is needed in changing between the spoken and sung word.
- Accents and dialects are often used, and need to be clearly distinguishable, including differentiating characters of different classes.

Singspiel

The lyrics of a song are spoken, or semi-spoken, instead of sung.

Voice in musical theatre

- A very wide vocal range is needed to be able to access a composer's pitches, thus actors should practise accessing and extending their range on an ongoing basis.
- Vowels need to be sung in a free supported manner, connected with the breath system, so the actor can pitch accurately, project the voice without strain and tonally colour the sound.
- Ending consonants are used efficiently to manage the duration of the long sung notes.



- Seamless transition from the spoken word to the sung word is required.
- In early musical theatre an actor's sung voice may produce a more pure and open tonal quality than their spoken voice. In contemporary musical theatre the qualities of the sung voice need to be the same as the spoken voice.

Voice in contemporary presentational drama

- Mastering the nine voice techniques is vital for an actor as each contemporary play will focus more, or less, on some techniques rather than others.
- Actors need to clearly recognise and work with the voice demands of a play and a production.
- Great voice dexterity is needed to be able to adapt accordingly.
- When working with Australian plays, being able to neutralise or accentuate one's own accent is vital to meet the demands of the character's communication style and the directorial vision.

Professional profile: Matt Grey – Director, actor and voice specialist

LLAM (Hons) and LGSM, London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, UK GSA Diploma, Guildford School of Acting and Dance, UK BA Hons (Theatre), University of Surrey, UK

Matt began his career in British Television and later continued his acting training at the renowned Guildford School of Acting and Dance in the UK. He has directed, devised and acted in plays in Britain, Australia and Singapore. Matt works extensively as a voice coach, including on the Singapore Repertory Theatre's (SRT) productions, including *Merchant of Venice*. He also specialises in voice training and works regularly as a voice-over artist. From his studio at home, he has written and arranged the music for a number of shows including recently in Singapore *The Phantom Cat* at the Kallang Theatre, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* for LASALLE, *The Lost Toy* for Centre Stage at the Esplanade Theatres on The Bay.

For more than a decade, although Matt has devoted his attention to providing performance training for upcoming actors, he understands the need to keep his skills sharp and up to date by taking on occasional acting projects. Recently he played Sigmund Freud in The Esplanade's *Freud's Last Session*, Dame Margery Norbuter in Centre Stage's *A Right Rubbish Christmas* and Egeus in SRT's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by the Royal Shakespeare Company's Barry Kyle. Matt also works occasionally for Mediacorp Television, having appeared in *Living with Lydia* and *Daddy's Girls*.

Matt Grey's sound exploration activity:

When Matt is exploring the way the voice and vocal communication are used in presentational styles of drama, he likes to start by building a strong relationship between thought, impulse and physical response. He also believes it is important to explore the relationships between sound and emotion. Below is in an activity to help young actors connect internally with the sounds they make.

'Different sounds invoke different emotional responses. For example the sounds 'sh' and 'dah!' can be interpreted as calming and alarming respectively.





Take the word 'dash' and separate into three sounds 'd', 'a' and 'sh'.

Individually work with 'd' first. At the same time vocalise and physically express 'd' as a sound/movement.

Explore the extreme possibilities of 'd'.

Work with 'a'. Vocalise and physically express 'a' as a sound/movement.

Explore the extreme possibilities of 'a'.

Finally work with 'sh'. Vocalise and physically express 'sh' as a sound/movement.

Explore the extreme possibilities of 'sh'.

Now work in pairs. 'Give' and 'receive' your three vocal sounds and accompanying movements to your partner. Swap over.

Working individually put a sequence of the three movements together and explore how the sounds sit within the body. How do they flow between different parts of the body? What it is like to either give or receive them?

Gradually bring the three together with greater fluidity.

Slowly take the movement away but enjoy the physical presence of the spoken word and how it inhabits the body. How does the new relationship to voice and speech differ?

MOVEMENT

The first part of this chapter has focused on one tool available to an actor, their voice. The second half will consider the second tool of the actor, their body. An actor's body is the vehicle through which they can utilise movement techniques, fundamental to every role or character an actor will ever play.

'A player can dissect, analyse, intellectualise, or develop a valuable case history for a part, but if one is unable to assimilate it and communicate it physically, it is useless within the theater form. It neither frees the feet nor brings the fire of inspiration to the eyes of those in the audience ... The artist must draw upon and express a world that is physical but that transcends objects – more than accurate observation and information, more than the physical object itself, more than the eye can see. We must all find the tools for this expression. 'Physicalisation' is such a tool.'

Spolin (1963, 1999) *Improvisation for the theater*, 3rd ed.



Although famous theatre practitioner Viola Spolin published this more than half a century ago, it still is very relevant for actors today. When an actor is on stage performing, they only have themselves, their physicality and mental capacity, to do their job. Actors need to find ways to use their bodies to communicate clearly, characterise effectively and perform successfully. That is, they need to be adept, flexible and creative at moving and not moving in the performing space.

Some of the areas an actor needs to consider when moving effectively on stage include:

- Facial expression
- Posture
- Gesture
- Gait
- Weight
- Space
- Time
- Energy
- Proxemics

Facial expression

This is the outward display of the internal state of someone on their face. The face will communicate the character's feelings and thoughts, as well as potentially their values, beliefs, dreams and desires.

In real life facial expressions are usually involuntary, physical reactions to the environment, or to others, and they can also be a reflection of the internal state of the person. On stage in certain styles of representational drama, the aim of the actor is to have involuntary facial expressions that accurately reflect inner emotions, thoughts and reactions to other characters and situations naturally, just like they would in real life. In presentational drama, facial expression can also be involuntary if it's appropriate for the style, the dramatic action at that point and the character. They can alternatively be more conscious or stylised, as is once again appropriate for the production.



Facial expression

A gesture with the facial muscles that may include head motion to communicate meaning.

Hint

Although scientifically facial expressions are a type of gesture, a gesture made with the face, when acting they're almost always referred to simply as facial expressions.

Internet exploration

Learn more about facial expressions from an expert at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2r2gEWLq0A

Posture

As discussed earlier when looking at the voice, posture refers to the way a person positions their body, not only when moving, but also when standing, sitting, lying down and so on. It is how they hold their physical frame, including their limbs and their muscles.

When it's said that a person has good posture, it means their spinal column is upright, their shoulders are back and relaxed, that their feet, knees, hips and shoulders are in alignment, and their head is balancing freely on the top of their spine. All of this whilst the body remains fluid and the actor doesn't place

Posture

A specific position of the body in which the torso and limbs are arranged in a certain way.

any physical strain on their supporting muscles or joints. By contrast, when it's said that a person has poor posture, it usually means they're carrying a lot of tension or compression in the body, and that they're giving in to gravity by collapsing the spinal column down into itself. Their shoulders may be hunched over or their hips tilted back, their chin may be thrust upwards or their body could be out of alignment in some other way.

For a helpful activity on improving posture, see **Activity 1.1: Adopting a neutral position** earlier in this chapter.

Gesture

A body movement that communicates some kind of meaning is a gesture. Like breathing gestures can be voluntary or involuntary, and are often habitual. Apart from facial expressions, the most frequently used type of gesture is a hand or arm movement.

Gestures are typically used in three ways:

- to emphasise and support dialogue
- to explain something that can not be as easily explained with only verbalisation
- or are involuntary actions that reveal feelings, thoughts and attitudes. This type of gesture is either a reaction to something or someone, or it is an unconscious behaviour that is displayed in certain circumstances or when the person feels specific emotions.



Gesture

A movement that is made with the hand, head or any part of the body, to express meaning.

An actor can draw on seven types of gestures to use on stage:

- **Adaptive:** these are unintentional physicalisations that occur either in reaction to something or because of habit. Often the person doing them is unaware of their behaviour, for example:
 - picking at their finger nails when they're anxious;
 - crossing their arms when they disagree with someone; or
 - tapping their foot if they're impatient.
- **Affective:** making hand or body movements that are connected to emotion and reveal unconscious feelings or objectives, for example:
 - rubbing their eyes when they're tired;
 - covering their mouth with their hand without thinking when yawning; or
 - flicking their hair off their face when being flirtatious.

- **Deictic:** indicating or pointing to a particular thing with the body, for example:
 - using their hand to bring an object to the attention of the listener;
 - waving their arm towards a physical place in reference of its geographical location; or
 - pointing their finger at a particular person when speaking about them.
- **Emblematic:** physicalisations that are considered common knowledge by the communicators and can be easily used to replace speech. For example an actor could:
 - give the ‘thumbs up’ to suggest they feel good or like an idea;
 - shrug their shoulders to indicate they don’t know the answer to a question; or
 - hold up three fingers as they talk about three options.
- **Emphatic:** delivering strong decisive gestures that release physical and vocal energy, which seem to ‘pop’ as the gesture is completed at the same time the key word of their message is spoken, for example:
 - clenching their fist and striking it against their other hand when saying something in anger;
 - clasping their hands together and shaking them forward repeatedly on key excited or joyous words; or
 - making a chopping hand movement when disagreeing with someone.
- **Iconic:** interacting with the space around the speaker to help support what they are saying, for example:
 - showing that something is extremely small by holding out their thumb and forefinger up with a centimetre of space between the two;
 - indicating a part of the body when talking about someone else’s body; or
 - holding up a hand to indicate the height of a particular person.
- **Metaphoric:** using the hands or another body part to recreate the shape of object being spoken about in order to make that shape more concrete, for example:
 - making a circle with their hands when saying the word, ‘round’;
 - creating a fist shape for the word, ‘strong’; or
 - touching the hand to the heart to indicate, ‘love’.

Internet exploration

To hear from an expert on gesturing onstage go to:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=el3yGfhDm9o

Activity 1.5: Gesture analysis

1. Below are three different hand gestures by the same actor at different points in a monologue from a play.
2. Analyse the photographs and write a paragraph for each one that describes:
 - the type of gesture it is
 - two different potential meanings behind the gesture
 - the impact each gesture, with the associated meaning, might have on the listening character.



Image A



Image B



Image C

Gait

The way in which a role or character walks or moves through space is their gait. Characters tend to have a particular pattern, rhythm or sequence to their gait. For example they might take quick steps that are only one foot's length apart. Or they might take a longer stride with their left leg and put more pressure on their left foot when it lands on the floor, than on their right. Each of these choices will affect the rhythm of the character's walk in different ways.

Gait

The manner in which a human being walks or moves through space.

The unique qualities of a character's gait might be very apparent and thus easily noticed by the audience or others around them, or they could be much more subtle and hardly visible to anyone at all. Gait could be determined by physical causes such as an injuries, psychological prompts such as past experiences, or simply habit where something done once-off in the past because it was easy or quick becomes an ongoing, regular action.

Internet exploration

To understand the physiology of gait better go to:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=5j4YRHf6lYo

Weight

There are two different focuses for actors to think about when exploring the weight of their role or character's movement:

- Physical weight
- Internal impact of that physical weight

Weight

The varying of downward force within movement in response to matter and gravity.

Physical weight is concerned with the matter that makes up the character's body; how much the bones, muscles, fatty tissue and so on weigh in relation to the size they occupy. Whilst of course the weight of the character is determined to some degree by the physicality of the actor who plays them, this is not the only determinate. Actors can be made to look lighter or heavier than they are in reality by both the way they physicalise on stage and also the costumes they wear. When physicalising an actor can add gestures, adapt their gait, change their posture and so on to suggest they are a particular weight. Also, designers can literally add layers to a costume to change the appearance of the character, or they can cleverly create a costume that hangs in such a way that it makes the character's build appear differently to that of the actor.

The second focus, the internal impact of physical weight on movement, is directly linked to the inner life of the character. How characters think and feel, plus at a deeper level what their psychology, beliefs and values are, should have an impact on the way they carry themselves in the playing space. Whether a character moves with a sense of lightness or effortlessness, or whether they move with a sinking, heavy feeling is often more related to their internal life as it is to their physical weight. A character that physically weighs a lot can move as if they are floating through space. Conversely someone who is physically thin can move as if they carry the weight of the world on their shoulders.

Space

Without this element there can not be any movement as actors are continuously moving through space during performance. Even when they're standing still, their bodies and the way they physicalise are taking up some space. It's important for actors to explore and use the stage as three-dimensionally as possible. This means not only moving up towards the audience and backwards away from them. It doesn't mean simply to the left of the stage or to the right, but also to consider the levels of space height that are available to them.

Space

The three-dimensional areas that are physically inhabited and not inhabited by the actor's body.

The standing or walking area is one spatial plain to utilise, and down on the floor is another. There is the space above head height and that which is further than arms length. There are so many more interesting levels an actor can use by being creative about moving through space. They can stand on permanent features of the scenography such as large rostra, as well as on transient or moveable set pieces such as a chair. Actors might sit on the shoulders of another actor, climb up on a scaffold, or even be suspended from the ceiling (safely of course).



Rostra

A flat raised surface for action to take place on during performance.

Scenography

Design of the theatrical space including, but not limited to the set, incorporating the elements of drama in order to create a place for performance whilst engaging the audience.

Levels

The vertical layers of the playing space from the ground upward that may be altered or extended by set pieces.

When moving through space actors also need to consider the direction of their movement. The body can move forwards, backwards and sideways. It can also move with the face and body aimed towards the same direction, or in different directions. For example the face might be looking right, while the body is moving left. Just because the audience is on one side of the playing space, doesn't mean the body always needs to be facing them. The

actor, of course, always does need to be aware of their body, but they don't simply have to deliver everything front on to the audience.

Internet exploration

Watch some NIDA acting students explore the aerial playing space at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1u66VYu9fMQ

Time

What pace is for voice, time is for movement; the rate of speed at which an actor moves and the duration of a movement. Actors need to be able to move at different speeds depending on the demands of their character, the inner world of the play and the play's style. As movement does not merely refer to walking or traveling across space, but also to the smaller or more isolated body movements, an actor should not limit their exploration of time to how long it takes their whole body to walk, run, dance and so on. They also need to consider how long they will take to move a single body part or physicalise their facial muscles.

Time

Adjustments to and changes in physicalisation pacing.

Time in movement is also about for how long a role or character uses stillness on stage; how much time they will take before they move, as well as for how long they will remain still pre- and post-movement. Going from stillness to animation, and back again, is also about timing. An actor needs to avoid anticipating and moving too early, and instead be able to move at the best point for the dramatic action and the dramatic meaning.

The last part of time in relation to movement that an actor needs to explore is frequency. That is how often a particular movement, or set of movements, may (or may not) be repeated.

Energy

Energy is the internal sense of vitality and vibrancy that an actor experiences, which will fuel their role or character's mindful thoughts and external movement. Movement needs energy to occur. Energy is also expended during movement. The faster or more intense the movement, the more energy is needed to support it and the more energy is lost by carrying it out. Getting the energy level right for performance is a fine and often difficult balancing act.

Energy

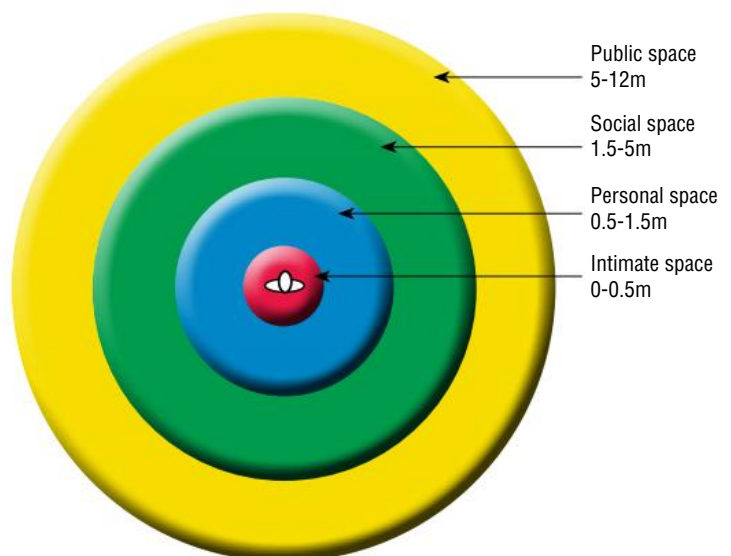
The vitality and force driving an object or being in an animated state.

An actor needs to have enough energy to vocalise clearly so that they're heard by the other actors and the audience members, to physicalise on a scale that can be seen, to remain focused during performance so they can commit completely to their character, and to be alert to observe what they do (on and off stage) so they can interact effectively. Yet they also need to play a character that is different to the actor themselves. If the character has higher energy levels than those the actor personally needs in order to perform, all the actor has to do is increase their own levels to match. But if the character has lower energy levels than those that the actor needs during performance, then the actor needs to maintain the internal energy levels so that they can act, whilst also *appearing* to the audience and the other characters that they have lower energy levels. Thus actors need to work hard when developing their acting movement technique, as well as in rehearsal, to be able to access, instigate, control and utilise energy.

Proxemics

Proxemics refers to the distance between two roles or characters, and the instinctive feelings or thoughts that these individuals experience towards the other, at that particular point in time due to the space between them.

In the 1950s anthropologist Edward Hall studied culture and human behaviour and through his research identified the four Zones of Proxemics. Hall discovered that people have varying comfort levels within each proxemics zone, and they will physically, emotionally and/or psychologically react according to their comfort level. They may want to move closer to or further away from the other person. They could act on this instinct and move or they might instead want to move, but choose not to because of an external or internal pressure. If they do make a movement, whether with the whole body, hand or face, it is often an unconscious one.



An individual's proxemics comfort levels depend on their relationship and past experiences with that person, as well as the situation and environment they are in at that point in time. It also depends on their personality, culture, beliefs, values, class and so on. It is no different for the characters in a play.

Proxemics

The spatial separation that individuals naturally set between themselves and others.

A good actor is aware of the four different proxemics zones, how they operate and what distances their character prefers in each zone, and the subtle changes of these preferences in respect to each other character of the play). They also need to know their own personal preferences and make sure they're not imposing their own comfort levels on their role that they're playing, but instead make active, appropriate and interesting choices for their character that may be different to their own.

Internet exploration

Find out more about proxemics with an Ancient Greek amphitheatre in the background at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fnxy8uSt6aw&spfreload=1

Spatial awareness

Some characters are very aware of their own proxemics preferences and others have no idea. Similarly some characters observe, or know from past experience, the proxemics preferences that other characters have, whilst others have not noticed. If they do have some kind of awareness they may choose use this knowledge to their advantage or to the advantage of the other person.

Activity 1.6: Spatial awareness analysis

- Below are images from three scenes during a rehearsal. The actors and director have experimented with two different uses of space for the same line in each scene. You need to analyse each choice and consider how the movement of the actors and their awareness of the space between them:
 - adds meaning to the lines
 - does or does not enhance the dramatic tension
 - reveals something about the characters and their relationships.
- Write a report discussing your analysis and findings.

Note: The stage is a thrust stage with seating on three sides. The scenes are photographed from the front row downstage audience.

**Scene One:**

Male character (wearing jeans) says, 'I don't think this is working anymore.'

**Scene Two:**

Standing male character says, 'You're late, and that's the third time this week.'

**Scene Three:**

Male character says, 'What happens if he says no?'

**Hint**

The second zone of proxemics, 'personal space', is well known by many cultures, although they may not know it. After speaking with someone you may have thought, 'He was in my face'. Or during that conversation you might have asked him to, 'Get out of my space'. Whilst not necessarily polite, such language is a clear indication that the other person has a smaller personal or intimate space than you do.

MOVEMENT IN REPRESENTATIONAL DRAMA

As a general rule movement in representational drama needs to be life-like and imitate the way real people use their bodies in everyday situations. It needs to seem spontaneous and natural, whilst being prompted and inspired by internal feelings and thoughts. Actors are well served to move in the moment as the dramatic action occurs by physically reacting to the events, to the other characters and to the environment around them. This will help avoid their movement being unbelievable, mechanical or prescriptive. All movement, expression, actions, stage business and so on, should work together in a cohesive, unified way to reflect the character's ideas, emotions and psychology.

Stage business

The behaviour, small activities and incidental actions of a character during performance, often involving props or interacting with the set in some way.

Sometimes the lines said (the words) might be in conflict with how the character says them with their body (movement). In these situations it is the movement that almost always reveals more truth about the character's intentions or offers a more accurate meaning than the actual words being voiced. For an actor, particularly in representational drama where multi-layered three-dimensional characters, subtext and psychology are important, this type of body language is a gift. An actor can communicate their objectives through their body very effectively, whilst their verbalisation continues delivering the printed script lines. Representational drama often becomes most interesting when, just like in real life, what the characters say (verbal communication) and what they mean (nonverbal and vocal communication) are in opposition.

Hint

In representational drama often an actor moves by first letting their internal state inform/prompt/inspire their external state. Whereas in presentational drama, an actor could start exploring their external physicality first and allow it to later have an impact on their inner life.

Movement in realism

Similar to voice, within representational drama each historical style has movement conventions that are unique characteristics. In realism typically:

- The body is focused with a sense of being completely centered, ready to physically react to internal or external stimuli.
- The body should also be relaxed and free so that movement is tension-free.
- Movement is always purposeful.
- Characters move prompted by their motivation and internal state.
- Gestures are spontaneous and are always linked to a complex and active internal life.
- Stage business is important and directly reflects the character's internal life.
- Conflicts in spatial awareness and proxemics between characters are important.
- Actors need to understand the way their own body moves so that they can channel this into their movement (or amend it as appropriate).
- Physical fitness is key so that the body can readily and effectively move in any situation it finds itself in.

Movement in naturalism

Although this historical style is similar in many ways to realism and typically also has the characteristics listed above, there are some additional important movement qualities such as:

- Movement must always be motivated, yet also completely authentic. If the character wants to move, they should do so. Likewise if they don't want to move, they should not, even if they have moved before in rehearsal or past performances.
- Actors having their backs to the audience, even for long periods of time, is acceptable if internally justified and relevant at that particular point in the performance.
- Stage business is extremely detailed, including the minutia that will be seen by no-one except the character.

See **Chapter 2** for acting techniques that are appropriate for representational drama.

Activity 1.7: Moving with purpose in representational drama

You are going to work through a series of simple physical tasks. Your teacher will call out the specific activities for you to do. Listen to their side-coaching whilst staying focused on completing the required task. Draw on your imagination if you need to and follow through with the first idea that comes into your head. Most importantly don't try to act, simply allow yourself to hear the task and carry it out.

1. Stage One:
 - Walk across the room.
 - Walk across the room to pass the time.
 - Walk to look at something on the other side of a busy street.
 - Walk to get home out of the cold weather.
 - Now pace whilst waiting for your late friend.
2. Stage Two:
 - Stand still.
 - Stand in a queue.
 - Pose as a model in a painting class.
 - Stand to deliver an important presentation.
 - Now stand on the sidelines to watch your friend's football match.
3. Stage Three:
 - Find a chair and sit down.
 - Sit on a comfortable lounge or sofa.
 - Sit on a piano stool.
 - Sit at the hairdressers.
 - Now sit in a Doctor's waiting room.
4. Stage Four:
 - Look at an imaginary table and count the number of items on it.
 - Clean the table.
 - Set the table for dinner.
 - Remove the chewing gum stuck under the table.
 - Shuffle a deck of cards and then deal out a hand for a card game.



5. Stage Five:
 - Check your phone for messages.
 - Receive and read a message.
 - Reply.
 - Read their reply to you.
 - Send another reply.
 - Check your phone for messages.
 - Check your phone for messages.
 - Turn off your phone.
6. Finally write a page-long report discussing the difference between simply moving (ie. walking) and moving with purpose (ie. pacing whilst waiting for a late friend). Give examples for each of the five stages.

MOVEMENT AND PRESENTATIONAL DRAMA

Unlike representational drama where there are basically two pure historical styles (naturalism and realism), it is almost impossible to count the different types that can be categorised as presentational drama. There are simply hundreds. To make it even more challenging for the contemporary actor, many of these styles are not completely non-realistic and even more of them are drawn from several different types of drama. So how then does an actor prepare their body and movement in presentational drama?



Flexibility, fitness, awareness and adaptability are key.

Ideally, an actor should develop a repertoire of different movement practices and theories. This will mean they are then able to draw on a particular movement technique or process when it is appropriate for a specific play and context. They might choose to use more than one method if it's appropriate for the production. They could even mix some realistic and some non-realistic movements techniques when they are working on a drama work that has both life-like and also more stylised elements.

Movement in Ancient Roman drama

In the drama of Ancient Rome:

- Most movement is directed out to the audience and actors need to be able to turn out to the front (and avoid acting in profile), even while interacting with the other roles and characters.

- Rhetorical gesture is needed in the monologue verse sections when actors should use flowing, ornamental, expansive and controlled gestures.
- All gestures should be life-like but also heightened to reinforce the rhythm of the lines through deliberate, stylised movement, even when the actor is not using rhetorical gesture.
- In comedies physical contact between the roles is frequent.
- Also in comedies running, hitting, falling, tumbling and other slapstick techniques are popular.
- Stage fighting, acrobatics, dancing and ritualised movement are frequently used and actors need to be fit and agile to complete the choreography.

Rhetorical gesture

The use of a hand, arm, head or other body part to accompany an individual word within a spoken line in order to display the associated emotion and evoke an emotional response in the audience.

Ritualised movement

Stylised and often structured movement involving patterns and repetitions to make and communicate meaning.

Movement in Renaissance drama

In drama works of the Renaissance period:

- Grace, control and a sense of fluid energy are needed for actors to gesture and move effectively.
- All movement is disciplined, with a great sense of rhythm and purpose.
- Movement is highly reflective of the class of the roles or characters, such as through the use of curtsies and bows.
- Gestures are life-like, but also somewhat stylised or heightened.
- Extensive use of rhetorical gesture, especially in the heavier, more serious sections, to help the audience understand the feelings behind the dialogue, or during the highly emotional moments of dramatic action.
- Semi-stylised stage business is incorporated, often with personal props such as fans, handkerchiefs, money purses, veils or masks and so on.

It is impossible to have any great Emotion or Gesture of the Body, without the Action of the Hands ... You must never let either of your Hands hang down, as if lame or dead; for that is very disagreeable to the Eye, and argues no Passion in the Imagination. In short, your Hands must always be in View of your Eyes, and so corresponding with the Motions of the Head, Eyes and Body, that the Spectator may see their Concurrence

The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton, *The Late Eminent Tragedian*
by Charles Gildon and Saint-Evremond,
Printed for R. Gosling, 1710

Movement in expressionism

In Expressionism:

- Movement is often stylised, but should always be integrally linked to the role or character's inner life, even if its non-realistic by nature.
- The actor might face away from the audience and have their back towards them, even when moving and vocalising.
- Speed is varied throughout the play, including within one scene where it might be extremely fast one moment and then relatively slow the next.
- A range of fluidity is used; at one point gestures might be dehumanised, mechanical, with jerky movements and at another time they could be graceful, dreamlike and flowing.
- Acrobatics, stylised dance, gymnastics, martial arts, human puppets and other highly physical choreography is often incorporated and actors must be extremely fit and flexible to cope with the movement demands.

Movement in epic theatre

With Brechtian-style or epic theatre:

- Actors use a mixture of natural, life-like movement, with heightened, stylised movement.
- Asian drama influences are prevalent and exaggerated gaits, gestures, facial expressions and so on borrowed from Japanese, Chinese and other Asian theatre forms dominate.
- Techniques of expressionism also dominate (see **Chapter 2: Acting** and **Chapter 15: Form and Style**) and actors need great dexterity to move appropriately.
- The actor might face away from the audience and have their back towards them, even when moving and vocalising.
- Movement fluctuates from fluid, graceful to emphatic, strong physicalisations, sometimes in the same episode.
- Because of the highly physical demands on the Brechtian actor's body, training in mime, acrobatics, dance and gymnastics is helpful to develop agility, flexibility and fitness.

Episode

Sections of some drama works in which a sequence of dramatic action unfolds and/or a communication interchange occurs.

Movement in musical theatre

- Movement can be stylised and exaggerated, especially during songs and even when not dancing.

- The actor typically uses their body with great purpose, high energy and control.
- Actors are more likely to turn out to and face the audience in early works (pre-1960) than in contemporary musical theatre. Since the 1950s moving in profile to the audience, even during the solo songs, is more acceptable.
- Chamber musical theatre requires actors to physicalise as naturally and true-to-life as possible, even whilst singing, or at least to appear to do so due to the (among other things) close proximity of the audience and every-day nature of the subject matter and themes.
- Choreography for dance sequences is frequently used and actors need to be able to dance well in a range of styles such as jazz, tap and ballroom, and even ballet, contemporary and flamenco.



Movement in contemporary presentational drama

- Mastering the eight movement techniques is vital for an actor as each contemporary play will focus more, or less, on some techniques rather than others.
- Actors need to clearly recognise and work with the specific movement demands of a play and a production.
- Great movement dexterity is needed to be able to adapt accordingly.
- Actors should train in several different movement techniques, both theatre techniques as well as in those of other performing art and sports forms such as dance, acrobatics, gymnastics and martial arts.

See **Chapter 2** for acting techniques that are appropriate for presentational drama.

Activity 1.8: Sound and movement in presentational drama

1. Work in two groups, each with 1-15 people, to explore sound and movement.
2. The first group (or person) agrees on and vocalises a chosen soundscape, such as a waterfall, an animal sound, a street at peak hour or light rain on a tin roof in the country.
3. The second group (or person) moves in a way that corresponds to the sound. Be wary of simply enacting the literal movement associated usually with the sound, try instead to reflect the essence or mood of the sound. For example, if the sound is of dogs barking, don't just move like a dog but rather allow the body to move in a way that compliments the suddenness, attacking and repetitive nature of the sound.
4. Swap over so that the group that started with movement, becomes the sound group and vice versa. The new sound group decides on a new soundscape and offers it to the movement group.
5. Repeat the steps above many times, experimenting with all kinds of different movement and sound explorations.

Internet exploration

Watch some WAAPA students present a stylised pedestrian movement sequence at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ict4d8vr68Q

CHAPTER 2

Acting

Key Concepts

- ☛ Acting
- ☛ Acting in representational drama
- ☛ Konstantin Stanislavski
 - The System
 - Given circumstances
 - Fundamental questions
 - Magic ‘if’
 - Emotional memory
 - Objectives
 - The method of physical actions
 - Circles of attention
- ☛ Group theatre
- ☛ Stella Adler
- ☛ Adler’s technique of acting
 - Acting is doing
 - Developing the imagination
 - Developing the epic
- ☛ Sanford Meisner
- ☛ The Meisner Technique
 - Mechanical repetition
 - Working-off
- ☛ Acting in presentational drama
- ☛ Bertolt Brecht
- ☛ Brechtian actor training
 - The intelligent actor
 - Interrogating the script
 - The actor-spectator relationship
 - Element of surprise
- ☛ Jerzy Grotowski
- ☛ Psycho-physical training
 - The holy actor
 - Authentic self-hood
 - Mind-body connection
 - Yoga
- ☛ Rudolf von Laban
- ☛ Human movement traits
 - Eight basic efforts

ACTING

A theatre practitioner who takes on a role or character, to develop and prepare for performance, using acting processes to do so, is an actor. Traditionally men and boys who practice acting have been called actors, whilst women and girls have been called actresses. Although this terminology is still appropriate, today in many countries, including Australia, gender specificity is not as important as it once was. Thus any person who acts is colloquially called an actor.

Acting

The art of shaping and delivering a role for live or recorded performance whilst drawing on the elements of drama and engaging in creative practices to entertain and/or engage an audience.

Actors must use voice and movement skills and techniques to realise and perform their characters in drama works. They will use these fundamental techniques in specific ways and often work within certain conventions, use particular practices or follow the sequential steps of one, or more, acting processes. Whilst there is a wide range of such acting processes available to actors, there are several that dominated the theatre and film industries last century. Some of these processes work best for representational drama, where three-dimensional psychologically-rich characters are needed, whilst other types are more popular with presentational styles of drama because of their highly physical approach, their accessibility to the audience or their match with a play's purpose.

Representational drama

Drama that imitates life as it explores human psychology by placing characters in life-like situations and relationships on stage. Because it's an imitation of life the characters don't know the audience is there.

Presentational drama

Drama that shows itself as a theatrical experience to the audience whilst the dramatic action unfolds. Because it focuses on the communication of ideas or the offering of a theatrical experience it often makes contact with the audience during performance.

ACTING IN REPRESENTATIONAL DRAMA

Although there are different processes that actors use when acting in a representational drama work they almost all have their roots, to some extent at least, in **The System of Acting**, developed by Konstantin Stanislavski. This chapter will first explore his system, and then also two processes developed by actors who first practiced the system themselves when working together for a decade at the Group Theatre collective in New York. These actors, directors and teachers each went on to refine and adapt the system to suit their experiences, needs, preferences and acting landscapes: Stella Adler with her **Technique of Acting**, and Sanford Meisner with his **Meisner Technique**.

Konstantin Stanislavski

One of the great acting practitioners and theorists of early last century was Konstantin Stanislavski. His work with the Moscow Art Theatre completely revolutionised the way actors acted and productions were staged compared to the centuries (and millennia) of the past. Stanislavski's and his colleagues' work, paved the way for modern realistic acting as we know it today.

After many years, including periods of success such as with the European production tours and also of turmoil where Stanislavski experiences long periods of disillusionment without inspiration or motivation, he developed a series of techniques and processes that he believed were essential to effective representational acting. These have become famous across the world as **The System of Acting**.

For more information about Stanislavski's life and work see **Chapter 15: Form and Style**.

System of acting

An acting process developed by Konstantin Stanislavski whereby an actor is able to create and deliver a psychologically-driven physically-connected three-dimensional character in performance.

The System

Stanislavski's System enables the actor to create a three-dimensional and complex character with a multi-layered internal life who is believable, tangible and interesting to the audience. An actor can create a clear personality, history, psychology and set of future goals for their character, just like people in real life. Some of the acting processes that form part of Stanislavski's system include:

- given circumstances
- fundamental questions
- the magic 'if'
- affective memory
- method of physical actions
- objectives.



Given circumstances

The given circumstances are the sets of conditions within a specific context that a character of a play finds themselves in. This is directly linked to the dramatic elements of time, space and situation. There are circumstances given to the actor by the playwright that are associated with the time and space of the inner world of the play, including the time period, date, location, geography, society, political landscape and historical past. There will also be details provided by the playwright about the situation that the characters are experiencing. The script will be littered with clues that the actor must find so they can understand as much as possible from the playwright about their character, their relationship with others, the problems they're facing, the things they want and the world they live in.

In combing the text for clues to find the circumstances of a character, actors should analyse not only the stage directions and the lines their character says, but also what other characters say about them. This includes both what is said in dialogue with the actor's character, but more importantly what the other characters say about them when they're not on stage. Often an actor will learn key information about their character's situation through scenes they are absent from.

Inner world of the play

The imagined setting, including the time and space of a drama work, reflective of real cultural, socio-economic, political, historical and environmental landscapes.

Fundamental questions

As part of identifying the given circumstance, according to the system, actors must ask themselves six questions. Stanislavski referred to them as **fundamental** because without knowing these things the actor has little hope of developing a three-dimensional, believable character. The fundamental questions are directly linked to the character's background, personality, relationships with others, experiences, desires, beliefs, values and future prospects. The fundamental questions start with who, when, where, why, what and how. They each require a detailed, specific and honest response from the actor.

The six fundamental questions are:

1. Who am I?
2. Where am I?
3. When am I here?
4. Why am I here? *or* Which past circumstances have lead me to be here?
5. For what reason am I here? *or* What do I want in the future now that I am here?
6. How will I go about getting it?

Whilst the starting point to answer these questions is to identify clues from the script itself, once every fact, character trait and possibility has been sourced and squeezed out of the script itself, it is time for the actor to use both their research skills and their imagination.

By researching the actor is able to find out more about the given circumstances and also the playwright's context. The playwright wrote the script whilst living in a particular place at a particular time in history. It's logical to assume that the environment around them would therefore influence what went into their script and how it went in. Researching enables an actor to fill many of the gaps of the given circumstances and helps them to realise why a character behaves in certain ways in certain situations. For example, although a person of a certain gender, age, marital status and occupation may be expected to behave in particular ways in one specific society and time period, a person with the same profile will undoubtedly be expected to behave totally differently when brought up in different community, in another country and alternative period of time.

Hint

Don't be fooled into thinking that one or two lines will be enough to answer the fundamental questions. You should be able to write pages and pages (and pages) in response to each. In gathering data from your research, don't simply describe your discoveries in words, try drawing some diagrams, making collages and including tables and charts to flesh out and get to know your character and the situation they find themselves in extremely well.

After exhausting the text for clues and also finding out as much as is possible through research, the actor needs then to rely on themselves by using their own imagination. What they don't know, what they can't find in the script or through research, they need to make up. Of course, whatever is imagined needs to be justified with some solid reasoning.

Once the questions have been answered, and *before* they are finalised, actors should try out their responses on the rehearsal room floor. Acting is, after all, a three-dimensional occurrence in space with other people. It is not an intellectual exercise to be completed sitting at a desk. How the lines are spoken will be influenced by the work done on the fundamental questions. The act of speaking the lines aloud will also have an impact on the actor's understanding of the questions. Similarly, saying the lines to and interacting with the other characters will be both affected by and affect the fundamental questions. Actors should make sure they experientially test their answers before they accept them as final.

Activity 2.1: Answering the fundamental questions

- A. As an actor preparing a character from a script for performance, answer each of the six fundamental questions below:
1. Who am I?
 2. Where am I?
 3. When am I here?
 4. Why am I here and which past circumstances have lead me to this point?
 5. For what reason am I here and what do I want in the future?
 6. How will I go about getting what I want?
- B. You could respond in dot points or in full sentence answers as you prefer, but you must be detailed, specific and honest (honest from your character's point of view). In addition to written responses you should include:
- sketches and diagrams
 - charts and tables
 - at least one collage made from cuttings of pictures and words from newspapers, magazine or other published material.
- C. Make sure you follow the four process steps:
- Look for clues in the script.
 - Research the inner world of the play and the playwright's context.
 - Use your imagination to make the rest up.
 - Try things out on the rehearsal room floor (and try them out multiple times).

Magic 'if'

During rehearsal, when experimenting with the text within the playing space, actors might ask themselves:

If / was in this particular situation, at this time and this location space, with these given circumstances, then what would / do?

This is the **Magic 'if'**. In developing a character when the actor looks to their own personal experience and way of seeing the world, they may get some new ideas about their character's reasoning, emotions, reactions and actions. Using the magic 'if' allows an actor to draw directly on their own personality, ways of doing things, perspectives and so on to help build a realistic and authentic character. After all, if an actor can honestly say that they would do a particular thing if they found themselves magically in their character's circumstances, then it's likely this 'thing' is going to be believable.

HINT: The magic 'if' is particularly useful if you find yourself stuck in a scene. Perhaps you're finding it difficult to feel empathy for your character. Perhaps you can't find a 'want' objective that resonates as true. Maybe your character interpretation is too wooden, too two-dimensional or too clichéd. Try using the magic 'if' and simply do, think or feel what you yourself would do, think or feel if you miraculously found yourself in those circumstances.

Affective memory

This has been one of the most hotly contested parts of the System by professional actors for the last century and yet, it is also one of the most well-known by the theatre and film industries, and also the general public. **Affective memory**, or **emotional recall** as it's sometimes called, is where the actor delves back into the past of their own life and explores a personal situation, and the emotions attached to that situation, in order to transfer those emotions to their character at a certain point in the play.

The actor first identifies that a particular point in the play requires their character to feel a certain emotion or set of emotions. They then reflect on their own life and identify an experience where they went through a similar incident and, most importantly, felt the same or at least a very similar emotion. By undertaking a series of recall exercises the actor will not merely remember the past events and emotions attached to those events, but will actually re-experience and re-live them. Through this process the actor's real-life emotions that they felt (or re-felt) can then be transferred directly across to their character within the inner world of the play.

The aim is for the actor, when in character during rehearsal or performance, to feel emotions that are not just *like* real emotions, but are *actual* real emotions. For example, if a character has to say a painful and final farewell to their lover in a play who is leaving forever, then an actor could recall a time in their own life where they broke up with a girlfriend/boyfriend. If they've never had that experience, then they might instead recall a time when they painfully buried a pet after it had died, or devastatingly watched as a parent moved out of their house during a divorce. The similarity in these situations is loss and the emotions associated with loss such as grief, anger and despair.

It's possible to see how affective memory can be a pretty intense technique to use. It's use has been debated repeatedly over the years not because of whether it works, but because of whether it's an appropriate thing for a human being to do. Many actors, professional accomplished realist-focused actors, believe the technique to be morally wrong, egotistically indulgent or psychologically dangerous. Yet others find it an extremely powerful and reliable process step that they cannot do without.

Objectives

One of the fundamental questions asks:

For what reason am I here? or
What do I want in the future now that I am here?

This is to enable the character to identify their objectives during the play. In every scene each character will want something. In fact, as the dramatic action ensues, it's likely that the characters will want many things, one after the other. The System requires characters to want one thing at a time, just as people do in real life. All actions, movements and vocalisations are driven by the motivations that are underneath them, and actors too need to have these on stage.

Dramatic action

The presenting, exploring and resolving of a situation in theatrical performance.

Whilst it's possible to want many things at once, at any single point in time there is something that a character, wants *the most*. This is what the actor needs to focus on. Once this objective is achieved, or once something occurs either externally or internally that stops a character wanting that objective, they will immediately then want something else.

There is not a singular right or wrong choice for a character's objectives, making the possibilities endless.

Stanislavski insisted on actors making clear, explicit choices about their objective at any and every point in the play. He realised that what people say (the script lines) is in total opposition to what they really mean (the sub-text) which goes unsaid. The objective is, therefore, often linked to the subtext. The character should always focus on trying to achieve their objective, no matter what they do or say. Ideally each objective should be only a few words in length; 'I want xxx'. For example:

Subtext

Underlying meaning or theme in a section or entire literary work.

- I want to protect my baby from the hurricane.
- I want to make her kiss me passionately.
- I want to magically disappear and never be seen again.

These objectives are still quite long and can be difficult for an actor to keep at the top of their minds when they're saying lengthy lines or doing complex activities. They can be cut back to:

- I want to save my baby.
- I want her to kiss me
- I want to sink away through the floor.

During the scene they can even become instincts:

- Save my baby.
- Kiss me.
- Sink away through the floor.

These edited objectives are clear, actionable and easy to keep in the back of the mind (or keep in the bottom of the heart or centre the soul as the actor prefers).

Once the actor has identified their objectives, they can consider how they are going to about achieving them. This 'how' is directly linked to the fundamental question:

How will I go about getting it?

There is a range of possible things an actor can do, say, not do or not say to help them achieve what they want. In rehearsal actors should try out many ways to achieve their objective. They should have a bank of potential actions to put into practice. If, during a scene, they find they're not having success with their objective and they want to continue pursuing it, then perhaps they could try another tactic to reach their goal. Of course then it is the character that is adapting their strategy to achieve their goal, not the actor. Some characters might stubbornly or unknowingly continue with the first 'how' that pops into their head. Others will be more consciously or unconsciously be adaptable.

Activity 2.2: Objectives

As an actor focus on working out potential objectives for one of your scenes. Create a chart that has the objective on the left and a range of corresponding possible actions on the right. An example is provided on the following page that you can use as a template.

Template

Objective	Potential actions
I want to embrace Anne	Cross the room to Anne and physically trap her in the corner
	Welcome Anne warmly and make her feel at home
	Keep as close to Anne as possible until the opportunity arises
I want the diners to leave	Disrupt the chit-chat conversation by throwing an object
	Appear disinterested when the others speak to me
	Use bad table manners to provoke their offence

A character's *super-objective* is their overall want and desire that overshadows (or underpins) all their smaller objectives. Whilst it could be something that is achievable in the time span of the play, it is often more longer term than that and is more of a life-long objective. Even when an actor wants one particular thing at one point in the play (their objective), they will always have a bigger desire (their super-objective), which sits underneath everything.

The method of physical actions

Stanislavski teaches actors that in real life internal thoughts and feelings are directly tied to physical expression and actions. He believed that the human soul's elements and the body's particles are inseparable. For the Stanislavskian actor everything that goes on inside the mind, heart and internal self is communicated through the body, including the posture, facial expression, gestures, gait and other movement.

Stanislavski developed a psycho-physical characterisation process to draw on this mind-soul-body connection. One of the key techniques was **the method of physical actions**, also known as *muscular memory*. Using this technique, an actor works with different gestures and physical actions that are realistic. The actor explores gestures that are used:

- with specific emotions;
- at specific times; and
- in specific places.

It is vital that these gestures are life-like. They should be:

- gestures which the actor personally uses in their own life;
or
- gestures that are life-like and are used by other people in real life.



The actor tries out and experiments with the gestures in character using their script or in an improvisation. During a point of intense emotion or instinctive realisation, the character will gesture and move in particular ways. A muscular memory, linked directly to an emotional memory, is formed. By using the body to then physicalise selected real-life gestures on stage during a performance, real-life emotion is recreated and therefore real feelings are felt by the character. The specific physical action becomes a trigger for the emotion; a key to unlock the real feeling. By doing the gestures and movements again in exactly the same way the next time that the scene is run, the same real emotions will be triggered as before.

NOTE: Creating a muscular memory does not mean that one particular physical action is only ever attached to one particular emotion. What works well for one actor in one play will probably not work for them in another play, and will almost certainly never work for another actor in any play whatsoever. The relationship between an action and a feeling is a personal and psychological one.

Circles of attention

Another part of the system that Stanislavski developed later in his career was in response to his observation that relaxed and focused actors are more able to provide a believable performance and to utilise the other components of the system more effectively. He worked with actors on their circles of attention to create public solitude. This is when an actor is completely focused and living in the relevant moment and context of the inner world of the play (solitude), despite being onstage and in view of the audience (public).

Actors are encouraged to choose a point of attention, within the playing space, for each and every moment in a play. The actor then continually concentrates and remains focused on that point of attention for the period of time that they select. If they find their mind wandering, they need to bring their attention back to their chosen point. Stanislavski observed that it's easier to remain focused if the circle of attention is very small, perhaps on one other character or on one small activity. When the actor's circle of attention is very large, encompassing several characters or includes a complex group activity, the actor is unlikely to remain focused on it for any lengthy period of time. In this situation when an actor finds their focus has unwillingly shifted, they should decrease the circle's circumference, even momentarily, to include one actor at most or a tiny component of the large activity. Once they've regained control of their focus, they can once again widen their circle of attention.

The easiest way for an actor to increase or decrease their attention circle is to literally try to observe something using one of their senses. For example, they need to look, *really* look, at one small object within their chosen circle, and observe the fine, detailed characteristics of it. When they need to change their circle of attention, then they select something else to observe in the new circle. Because sensory data gathering is integral to the circles of attention, it is easier to focus on a small circle, than a big one.

Internet exploration

Find out from some director Dalip Sondhi and some actors about emotional memory and the Method of Physical Actions:

www.youtube.com/watch?hl=en-GB&gl=SG&v=vpEGXrDSXo8

Activity 2.3 – Method of physical actions

As an actor you are going to experiment with the method of physical actions. Your teacher will side-coach you during the activity. Stay focused on what you are doing and, without looking at your teacher, simply aurally notice their instructions and then carry them out.

Part One

- You are waiting for your friend to meet you in a park for a picnic.
- They are late.
- You unpack the picnic.
- They are always late.
- You wait.
- It threatens to rain.
- They do not arrive.
- You wait.
- It starts to rain lightly.
- You wait.
- It rains heavily.
- You pack up the picnic.
- You wait under a nearby tree.
- It is cold.
- They still don't arrive.
- Lightning and thunder start.
- You leave.

Part Two

- Consider what you experienced and did during the improvisation:
 - What did it feel like when you were waiting?
 - How did you physically react?
 - How did your body or your emotion change during the scene?
 - In what way did your feelings become stronger or weaker?
 - How did this affect your movement?
 - What particular gestures did you use?
 - In what way did you move?
- If you don't know the answers to these questions, try repeating Part One
- Select one gesture that you used during one particular section of the exercise and identify what feeling you were experiencing at that moment
- Try repeating that gesture now:
 - Breathe in and out for a few cycles slowly.
 - Clear your mind of anything else.



- Replicate the gesture exactly with precision and deliberation.
 - Breathe in and out slowly.
 - Once again, replicate the gesture exactly with precision and deliberation.
 - Breathe in and out slowly.
 - Replicate this gesture exactly with precision and deliberation several times, breathing in and out slowly each time.
 - One final time, replicate the gesture exactly with precision and deliberation.
- Reflect on whether the emotion was reignited and, if so, to what level.
 - Describe your experience in writing in a journal.

Part Three

- Carry out a solo improvisation in a different situation that's set in a different time and space.
- Use the same gesture, replicating it exactly with precision and deliberation at some point during the improvisation.
- Allow the emotion to be triggered (or not).
- Reflect on whether the emotion was reignited and if so, to what level.
- Describe your experience in writing in a journal.

Group theatre

in America in 1931 a group of talented young actors formed a theatre company called the **Group Theatre**. This ensemble was dedicated to exploring and creating theatre using the acting techniques and processes of Stanislavski's System of Acting until the group disbanded in 1941. Among the founding members were three famous actors who went on individually to adapt, develop and build on Stanislavski's System each in a unique way. Stella Adler developed the **Technique of Acting**, Lee Strasberg the **Acting Method** and Sanford Meisner the **Meisner Technique**.

Stella Adler

Born into a theatre family, Adler began performing on stage at the age of four. Across her careers she acted in more than 200 plays, became well-known with the general public for films such as *Love on Toast* and taught some of the most famous actors in the USA when they were young such as Marlon Brando, Robert De Niro and Kate Mulgrew.

She is the only one of the three Group Theatre founders to have studied personally with Stanislavski. In 1934 she went to Paris and worked with him there for five weeks. She discussed her concerns with parts of his system, including emotional memory, and he helped her to understand them in a different way. Adler also learned that Stanislavski had further developed his system beyond the core that she and her colleagues in New York had been using.

After returning to the States and finding herself unable to convince her colleagues to rethink some of the old technique, or persuade them of the merit of new parts to the system, she left the Group Theatre and eventually started her own acting school, the Stella Adler Studio of Acting in 1949.

For more information about Adler's life and work see **Chapter 15: Form and Style**.

Adler's technique of acting

Adler's technique enables actors to create three-dimensional characters who are committed to the world they find themselves in, imaginative in performance and believable to the watching audience. The actors playing them have the stamina, imagination and technical ability to be able to take on the large, multi-layered, often contradictory characters in incredibly difficult situations, exceedingly well. Three of the focus areas that form part of Adler's technique are:

- acting is doing
- developing the imagination
- developing a sense of the epic

Technique of acting

An acting process developed by Stella Adler based on Stanislavski's System of Acting whereby an imaginative actor is able to create and deliver a complex, active, believable three-dimensional character in performance.

Acting is doing

Actors, just like people in real life, are always doing something. Adler believed that an actor should put more of an emphasis on doing rather than feeling. If an actor does something, and they know why they do it, she advocates that the emotion will come. Using this technique actors of course need to justify their actions, but the justifications come second. First they should start with their action and only then justify why they're doing it, and not the other way around.

Even if a character is doing nothing, they are doing *something*. Even if they are unsuccessful at a task, they are trying to do it or they are giving up on it (and giving up is also an action). An action is a verb, a *doing word* as it's called in primary school. Verbs in their root or non-conjugated form start with 'to ...'. For example to eat dinner, to search for something, to wait for another character's return, to run across the room.

Adler asks actors to be specific with their actions. There is a lot of difference between the verbs to scamper, to chase and to sprint, and yet in doing all of them running will undoubtedly be involved. For example, in a dialogue in a play where one character is in love with another and there is a stage direction that he is trying to win her affections, the actor might try one of the following: to smooth talk, to toy with, to pamper or to flatter her. In any of these he is taking on and doing the stage directions, but he is making it his own, appropriate for his interpretation of the character, his relationship with the other person, his understanding of the given circumstances and so on by being specific with his action verb.

All actions have beginnings and they have ends. For real people in real life, as soon as one of their actions ends, they immediately start a new action; they never do 'nothing'. They might be zoning out ('to zone out'), relaxing ('to relax') or staring at the horizon ('to stare') but they are always doing something. They might stop doing one thing because

they realise something or change their mind, they could stop because of something that someone else does to them, or perhaps because of an event that occurs which causes something to happen. So too must characters in a play. For example in sequence a character might use the verbs to run, to stop, to sit down, to catch one's breath, to recuperate and so on.

Activity 2.4: Creating a verb bank

1. Create a list of fifty action verbs that you could use as an actor when next working on a scene. Write down one 'doing word' per line and write them in their non-conjugated form.
2. Next to each of your fifty words, write an alternate word that means something similar to the original, but has a unique definition of its own.

Activity 2.5: Experimenting with verbs

1. Select a monologue from a script you're working with in class where your character is talking to at least one other character. You're going to work with the first three sentences only.
2. Select one action verb to try out when you say the lines aloud to another real or imagined actor.
3. Stop rehearsing, reflect on the experience, justify why you chose that action for that line and make some written notes.
4. Redo the lines aloud this time whilst doing a different, new action.
5. Stop again, reflect, justify and make notes.
6. Repeat this two-step process so that you try out at least five different action possibilities with the same three lines.
7. Choose the action verb from the five that you think works best for the staging of your monologue. Justify, in writing, why you think it's the best choice.

Hint

When experimenting with action verbs, if you get stuck and can't think of an appropriate verb, start with the script. Comb through the script looking for clues in the stage directions, your lines and the lines others say to or about you, which might reveal some action verbs that you can try out.

Developing the imagination

Early in her career Adler was concerned with some parts of Stanislavski's system, in particular emotional memory. She did not agree with this part of his technique and found it dangerously unhealthy for actors to revisit events, including the associated emotions, of their past, and to then transfer those emotions to the feelings of the character they're embodying in the present. Instead she believed in the possibilities of the imagination.

Adler advocated that the imagination was a far more creative, safe and effective tool to generate emotions and realise a multi-layered character. If an actor is playing a character that is dealing with the death of a loved one in a play, rather than remember a time in their lives when someone died, Adler encourages the actor to stay within the world of the play and to imagine that the loved one died. Of course for this imagination practice to work, the actor needs to imagine every, single minute detail. This includes everything their senses could take in (such as specific colours, textures, smells, temperatures, tastes and sounds of the event) and everything their minds could experience (such as emotions, feelings, instincts, thoughts, concerns, fears, desires, memories, ideas and segues in reaction to the event). If the actor is able to totally imagine the whole world of the play, the situations, their place within it, the people in it and the dynamics that exist between them, then their feelings will be appropriate, true to life and believable.

When using the imagination actors need to observe the world around their characters, down to the very last, fine, specific detail. The actor should not be limited by the area that the audience can see, by also imagining what's in the next unseen room, and then the one on the other side of that. They should create a mental image for the outside of the building, the footpath, the street, the parking space and so on. What's on the other side of the street, the next street, the next suburb, the middle of the city, the riverside or beach, the ocean and beyond it? Everything the character would see, hear, touch, taste and smell if their world was real needs to be imagined by the actor. As does their view and understanding of the society (economy, politics and class system) that they live in, the daily events and larger newsworthy events that occur, and the history that's gone before them. The aim is by allowing the character to see specific images in their mind, they will believe them as real. If they believe their world is real then the audience will too. In fact Adler advocated that the audience will almost be able to see the images that the actor sees in their imagination.

Hint

If as an actor you get fixated on a real memory from your own life, instead of an imagined scene, Adler's technique would encourage you to change the memory in some way; relocate it, turn it upside down or inside out, shrink or enlarge it, change the season, the temperature and the colours and so on. If you don't change it you will become limited by what you remember, rather than freeing your mind, psychology, thoughts and emotions to create new possibilities. Acting requires new possibilities because every character in every situation is new and different to you.

Developing the epic

Adler continually reminded her students that the actor only has themselves; their voice, body and inner self. She also reminded them that so many parts in so many plays were *large*. By large she meant that they were either extraordinary people in ordinary situations, or ordinary people in extraordinary situations.

Either way, actors almost certainly need to stretch into the role, often to stretch so much that they can't make the transition. Committing to *developing the epic* in oneself over a long period of time is key to being ready to adapt, stretch if need be and take on those large roles when opportunities arise. If an actor doesn't develop the epic in themselves they either won't be offered the part or, if they are, they will fail at creating and performing it well.

Epic character

A grand, extraordinary or heroic character faced with an arduous, challenging or long metaphorical or actual journey.

The first step to developing the epic is for actors to completely know themselves. To know themselves, understand themselves and accurately identify all of their many assets and faults. If an actor is going to be able to capitalise on their own strengths, whilst also working effectively with their personal weaknesses, then they must know, accept and embrace all of them.

They then need to be systematic in addressing those faults that can be addressed. If they have a particular fear that's relevant, they need to overcome it. If they can't move well, they must work very hard on training in movement. If they're unable to make a safe, audible, expressive vocal sound or their voice is without tonal colour or pitch range, then they need to regularly take voice lessons and practise daily to improve their voice technique.

Finally, once knowing themselves and developing their acting instrument, they need to take risks, not be scared of being large and to find the sense of the epic in the characters they take on. A character can absolutely be life-like and yet not be like anyone that the actor, or the audience knows. They can be totally believable and yet do things that seem impossible to the regular person. An actor can be epic within their reality, if they takes risks, imagine every detail and always *do* an action at every point in time.

Internet exploration

To hear Adler talk about size and the epic, go to:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mTfFXbJEHA

Sanford Meisner

Meisner, born in 1905, graduated as a pianist from Damrask Institute of Music, which became the Juilliard, in 1923. He then managed to find his way into working on a Sidney Howard play where he discovered his passion for acting. He launched into a pursuit of this new career and eventually formed, with his contemporaries Stella Adler and Lee Strasberg, the Group Theater early in the 1930s. Meisner acted in twelve of the Group's productions.

Becoming increasingly disillusioned with pure Stanislavskian practice, he began looking for opportunities to refine and extend the system in his own way. Meisner, like Adler and Strasberg, used the system as a basis for his own process. He felt, that when solely applied alone or used in its pure state, Stanislavski's System was too manipulative and restrictive on the actor. He began experimenting with adaptations that allowed an actor to live in the imaginary moment of the play with authenticity.

Meisner began focusing on and experimenting with new exercises to help locate the actor in the here and now. He pushed actors to react instinctively to other actors, rather than to try to act. His explorations of this new technique lead him to create the Meisner Technique of Acting. He went on to work with many theatre companies, including in 1935 The Neighborhood Playhouse, where he became head of the acting program from 1964

to 1990. In 1985 Meisner, together with James Carville, co-founded several now renowned acting schools including The Sanford Meisner Center in Los Angeles. Meisner passed away in 1997.

Internet exploration

Listen to student actors talk about their experience at The Neighborhood Playhouse at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQf1yk115ME

The Meisner Technique

Meisner developed a realistic acting technique that uses a sequence of repetition exercises as a foundation, so that the actor can live truthfully within imaginary circumstances. He believed that human beings are remarkable, magnificent creatures, and that each person is absolutely unique. He also believed that if actors could trust completely in this sense of individuality, that they would do remarkable things in performance.

At its core Meisner advocates that the actor in performance is always doing something. If that something is going to be believable, meaningful and interesting then the actor must be completely and totally in something the Technique calls the 'right here, right now'. Actors should never pretend to do something, instead they should actually do it. Therefore they should never 'act' an interaction or a behaviour, they should simply speak or do something. If the actor is able to be successful with doing and being present, they can live truthfully in imaginary circumstances and be believable in performance.

Meisner Technique

An acting process developed by Sanford Meisner inspired by Stanislavski's System of Acting whereby a totally present and reactive actor is able to create and deliver a believable three-dimensional character in performance.

Mechanical repetition

At the foundation of the Meisner technique is locating the actor in the present. Actors need to remember the Meisner foundation of 'right here, right now'. In order to be 100% focused and 100% present, actors repeat. That is actors simply repeat what is presented to them by another actor. An actor doesn't try to do anything, nor add anything or take anything away, they simply repeat. According to Meisner the repetition should be mechanical and automatic, without judging it or thinking about it.

Repetition

The act of doing or saying something in exactly the same way as it has been done or said before.

There are many mechanical repetition exercises available to the actor in Meisner training. The aim is not to complete the exercises all at once. Ideally actors explore and learn from one exercise per session. In each session actors need to spend a lot of time doing a single exercise: They should do it, watch others do it, then do it again themselves and finally reflect on it.

Hint


Don't try to 'get it right'! Just simply **do** the exercise, nothing more or less. With time, after you have done this and other repetition activities several times, things will probably begin to stand out and make more sense to you. Trust that the process of doing will reveal understanding to you later on.

Activity 2.6: Mechanical repetition 1

1. **Work in groups of three**, with Person A and Person B working as acting partners, and Person C being the observer.
2. A and B sit opposite facing each other. C is on the side.
3. A turns their head completely away from B. C says 'start'. A turns back to look at B and says the first thing they notice about B's physical appearance. For example: 'blonde hair' if they have blonde hair, or "frameless glasses" if they are wearing that glasses type and so on. B remains focused on A, but without doing or saying anything else
4. This is repeated another four times with C varying how long before they say 'start'. A will identify and say a different thing about B each time. If C thinks A is pre-empting what they are going to say, they call 'time out' and explain why they have stopped the exercise.
5. This sequence must be done five times without being stopped (ie. without C calling for a time-out)
6. Rotate roles: A becomes B, B become C and C becomes A.
7. Complete the exercise again using the steps above.
8. Finally rotate a third time so everyone has a go in each role.
9. Discuss the activity as a group and identify key takeaways for the actor during rehearsal and performance processes.
10. Make notes on the discussion, including the takeaways, in a journal.

Activity 2.7: Mechanical repetition 2

1. **Work in groups of three**, with Person A and Person B working as acting partners, and Person C being the observer.
2. **Repeat Activity 2.6**, this time with B repeating back exactly what they hear A say each time. They should repeat the actual words and also the way the words are spoken. For example, if A says 'Blooondde hair', then B would also emphasise the 'ooonn' of blonde identically. A then repeats what B says to them, replicating the words and the intonation that they hear. If they are completely focused on B, the way they speak the words might be different to the original way they said them. They shouldn't think about this during the activity, they should simply do it. For example if A says 'frameless glasses', B then says 'frameless glasses' and A hears 'frame lezglassess', then A has to say back 'frame lezglassess' which becomes the new repetition. A and B continue to repeat, until C says 'stop'.

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3. This sequence, (where A turns away, C says 'start', A turns back and says the first thing they notice about B's appearance, B repeats what they hear, A repeats what they hear, B repeats what they hear and so on) should occur three times. Person C should vary each sequence duration, so that A and B don't become complacent.
 4. Rotate roles; A becomes B, B becomes C and C becomes A.
 5. Complete the exercise again using the steps above.
 6. Finally rotate a third time so everyone has a go in each role.
 7. Once again discuss the activity as a group and identify key takeaways for the actor during rehearsal and performance processes.
 8. Make notes on the discussion, including the takeaways, in a journal.

Working-off

To help promote reacting, rather than acting, Meisner used a series of exercises that he called working-off. These were to promote the actor's trust in their instinct and to help them 'take the first thing' from the moment. Meisner used the phrase frequently to encourage actors to actively listen to the other character and to experience action without anticipation.

Meisner noted that often young actors will become complacent, without meaning too, during performance. They will anticipate what the other character is saying or doing, as well as what they will say and do after them. Actors need to completely engage in the action of the piece here and now, not to pre-plan their reactions or emotional responses to others, nor to expect certain events or behaviours to occur. To help do this an actor should move the attention from him or herself, and put it on the other actor.

Responses must be impulsive, coming from the actor's own truth without censorship. This requires the actor to be willing to open up and have complete vulnerability in front of the other actor. Only then will an actor be able to complete working-off others successfully.

Many working-off activities, such as the next one, ask actors to pinpoint their behaviours and reactions, whilst still 'taking the first thing from the moment'.

Hint

It could be during this exercise that odd things happen. For example A might laugh in the middle of the phrase suddenly. If this happens then a laugh should become part of the repetition each time. Or perhaps B might sniff when they are speaking, so if A hears the sniff they need to repeat the phrase with the sniff in the accurate place.

Another hint

The statements or questions that A makes should be provocative, but not personally attacking. Gossip obviously must not only be avoided, but also not even alluded to. Remember the drama space is a safe environment to play and develop positively.

Activity 2.8: Working-off

1. Work in groups of three, with Person A and Person B working as acting partners, and Person C being the observer.
2. A and B sit opposite facing each other. C is on the side.
3. A will say something provocative to B. For example 'Global warming is just a figment of your imagination', or 'I can tell your handbag is a fake', or 'Your T-shirt is so bright I need sunglasses', etc and so on.
4. B will mechanically repeat the sentence they hear back to A, 'Your T-shirt is so bright I need sunglasses', **without** trying to change anything.
5. A will then say a new related sentence that is a reaction to **the way** B used their vocal qualities, expression, breathing and so on to say the line. If A hears B's verbalisation as slightly rushing and emphasising one particular word, such as 'Yatshirt'sobrightoneed**SUN**glasses' A's interpretation might cause them to say 'You're worried about how you look now' or another instinct might make them say 'You're focusing on my glasses' or 'You're enthusiastic about your clothing'.
6. B will then repeat back A's statement in exactly the same way that A says it. In turn, A will make another linked reaction-based statement. A's reactionary sentence to this (or at any time in the sequence) might not even make sense, which is perfectly fine. For example they might say 'Yourrrrrrrre ... ENTHUSIASTIC!'. As usual, Person B would then repeat back exactly what they heard 'Yourrrrrrrre ... ENTHUSIASTIC!'. The most important thing is that A reacts to what they observe in the way B repeats each line back to them, plus what they observe about B's feelings as they are repeating the line back. Then A must immediately vocalise and verbalise their own reaction without any type of censorship to B.
7. As in the previous activity all inflections, pace, reactions, extra fill bits (coughs, sneezes, umms) must become part of the repetition if they occur.
8. B should repeat what A says ten times.
9. Rotate roles; A becomes B, B become C and C becomes A.
10. Complete the exercise again using the steps above.
11. Finally rotate a third time so everyone has a go in each role.
12. Discuss the activity as a group and identify key takeaways for the actor during rehearsal and performance processes.
13. Make notes on the discussion, including the takeaways, in a journal.

Internet exploration

Hear from Robert de Niro about reacting, rather than trying when acting at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4K2znuYjwI

Activity 2.9: Coming to the door

1. This is a development of the previous activity. It needs to occur in a room with an actual door. Two actors will work together; Person A and Person B. Your teacher will be Person C and the rest of the class will observe.
2. B stays in the room and A goes outside. A will knock on the door and B will get up from wherever they are in the room to let A in. A can never let themselves into the room, B must always go and open the door.
3. A will say something (anything) to B and then the same Working-off process as in Activity 2.8 will occur. A might say something like 'I thought you were coming home next week', or 'It's totally freezing out here', or 'Thank goodness you're in, I'm starving!', or 'Sorry I'm late'.
4. B will then repeat back to A their first sentence. So if A says 'Sorry I'm late', B will say back 'Sorry I'm late'.
5. Then A will react to B's vocalising, body language, facial expressions and so on of their 'Sorry I'm late' with a new reactionary statement, phrase, question, crazy vocalisation. This new phrase would be then be repeated by B.
6. A would once again respond with a reactionary verbalisation. This A-B sequence should occur ten times.
7. This activity is repeated as many times as the session will allow, each time with new actors. Alternatively, the class can break into groups of three (A, B and C) and use different rooms with different doors. If working in 3s, the exercise should be run three times, changing the roles each time.
8. Discuss the activity as a small group or a class. Identify key takeaways for the actor during rehearsal and performance processes.
9. Make notes on the discussion, including the takeaways, in a journal.

This final activity reminds actors that in performance their reality is an imaginary one. Person A didn't really think they were late, nor were they actually feeling sorry towards Person B for being late, because really they weren't late. The situation was *imaginary*. It is in these *imaginary circumstances* that an actor simply behaves truthfully.

Hint

Don't move unless you want to when you are in the activity; don't walk or sit down unless it happens organically. Only if it is in reaction to the other person should an actor do anything other than repeat exactly what they've heard and seen in the split second before. You may feel awkward in not moving when you think you should, but rather than move, just stand and be awkward. If, of course, you have a true impulse sparked by the other person to move, then move. But not before then.

Internet exploration

Watch Meisner himself teaching at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBszDobYD8w

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

Dean Lundquist – Director and playwright

Dean's theatrical career has been varied and eclectic. Originally he was an actor at the University of California, Berkeley and then The American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco where he studied with Director Peter Sellars and Dr. Christopher Herold. With classmates, Dean began The East Bay Actor's Collective who produced open air versions of Shakespeare in economically deprived neighbourhoods.

Dean also completed a graduate degree at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and worked closely with the music department, directing opera and writing plays such as *The Haircut*. While in Las Vegas, he interned at The Seattle Opera under the directorship of impresario Speight Jenkins. After completing his graduate degree, Dean moved to Los Angeles where he was assistant to Golden Globe winning director/producer Mel Swope. He also directed Peter Shickley's *Oedipus Tex* and his own adaptation of Mozart's *The Impresario*.



In search of new artistic inspiration, Dean headed east to Japan where he worked as a voice-over actor, scriptwriter and director. In Tokyo, he formed 'Tokyo Silverfish', an experimental theatre company producing original works reflecting Japanese and cross-cultural exchange. Since moving to Singapore, he has been busy writing, directing, teaching and occasionally acting. He was awarded Best Director for *10,000 Cigarettes* in the inaugural Short + Sweet Singapore festival. He has taught at Modern Montessori International, Raffles Institution, The Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and the LASALLE College of the Arts.

Musings on the Meisner technique

The cornerstone of Sanford Meisner's technique is that 'acting is living truthfully under imaginary circumstances'. This really sums it all up for me as an actor, writer, director and teacher of acting. It doesn't matter what the style of the theatrical piece is, it all comes back to this. For example, if you are performing in an opera or musical, the circumstances are not the same as they are in every day life – in that world, people express themselves in song. However, if you drop your handkerchief on the floor in a musical, you pick it up just as you would in real life – otherwise you aren't living truthfully.

Many years ago I played Hamlet and a fellow actor, playing Horatio, accidentally called me 'Horatio' on stage by mistake. In real life if someone calls you by something other than your name, you correct them. I couldn't ignore it, so I raised my eyebrow, said something witty in reply and went on. To ignore it would've been to not live truthfully. I'm sure I would've had Shakespeare's blessing. Similarly, I once was in a Moliere play all in rhyming couplets. In one scene, I had to bound up on the stage and negotiate a few stairs. However, the wood was weak and I stepped through the second step. I panicked for a second. Then I improvised a rhyming couplet, the audience roared, and the play went on. That's living truthfully under imaginary circumstances. Don't ignore what's in front of you - use it.

One problem some young theatre actors have today is unifying the vocal demands of the theatre with the desire to want to be 'real'. Again, live truthfully under the imaginary circumstances. It's easy to mumble into a boom mike on a film set. It's harder to mumble so that a 500-seat theatre can hear you. But you can do it. It takes practice to understand and master the demands of performing live, but once you do it, it is easy to justify why I need to project my voice to the actor who is 5 feet away from me so that I can be heard in the back row. Maybe I live next door to a construction site that only the people in the play can hear. Or maybe I went to a nightclub last night with loud music and my ears are still ringing. Or perhaps my head is congested and my ears are plugged up. That would do it!



Meisner thought that actors have two basic blockades to performing fully: 1) they are self-conscious and 2) they don't listen. Sandy's repetition exercises alleviate both of these problems. By observing your acting partner and giving them all your attention, you become more available to react to them and thereby cannot focus on yourself. Because you have to repeat what they said in a new frame time, each utterance forces you to listen. Repetition is like a ping-pong match. You can't play ping-pong by yourself. (Well, I suppose you could, but you'd always know who the winner would be and how fun is that?!) Similarly, it's difficult to act by yourself.

Sandy Meisner and Lee Strasberg were both attempting to bring the work of Stanislavski to America. The Russian giant planted the seed, the beanstalk just grew in different directions. The biggest difference between the two is in their approach to emotional preparation. Volumes have been written about 'The Method' pioneered by Strasberg. For me, I find that it is a very imprecise and dangerous technique. Simply put, 'Method' acting says that the actor will cry on this line, walk on this line, yell on this line, etc. This doesn't seem natural to me. I've often heard that when two 'Method' actors are on stage together, it's like they aren't in the same play. By contrast, Meisner asks you to do your emotional preparation based on your imagination before you walk on stage so that you are in a state of being similar to that of the character you are playing. If I am to enter a scene and where the character I play just won the lottery, I imagine what I would do if I were to win the lottery. I have never had that experience. So I daydream a bit and then walk on stage.

Character (That dirty catchall of a word!)

Sandy Meisner said that you are a more interesting person with a unique experience who is deeper and richer than any number of lines on a page in a play. What you, as an actor, bring to the theatre or the film set, or the TV studio is your reaction of what you would do under the imaginary circumstances. It might be different than what I would normally do, but what audiences pay big money to see is behaviour.

I think the best actors are ones that allow themselves to go about as if they are in that situation. Of course they know that they are in a play, but that is the world they set up for themselves. There is a reason it's called a play. Shakespeare used to refer to his actors as "players." The play is really a game and the rules are different for every play. The actor just needs to listen to the director, understand the script and follow the rules for that particular play and then have fun. I find that talking to actors about abstractions of what the character is all about is usually pretty fruitless. They are based on adjectives. Is he moody? Is she flirty? I always want to see what a person does, not what he is. Actions speak louder than words.

Sandy used to say 'an ounce of behaviour is worth a pound of words'. If Hamlet were to drop a stone on his foot, he'd say "ouch!" just the same as Stanley Kowalski would! That's living truthfully. Similarly, if Edmond from King Lear thinks he's going to be left out of his Dad's will, he tries to kill his brother. Brick from Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, confronted with more or less the same situation, decides that getting drunk is a better option. You might say about Edmond that he is a total !%\$#!—and he is—but you evolved that opinion based on what he does. Similarly, you might think that Brick is hiding a deeper issue with alcohol and that he is non-confrontational. But again, we see this from his behaviour and that is the essence of character.

ACTING IN PRESENTATIONAL DRAMA

The processes available to an actor to use when preparing a role or character in a presentational drama work are too numerous to list. The remainder of this chapter will focus on three processes that have been seminal in their impact on the development of the theatre industry globally, particularly in Europe, the UK, the USA and Australia: Bertolt Brecht's **Brechtian Actor Training**, Jerzy Grotowski's **Psycho-physical Training** and Rudolf von Laban's **Human Movement Traits**.

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

Crispian Chan – Actor

BA (Theatre) Curtin University

Adv. Cert (Stage Combat) Society of Australian
Fight Directors

BA Hons (Acting) LASALLE College of the Arts



Crispian established himself at a young age, as one of West Australia's dynamic and upcoming actors. As a teen he was nominated for several awards, including 2004 WA Actor's Equity Best Support Actor for Micky.Com and their 2005 Best Actor for *Man with Five Children* and won Best Newcomer for *Man with Five Children*. He has worked for theatre companies such as BSX, Black Swan Theatre Company, The Blue Room, Perth Surgeons, Barking Gecko and the Perth International Arts Festival.

Since graduating from drama school in 2008 he has worked as an actor and theatre practitioner in Australia and Asia, including *The Importance of Being Ernest* (Wild Rice), *The King Lear Project* (Kunstenfestivaldesarts & Singapore Arts Festival) and *Equus* (Toy Factory). He is also known for his film work including *Final Defect* (2013) and TV work such as *The Philanthropist* (2009).

A few thoughts from Crispian on characterisation in presentational drama

"For myself, the line between characterization for non-realistic and realistic theatre is very blurry. One could even say that the nature and conventions of theatre is unrealistic! Here we are, creating a world on a stage in a dark hall with an artificial set, lights and there is a whole bunch of people watching us perform – how in any way is that natural when compared to real life!?"

There are so many theories and techniques out there to help us characterize.

Some tell you to study animals and base your characters on a live creature. Others ask you to imagine the whole of nature and base your character on an element – wind, water, fire or earth. Others tell you to imagine a new body for your character in your mind and then let it affect your own.

I bet some of you are already going – 'that's a bit weird...' or 'would that really work?'

They're valid questions . . .

Truthfully some of it wouldn't work for you at all, but some would. I can't tell you what is going to work for you. I don't know you! I don't have one ultimate solution for you that will answer all those questions about characterisation.

In most of cases however, we have a script. And that's a good starting point. For me, that is where the majority of the work is done. The playwright has spent hundreds, even thousands of hours writing that script. They're the ones who know the characters best and therefore the script should contain all the hints you need about creating the character.

What does your character say to the other characters? What are your character's opinions about various things? What do the other characters say about your character?

Make a list of all of these types of things and compare/observe. That's a good starting point.

Never play your character – always play 'through' your character. By this I mean that you should never be caught up in trying to convey/sign board that you're the 'bad guy' or the 'love interest' with superfluous physical gestures and voices.



Crispian in *Hearts and Minds* (2004)

Let the audience find out for themselves, they're listening to every word and watching every action that you make - they can work out for themselves who your character is. You just need to be specific and detailed about the actions you make on stage.

How can a modern audience be still moved by the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, which was written in an archaic language style from a hundred years ago? How is it that we are moved by a bunch of puppets in the musical of *The Lion King*? How can we be moved by a movement-based production?

It is the truth of a story. Above all else find the truth of the scene or story – tell it honestly and hopefully the full character of your role will come out.

And remember in life, our very own character is shaped by the actions we perform through ourselves to others.

Why should it be any different on stage?"

Bertolt Brecht

German playwright and director Bertolt Brecht, born in 1898, is considered one of the seminal theatre practitioners of the 20th century. Not only did he write and direct numerous plays, he also developed the Epic Theatre style. The acting conventions in this style are totally different to those that many other practitioners were working with around the same time, such as Stanislavski's System, Adler's Technique and the Meisner Technique in the USA and other parts of Europe.

Brecht was a strong Marxist, and although an individual's political beliefs and values may not be explicitly relevant to their artistic work, because Brecht deliberately created drama to reflect and promote his beliefs, it's easy to see the influences of Marxism in many of his productions. This is particularly evident in the productions he staged with the Berliner Ensemble, a company he and his wife Helene Weigel founded in 1949 in East Berlin. Brecht strongly disagreed with the arts being elitist as it was at the time. He worked hard to bring theatre back to the ordinary people, the working class. His dramatic work, including the acting style he worked with performers to develop, clearly reflect this.

Marxism

A political, social and economic theory developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels based on a collectivist classless social system.

Brechtian actor Training

The Brechtian actor is highly physical, extremely agile in mind, has great control over their durable voice and body, is intelligently involved in the production (and not merely a puppet in the director's hands), whilst able to focus more on the big picture and purpose of a production, rather than get caught up emotionally or psychologically with the inner life of their character. Brechtian actors work hard in rehearsal and diligently train between productions using a variety of techniques and processes to hone their craft.

Brechtian actor training

An acting approach developed by Bertolt Brecht to develop an informed, thinking and contributing actor who is able to connect with the audience, meet the physical and vocal demands of the script and the intellectual demands of the production, whilst delivering a focused, emotionally appropriate, purposeful role or character in performance.

The intelligent actor

Actors, according to Brecht, need to be capable of judging the value of their own contribution not merely to the roles they play, but to the production as a whole and society in general. They need to use their performance work as a vehicle to espouse their own political, economic, social, environmental and humanitarian views. Therefore, actors need to observe the outside world. This means making conscious, committed, ongoing observations.

Before anything else, the Brechtian actor needs to people-watch. This doesn't simply mean sitting in a café, the same café, a few times and watch people drinking flavoured lattes whilst surfing the internet on some device for free. It means actively observing people the actor has never seen before, in locations they haven't been to, doing things they've never stopped to notice before. Actors need to notice the mundane, everyday activities that people do without thinking. They also need to take in as much information about the lives of people from different classes, to watch how people live out their political views, to look for economics playing out in everyday life, to observe the social injustices all around them. According to Brecht actors should recognise and carefully watch these injustices that are small (but not easily noticeable), as well as those that are large (but are usually ignored). Actors need to question what they see and then put these questions into performance to provoke audiences to question too.

Activity 2.10: Daily life observations

You are going to complete a series of observations of everyday life. In your observation you should pay attention to as many tiny, almost unnoticeable components of the activity. Be active in looking for the details you would usually not notice.

After you've completed each observation, record what you've seen and heard in a journal. Be as detailed as you can.

1. Watch an older woman hang out the washing on the line.
2. Watch an older man hang out the washing on the line.
3. Watch a young woman hang out the washing on the line.
4. Watch a young man hang out the washing on the line.



5. Watch a teenage girl hang out the washing on the line.
6. Watch a teenage boy hang out the washing on the line.
7. Watch a child hang out the washing on the line.

Write a report describing the differences between each of them:

- What stands out for you?
- Why do each of these things stand out for you?
- What do your responses tell you about you (your beliefs, values, intellect, emotions, skillset and so on)?

Now, using the washing line in your (or a friend's) back yard or balcony, physically imitate each of the seven people hanging out the washing using a real clothesline, washing and pegs. Don't act, just do.

Reflect on how accurate you were with each imitation.

Add to your report by describing what was successful and what was not, what was easy and what was not. Make sure you add your reasoning for each description.

Interrogating the script

The Brechtian actor is not only extremely curious about life, but also about the script that they're bringing to production. Although most acting processes require an actor to search a script for clues, the Brechtian actor absolutely scrutinises each word of each line of the script for obvious and not obvious clues. Their focus is not to find meaning that pertains to the psychological layers of their character or their relationships, but instead to search for the multiple ways to factually interpret a line; they are investigating text to understand what's the purpose behind the line, how it contributes to the production and how that line operates from the perspective of different people (such as the playwright, the director, the audience member, other actors and themselves).

Fifteen good questions a Brechtian actor can ask for each and every line they say or hear during performance are:

1. What does this line require of me as an actor?
2. What does this line require of me as a communicator?
3. What does this line require of me as a member of society?
4. What does this line require from the production?
5. Who is this line useful to onstage?
6. What does this line prompt?
7. What has an impact on this line?
8. Who is this line useful for in the audience?
9. In what way is it useful for them?
10. What is the playwright's purpose of this line?
11. Why is that useful?

12. In what way might it not be useful?
13. How does it relate to the dramatic action?
14. How might it not be helpful to the dramatic action?
15. How does it relate to the purpose of the play?

Actor-spectator relationship

For Brecht the audience member is not someone to draw into the production so that they're lost amongst the dynamic storyline or feeling emotions because of the extraordinary depth and plight of the characters. Nor was his aim to simply entertain them. For Brecht the audience member is a spectator, someone to inform, to stimulate into thought and to prompt into action. The actor, therefore, has a relationship with the audience-spectator that is quite unique.

The actor, or the role they play, can and should often talk directly with the audience. They need to treat the audience as the intelligent, interesting, dynamic human beings that they are. They need to capitalise on the audience's capability of learning new things and understanding perspectives that are alternate to their own.

To build this direct relationship and interactive goal the Brechtian actor uses certain conventions:

- Gestus
- Alienation
- Direct address

Gestus

Gestus is combining gesture, facial expression, overall body language, proxemics and blocking to deliberately create meaning and then communicate that meaning to the audience. It is through the actor's movement, not their internal emotion, that they prompt a thoughtful response in the audience.

The actor's movement is, therefore frequent, highly stylised and very controlled. A simple gestus might accompany the most important word within a spoken line. A complex gestus including a group movement sequence might pre-empt a scene. Although stylised, gestus are not mechanical or wooden, unless of course the actor intends them to be so in order to convey specific meaning. They can also be used instead of speech or even for long sections of dramatic action.

For example, if a well-dressed, upper-class woman walks from one side of the stage to the other without turning her head or looking down at the ground, this movement has limited or ambiguous meaning. If the same woman, however, walks in the same way across the stage and yet her steps are made over the top of deformed beggars who lie on the ground and wave collection cups at her, this gestus is more clear and extremely meaningful.

Gestus

A Brechtian acting technique whereby the actors use expressive physical gestures, together with deliberate gists (attitudes), in order to convey specific meaning without allowing the audience to become too emotionally involved with the play.

Most importantly movement dexterity, flexibility, discipline and adaptability are required by the actor in order to physicalise the gestus meaningfully so that it clearly conveys the intended message.

Activity 2.11: Gestus to communicate meaning

1. Working in a small group of 4-6 people choose a scene, episode or excerpt from an appropriate presentational play that you're studying in class.
2. As a group identifying the key issues (such as societal problems, minority-group prejudices, class-based disenpowerment or authority-based injustice).
3. Choose one theme you would like to highlight above the others and identify at least three different points within the scene where you could use gestus to highlight the theme with stylised stage business, heightened physicalisation additions, or blocking choices that use the space non-realistically. You could add in other roles, new interactions between them, additional group or chorus behaviour, new events and activities, alternative ways to block the scene than those offered in the script's stage directions.
4. Experiment on your feet with several different variations that will allow your group to emphasise not only the theme, but especially the impact of your dramatic treatment on the audience.
5. Choose one experiment variation which you think brings out the theme the most and will be most impactful on the audience. Rehearse the scene with this addition.
6. Present your work to your whole class as a performance.
7. Write a mini-report discussing:
 - your theme and the importance of highlighting it to the audience
 - three potential ways you identified to be able to heighten the theme through using gestus
 - your chosen gestus; what you did, how you did it, why it was appropriate to do.

Alienation

Because the actor isn't wanting the audience to become caught up in the production and the emotions the performance might evoke, the actor will use verfremdungseffekt. This term translates from German as **alienation effect** and it refers to a series of conventions used by actors to make things seem strange and different to the audience. The actor employs these conventions to keep audience members distanced from the production, so that they can think about the dramatic action as it occurs, and the meaning behind it.

Alienation effect

Verfremdungseffekt or V-Effekt in German. A technique first employed in the west by Bertolt Brecht to distance the audience from the action allowing them to think about, rather than emotive over, the events, as well as their causes and impacts.

This doesn't mean that the audience will not feel a thing during a production, instead they won't be overwhelmed by their feelings. First and foremost they will be able to identify elements, such as characteristics, rights, wrongs, values and beliefs in the production, with any emotions they may feel being secondary.

The actor will use conventions such as reported speech to help alienate the audience. Reported speech is made by a character when they state their own involvement in an action or line either before, during or after it occurs. Typical ways of doing this include:

- A character will describe an action they're about to do in the third person, for example 'He stands' or 'John stands.'
- A character describes oneself as the subject, in the third person, during their speech, for example 'He said, "I can't do it"' or 'John said, "I can't do it"'
- The character describes one's real emotions that contradict their speech (or movement), for example 'He was very unhappy that she helped him stand up.' [*To the other character*] 'I really appreciate you helping me stand up.'

Activity 2.12: Reported speech

1. Working with a partner or in a trio select an excerpt from a play you're working on in class where reported speech is not being used by the playwright. Ideally the excerpt should be either an emotional section or one where the dramatic action has big consequences.
2. Add in some reported speech. How much you add in and when you add it is up to your group. Remember the aim of reported speech is to help with the V-Effekt and enable the audience to think about the drama in front of them, without becoming too overwhelmed emotionally by it.
3. Prepare the excerpt for performance with your reported speech additions.
4. Perform the excerpt for your class.
5. Write a mini-report that discusses:
 - why, from an emotional, mood, atmosphere, dramatic action and/or dramatic meaning perspective, you selected the excerpt to work with
 - in what way you used reported speech.
 - how the additions created V-Effekt on your audience
 - anything else that's appropriate.

Element of surprise

Brechtian actors need to keep a sense of spontaneity and unknown possibilities about their performance. Brecht insisted that there were multiple ways to do the same thing and that actors and theatre practitioners should disagree on and debate about how to do

something. They should remain flexible with their realisation of an idea, interpretation of a section of text or reaction to another actor or event.

Where Stanislavski, Adler and Meisner might advocate psychological reasons for there being multiple interpretations, Brecht would suggest it is simply a reflection of history: That the same things have been done at certain times across history in many different ways. The fact that philosophers, mathematicians, scientists and artists have proved one thing at one point in time, only to recant it later in their lives or for it to be disproved after their deaths, doesn't mean that it wasn't seminal at the time and greatly influences human beings and the societies they lived in.

One of the ways to ensure the element of surprise is still alive late in the rehearsal or performance processes, is for an actor to notate initial thoughts and first impressions immediately upon their first reading the script. Later when rehearsing and preparing for production, if actors lose their spontaneity and become too heavy with the script, they can revisit their first thoughts. By having annotations that capture first ideas, instincts and responses, actors can draw on them when they need to re-inject some vitality and simplicity into their performance.

Internet exploration

Hear from actor Meryl Streep about her experience playing the title role from Brecht's *Mother Courage*:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Mz5I1LmLLw

Jerzy Grotowski

Polish director and theatre practitioner Jerzy Grotowski, born in 1933 and died in 1999, is best known for his ground-breaking work in the creation of **Poor Theatre**. This highly stylised, non-realistic approach relies heavily on a range of presentational movement and ritual conventions.

As a young director Grotowski worked with a wide range of theatre companies in Poland and experimented with different and somewhat irregular treatments of text. It wasn't until his work with Theatre of 13 Rows that Grotowski was put on the international map as a director. His most famous production at this time was Wyspianski's *Akropolis*, through which the foundations of Poor Theatre were born. In this play he directed the acting ensemble to build a crematorium-like structure in-role as concentration camp prisoners, whilst they enacted biblical stories at the same time for the audience's 'enjoyment'.



Psycho-physical training

The core purpose of Grotowski's acting process was to enable the actor to discover and then work with the connections that exist between their body and their internal core. Only then would they be able to be an authentic part of a dramatic work.

Several parts key to this approach are:

- The holy actor
- Authentic self-hood
- Mind-body connection
- Yoga

The holy actor

The actor was deemed as almost being holy by Grotowski. Not because of a spiritual reverence, but because in Poor Theatre the actor opens themselves completely to the spectator (audience member), revealing parts and truths that people regularly suppress. Grotowski didn't have them hide behind special effects, elaborate costumes or complicated sets. He directed and experimented with actors so that they would have a direct, open, honest and connected relationship during performance.

Authentic self-hood

Grotowski advocated that for an actor to be effective on stage they need to work with only their maskless self. Achieving this sense of self requires hundreds and hundreds of hours of disciplined reflection and highly physical training. According to Grotowski actors need to be able to lay themselves bare: emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and psychologically. They need to uncover what they're hiding under layers of self-, family-, society- and cultural-conditioning. This is to rid themselves of limiting, restrictive and unnecessary expectations, to strip back their façades and become totally (metaphorically, not necessarily physically) exposed.

From a reflective perspective they need to question every part of themselves; their behaviours, thoughts, instincts, reactions and emotions. They need to ask 'why' to everything. 'Why did they do *that* particular thing?' 'Why is *that* emotion coming out?' 'Why are they reacting like *that* and at *that* speed?' And to whatever the actor says or thinks in response to their own questions, they need to ask once again 'Why?' The Grotowski actor will often go six layers deep, that is they will question themselves about an occurrence or an idea with six 'Why's. This is to help the actor get to the source, the root cause behind their behaviour, thought, instinct, reaction and emotion. Only then can they let go of unhelpful conditioning, prejudices, biases, habits and expectations. Only then can they get one step closer to their *authentic self-hood*.

Once actors have been laid bare right back to their authentic self-hoods, will they then be ready to work towards achieving the *Total Act* in performance. This is when an actor 'commits an act of sincerity, when he unveils himself, opens and gives himself, in an extreme, solemn gesture and does not hold back, one knows that this actor has achieved the "total act"' (Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Routledge (2002) p.124-5).

Total act

A state experienced by an actor when s/he is authentically allowing their natural impulses to clearly and fully be directed towards a specific point, one that is fundamental to the performance.

Mind-body connection

Grotowski's mind-body training was made up of rigorous, energetic and very exhausting exercises that resulted in extreme fitness, muscular strength, spinal flexibility and physical alignment for the actor. He developed a series of exercises called **corporals** that relied heavily on rolls, somersaults, jumps, headstands, shoulder stands and other highly physical activities.

The mind-body connection theory is built on Grotowski's own experiential learning where he found that repeatedly running, jumping and rolling in the same way for hours brings to the surface any latent emotions, frustrations and fears. The actor, together with the ensemble will then explore these newly surfaced sensibilities on the workshop or rehearsal room floor. Only then is the actor metaphorically stripped bare and completely in tune with themselves, ready to work towards performance.

Imprint on your memory: the **body** must work first. Afterwards comes the **voice**. If you start on something, you must be fully engaged in it. You must give yourself one hundred per cent, your whole body, your whole mind and all its possible, individual, most intimate associations ...

In all you do you must keep in mind that there are no fixed rules, no stereotypes. The essential thing is that everything must come from and through the body. First and foremost, there must be a physical reaction to everything that affects us. Before reacting with the voice, you must first react with the body. If you think, you must think with your body. However, it is better not to think but to act, to take risks. When I tell you not to think, I mean with the head. Of course you must think, but with the body, logically, with precision and responsibility. You must think with the whole body, by means of actions. Don't think of the result, and certainly not of how beautiful the result may be. If it grows spontaneously and organically, like live impulses, finally mastered, it will always be beautiful.

Grotowski, *Towards a poor theatre*, Routledge (2002) p.189

Yoga

When training in this type of psycho-physical process, actors will frequently undertake many exercises of **hatha yoga**. Grotowski developed a series of *plastiques* that incorporated asanas, (physical poses), stillness (pranayamas) and breathing exercises. These help to strengthen the actor's body, increase the ability to focus and enhance the mind-body connection.

Hatha Yoga

A branch of yoga with a specific approach to and use of a series of awareness, breathing and physical exercise for total well-being.

Yoga, in its original form, differs from this psycho-physical training in that it focuses far more on the practitioner's internal experience through a meditative approach than Grotowski's process does. Instead of looking inwards, Grotowski has his actors carry out yoga sequences whilst consciously maintaining an outward focus. That is, he ensured that during each exercise sequence the actor remained actively aware of their physicality, the external environment and the other actors around them. He even goes so far as to encourage actors to be influenced by their peers and the world around them during a yoga sequence.

Internet exploration

Watch Grotowski as he works with two actors in a workshop at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRyLLTs00c

Activity 2.13: Tiryaka tadasan – The swaying palm tree pose

1. Stand in a large circle with your peers, facing inwards, making sure you can't touch anyone else even with your arms outstretched.
2. Complete the tiryaka tadasan pose whilst staying aware of the whole group. Focus on the physical activity while at the same time responding to the ensemble's timing and intensity, and the atmosphere and mood of the environment.
3. If you don't know the sequence by heart, your teacher will lead you through step-by-step. Listen to the teacher's voice, concentrate on moving your body and stay aware of the whole group.
 - Stand with your feet apart (about the distance of one foot between them) with your eyes focused straight ahead. Use your peripheral vision to stay aware of the group. Interlock your fingers and palms facing them outwards.
 - Breathe in and raise your palms over your head.
 - Exhale and bend from your waist towards your left side. Try not to lean forwards or backwards. Hold this position for a few seconds.
 - Inhale and slowly return to an upright position.
 - Repeat this bending over towards the right side whilst exhaling.
 - Inhale and slowly return to an upright position, keeping the arms raised above your head.
 - Repeat these sequences five times on each side.
4. After you've completed the activity reflect on the following questions:
 - What did you notice about your body during the exercise?
 - What did you notice about your movement?
 - What did you notice about the group and the environment during the exercise?
 - How did that affect you?
5. Write a mini report that captures your reflections.

Activity 2.14: Manjari asana – The cat stretch pose

1. Stand in a large circle with your peers, facing inwards, making sure you can't touch anyone else even with your arms outstretched.
2. Complete the manjari asana pose whilst staying aware of the whole group. Focus on the physical activity while at the same time responding to the ensemble's timing and intensity, and the atmosphere and mood of the environment.

- ➔ 3. If you don't know the sequence by heart, your teacher will lead you through step-by-step. Listen to the teacher's voice, concentrate on moving your body and stay aware of the whole group.
- Start this pose kneeling down. Then lean forward with your hands on the floor underneath your shoulders. Fingers, hands and arms should be pointing forwards, knees separated by 5-10 cm and the body should be in a straight line.
 - Inhale deeply raising the head without moving your arms. Hold this position for five seconds.
 - Exhale slowly lowering your forehead to the ground between your arms and stretching your spine upwards. You will need to contract your stomach muscles. Hold this pose for five seconds.
 - Repeat this sequence five times.
 - Come back to standing position and breath normally for about 15 .
4. After you've completed the activity reflect on the following questions:
- What did you notice about your body during the exercise?
 - What did you notice about your movement?
 - What did you notice about the group and the environment during the exercise?
 - How did that affect you?
5. Write a mini-report that captures your reflections.

Rudolf Von Laban

Rudolf von Laban, of German descent, was born in Bratislava, Slovakia in 1879. Even in his childhood he was fascinated by the way people moved and behaved physically. He played a significant role in the evolution of dance first in Germany, and later in England, during the first half of the 20th century.

Whilst von Laban's work in the movement arena was vast, he is best known for two contributions. The first is that he developed a dance technique that was much freer than traditional classical ballet, moving away from the use of conventional, prescribed steps, and using instead key traits of human movement. The second is his invention of **kinetography**, which is a method of recording choreography through notation in a way similar to that used by composers for music.

Kinetography

A notation system to analyse and record movement developed by Rudolf von Laban.

Von Laban's new movement method and his movement language have become fundamental not only to the dance genre, but also to acting in presentational drama. Laban died in his adoptive home, England, in 1948.

Human movement traits

Through endless observation, analysis and research von Laban developed an understanding of the expressive nature of human movement habits. He disliked the drama and dance productions and techniques of his day because he found them to be highly artificial and void of any worthwhile substance.

Von Laban's technique can be used to intellectually and experientially understand any movement made by humans, animals or even the environment. It enables actors to describe and physically recreate any moving thing. From a person rushing across the street so they can catch a departing bus to a cat walking casually on top of a fence, or even the steam rushing out of a boiling kettle.

Von Laban's technique focuses on the exploration of space, time, weight and flow in movement. He called these four dynamics **effort factors**, and they are linked to the attitudes, emotions and instincts of actors' characters. Although von Laban used these factors as the basis of his work with dancers, early in the 20th century they were adopted by performers from other art forms, a practice that has been continuing ever since. Actors found the effort factors a way to move freely when working; authentically as roles and characters, and creatively as artists during performance.

Effort factors

The way energy is expressed in movement, linking physicality to inner life.

Each of the four effort factors can be tracked on a continuum, ranging from complete freedom to total restriction. A movement can be located anywhere along each continuum. Using von Laban's process, it is the job of the actor to explore the movement range of each factor so that they can find what best suits the character they're playing within a play. The four effort factors are:

- Space
- Weight
- Time
- Flow

Space

For von Laban space is not empty, but has great substance. The actor needs to understand the boundaries of the playing space their role or character inhabits, as well as their location within that space. To move, they will shift the space in front of them that will then move to fill the void of the place the character vacated. When a character makes themselves smaller, they draw the space towards them, a movement called *gathering*. When a character makes themselves larger, they move the space away when extending their body parts outwards, a movement called *scattering*.

Weight

Every being and every object has a relationship with gravity, for von Laban roles and characters are no different. Actors should explore the mass of their bodies in relationship to the pull of gravity. There is a tension that some characters will *indulge* in (or partially indulge in) and their frames, body parts and even energy will almost seem to sink down into the floor. Other characters will *resist* (or partially resist) this tension and their bodies will have a sense of floating upwards.

Time

A movement takes a certain period to occur, and this period could be long such as in a sustained movement, or it could be short such as in a quick movement. Each movement within a series has a duration period, but collectively they form a *rhythm*. This external rhythm, that is easily observable by others, typically matches the internal rhythm of the role or character, which is not easily observable. Actors need to experiment with *regular rhythm* where a pulse of several movements has a clear sense of pattern, or with *irregular rhythm* where pulse patterns are absent or difficult to identify.

Flow

In the same way that water can move either freely finding its own weaving path as it goes along, or with restriction contained by channels, conduits and predetermined pathways, movement too can be free or bound (or anything in between). Free flow movement is uninhibited and unimpeded, but bound flow is hesitant and stilted. In whatever type of flow, movement can be *simultaneous* or *successive*. If it's simultaneous the actor's body parts will work together concurrently, such as limbs moving in unison. Whereas if it's successive, the body parts will move one after the other, with one beginning the movement and the next continuing it on.

ACTOR CHECKLIST

Creating a role or character using the four effort factors

When working with the movement of your character and utilising one part of von Laban's technique, you could explore the questions below. When you do explore them, make sure you don't simply think about the answers, but physicalise the possibilities for every single question. Feel, with your body, what is the best type of movement for your character. If you try the questions out physically, you will probably get a different answer to at least some of them, than if you simply sat at a desk and reflected on the possibilities.

Once you have explored the questions on the workshop floor, capture your decisions by writing a response to each one of the questions in a character journal.

Weight

- ☐ How heavy or light is your role or character?
- ☐ Do they seem to sink more into the ground than you do? Or do they feel like they hardly touch the ground?
- ☐ Is their weight evenly distributed over the whole of their feet? Do they feel like they are pushing into the ground at the front with the balls of their feet? Or are they pulling to the back of their feet and digging their heels in?
- ☐ Do they favor the right side of their body? Or the left? Or are they equally balanced on both?
- ☐ How heavy are their arms when they reach out for something? What about their wrists? Their fingers?
- ☐ How much do their muscles hang on their skeletal frame, pulling down to the floor? Or do they seem to lift up and away from their bones?



Space

- ☐ How much space does your role or character take up? Are they tall or short? Slender, stocky, plump, bony or thickset?
- ☐ Are their feet close together or is their stance wide apart?
- ☐ Are their shoulders back and their chest open – or do they cave their body over?
- ☐ When they turn do they move their whole body, their upper torso or just their head?
- ☐ When they walk do they take up a lot of space or a small amount?
- ☐ Which level do they prefer to operate at? Close to the ground, chest height, above their head or stepping up on other objects?
- ☐ Do they walk directly to where they are going or do they meander?
- ☐ When they interact with other characters do they have a large or small personal space? What about all their proximal zones? Their intimate space is their smallest – who do they let to their intimate space? How big is their intimate space? How big are all of their proxemics zones? How does this affect their movement?

Flow

- ☐ Does your role or character move like water? Or are they stuck like wood?
- ☐ Does your character meander around, under or over obstacles in their path? Or do they have to dodge them jerkily? Do they bulldoze straight over the obstacles? Do they stop moving altogether until the obstacle gets out of the way?
- ☐ Are their movements smooth and connected? Or are they isolated and disjointed? Does the whole body move as one, each body part in unison with the rest? Or does one body part start the movement, with another limb taking it over partway through, and yet a third limb finishing the movement?
- ☐ When the character moves which part of the body do they lead with? In what way does the body part lead? How does this affect the rest of their body? Does this ever change if they are in a different situation?
- ☐ How charged do their movements feel? Does it feel like their whole body moves as one connected energy force field? Or is there an electric current that pulses through their body?
- ☐ When they move does their energy seem to extend out in front of them? Or is it trapped inside them? Does it even drag behind and follow them?

Time

- ☐ How quickly does your role or character move across the stage? Are they fast or slow? Do they change speed depending on their mood or the situation they are in?
- ☐ How quickly do they raise their head, turn their body or reach out for something?
- ☐ Even before they move, is their impulse to move fast or slow? Is it measured and controlled, or quick and spontaneous?
- ☐ When they finish a movement do they rest for a moment – are they stationary or immobile? Or do they move straight on to the next movement?
- ☐ When they move, is the movement rhythmic? Does their walk have a clear beat to it? Does their run? Skip? Or does their movement seem to lack a clear pulse? Are there sporadic bursts of movement, alternated with irregular pauses?
- ☐ Do they have a fast or slow internal rhythm? How does this come out in their physicalisation – does the audience ever see evidence of it? Does it affect their speech pace? Is their internal rhythm and pacing the same as their external ones?

Eight basic efforts

After extensive exploration with the four effort factors, von Laban found that performers could use them in specific combinations to help them gain access to and have consistency in delivering a role. By combining three of the four factors qualities von Laban defined eight basic efforts, which have become known globally as **The Laban Efforts**. Each effort is named by a specific verb. They are:

	Weight	Space	Time
Gliding	Light	Direct	Sustained
Pressing	Strong	Direct	Sustained
Dabbing	Light	Direct	Quick
Punching	Strong	Direct	Quick
Wringing	Strong	Indirect	Sustained
Floating	Light	Indirect	Sustained
Flicking	Light	Indirect	Quick
Slashing	Strong	Indirect	Quick

The quality of the fourth effort factor, flow, is not included in the eight effort descriptors. This is because each of the efforts can be either free or bound in their movement flow. For example one actor can create a light-moving, fast-paced, indirect role who moves extremely freely, while another actor can create a different light-moving, fast-paced, indirect role whose movement is totally restricted and bound, and yet both actors will be using the Flicking effort.

Hint

Even without having any knowledge of von Laban's effort factors, actors and non-actors alike will probably be able to accurately associate the factor qualities with the Effort. Think about an angel 'floating' through a cloud. The verb automatically conjures up an image of a light, slowmoving being who weaves or meanders gently through the sky. Von Laban's effort factor extremes for floating are indeed light in weight, indirect in space and sustained in time.

Internet exploration

Find out more about the eight Laban Efforts at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ArKgQUPPas

 **Activity 2.15: creating a character with the Laban efforts**

1. As an actor taking on a role or character from a script you're working on in class, physically explore on the rehearsal room floor each of the eight Laban efforts.
2. Identify the one that most suits your character. Make sure you make this choice based on physical experimentation, not intellectual analysis.
3. Once selected spend 15 minutes in-character adopting your Effort choice, you should:
 - Do as many different movements as you can such as walking, running, standing still, sitting, climbing stairs and bending down.
 - Also try and do some daily-living activities such as eating, drinking, waiting, looking, listening, reading and speaking.
 - Finally try interacting with others in a range of activities from simple eye contact through to an in-depth conversation, from sitting next to someone at the train station to doing a household chore together.
4. Write a mini-report that discusses:
 - The Effort you selected and why you selected it.
 - What happened mentally, emotionally and psychologically when you 'lived' the Effort for the 15 minutes.
 - What happened when you interacted with another person.

CHAPTER 3

Directing

Key Concepts

- ☛ Directing
- ☛ Directing process
 - Conceptualising
 - Realising the concept
 - Creative vision
 - Rehearsals
 - Directorial approaches
 - Keeping the end in sight
- ☛ Konstantin Stanislavski
- ☛ Bertolt Brecht
- ☛ Jerzy Grotowski
- ☛ Peter Brook

DIRECTING

A director, contrary to popular belief, is not usually someone who sits in a folding chair out the front of the stage and shouts instructions to actors through a megaphone. That cliché comes from the film industry, and even then it usually takes place only when filming on location outdoors in a massive open space or indoors in a large venue with crowds of actors. In contemporary drama direction is much more interactive and personal.

Directors today tend to work collaboratively with the actors, designers and entire production team. They will create a directorial vision for the drama work, a guide-line to help realise the script from the written page to three-dimensional performance.

Directorial vision

The clear and defined conceptualisation by the director of the way a dramatic work will be realised in performance in order to communicate identified meaning to a particular audience, in a specific location at a point in time.

DIRECTING PROCESS

There are two broad processes that directors of drama undertake:

- Conceptualising
- Realising the concept

Conceptualising

In order for a dramatic work to be successful there needs to be a purpose for doing it. The purpose behind a dramatic production could be one of many things. The director and the producing theatre company might want to teach the audience something or to entertain them in some way. A purpose might be to make people forget their troubles when watching the performance, to stir up emotions or to realise something about themselves or the society they live in. It could be to get people to carry out a particular action in the real world, or to *enable* them to carry out that action. A production might even have more than one purpose behind it. Purpose enables the director to set clear audience-actor/audience-production relationship goals, to work towards having an impact on that audience in a particular way and to make appropriate stylistic production choices.

The second part of conceptualising is coming up with what the main message is (or messages are) of a production and how the message(s) is likely to take dramatic shape in performance.

The third and final part of conceptualising is dreaming up a big-picture view of the production. This big-picture dream incorporates how the purpose might creatively be achieved and the ways the message might be communicated through the design components and the acting. The director will imagine how the production could work overall, what it might feel like, in what way the senses may engage with it, and how thoughts and reactions might be stimulated both within the playing space and in the audience.

Together the purpose, the message(s) and production big picture form the director's vision.

Every director will have their own method for coming up with the directorial vision for a drama work. In their own way and in their own sequence they are likely at some point to:

- read the script many, many times
- explore the way the playwright has used the dramatic elements
- investigate the political, socio-economic, historical, cultural and environmental landscapes of the inner world of the play
- research relevant contextual information
- find out about the playwright and the culture the playwright was/is living in
- identify the obvious and the not-so-obvious themes and issues
- explore multiple perspectives on the same issue
- deep dive into the subtext as much as they can.

Inner world of the play

The imagined setting, including the time and space of a drama work, reflective of real cultural, socio-economic, political, historical and environmental landscapes.

Consider the many of ways the dramatic elements might be used in production to:

- find out about the preferences and backgrounds of the target audience
- think
- dream
- talk to others
- try out ideas (however they can).

Activity 3.1: Conceptualising a directional vision

1. In the role of director using a script that you're studying in class, create the directorial vision as if you were going to direct a production of the play. For the concept of your imagined production you should identify the:
 - purpose
 - main message(s) (and the audience it's targeted towards)
 - creative big-picture production view.
2. Write a report describing your concept. You should also discuss why you think the target audience is well-matched to the purpose/message (and vice versa).

Realising the concept

There are two major parts to realising the directorial vision:

- Formulating and delivering the creative vision
- Rehearsals.

Creative vision

After conceptualising their directorial vision for a dramatic production, the director will begin work with the members of the creative team; the scenographer, lighting designer, sound designer, costume designer and, if they're lucky enough to have one, the dramaturg. The director will share their vision for the production with the team. Then together as a group they will flesh out the director's vision further. The designers and dramaturg will offer ideas, make suggestions, seek clarifications, put forward alternative perspectives and even potentially disagree with some parts of the original vision. Together they will unpack the purpose as much as they can, explore the main message(s) further and collectively imagine the production's big picture. Usually after several discussions the group will eventually agree on and define an overall creative vision for the production.

Creative vision

The shared clear and defined conceptualisation of the creative team, typically initiated by the directorial vision, of the way a dramatic work will be realised in performance in order to communicate identified meaning to a particular audience, in a specific location at a point in time.

This creative vision is a common understanding amongst and shared by the creative team about the production purpose, the message and the big picture. It can be a clarification, extension, redefinition or a total rework of the director's original vision. Some directors are very flexible with their original vision and open to changes from the creative team, whilst others are more fastidious in keeping strictly to their original vision.

Hint

Sometimes the director will start working with the creative team before the directorial vision has been formulated. In these situations the directorial vision and the creative vision are one and the same. This is particularly true of ensemble theatre companies or when practitioners are devising a new work together.

Once the creative vision has been agreed upon, each member of the creative team will individually set about realising part of the vision through their own particular design work (or dramaturgical work if the dramaturg is involved). Firstly each designer will work towards creating the design. Then, once their designs have the support of the director and the approval of the producing theatre company, they will enter the realisation, construction and delivery phases.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals are the main vehicle through which the director will realise their part of the creative vision. They are the time when the director will work with the actors, stage manager and key crew members to prepare the script for performance. If it's an original work, then they will work together as a team to devise the play, including the script, and prepare it for performance.

At some stage during rehearsals a director typically will:

- lead the actors through explorations of the script, themes, dramatic meaning and so on.
- investigate the inner world of the play with the actors, both the situations and events of the script, and the wider contextual impacts
- provide opportunities for the actors to develop their roles or characters, and their characters' relationships with one another, as well as explore the changing dynamics between them
- enable actors to draw on their existing voice and movement techniques and extend these further for character and performance
- help the actors to creatively experiment with and effectively use the set, props, costumes, lighting and sound
- block the play by working out where, when and how characters will move within the playing space
- enable the actors to explore their relationship with the audience and the dynamics between them
- help bring all the rehearsal and design components together at various points by running sections, scenes, acts and the entire script of the play

- communicate ideas, make recommendations, provide support and offer feedback to the actors, stage manager, crew members and, if they're attending the rehearsal, the designers and the technical operators.

Rehearsal process

In preparing for performance it's likely the director will lead the actors through a series of process stages, such as:

1. First read
2. Character development
3. Script exploration and experimentation
4. Blocking
5. Run-throughs
6. Dress rehearsals

This chapter will focus on some of the important techniques and approaches used by directors at certain stages within the preparation process. For more information on each stage of the preparation process go to **Chapter 14: Rehearsal and performance**.

Internet exploration

Hear the way one scenographer took the director's vision for a play and interpreted it in his design (and hear from the director too about his concept):

www.youtube.com/watch?v=TI4BUHi3law

Activity 3.2: Realising directional (and creative) vision

Building on **Activity 3.1** in the role of director using the same script that you're studying in class, create the overall plan to realise the directorial vision in a production of the play. You should consider and then write a report describing:

- the venue (including the ideal staging and audience configurations)
- creative vision
 - each of the key components of the design areas (scenographic, lighting, sound and costume design)
 - dramaturgy needs.

To do this, you will need to imagine that you've had several discussions with the other creative team members so that you can come up with a very high level overview of the overall creative vision

- rehearsal processes
 - especially how you would focus on character development, script exploration and experimentation, and blocking
 - anything else that's relevant.

Directorial approaches to exploring and experimenting

When the director and creative team are meeting together to plan for a production, much of the discussion focuses on exploring the production's purpose, dramatic meaning, imaginative interpretations, dynamic aesthetics and other parts of the creative vision. When the director and actors are rehearsing the play, much of their time is taken up experientially exploring the voice, movement, character, dramatic action, delivery style, audience relationship, dramatic meaning and other components of performance.

Every time a decision is made about how to interact with another character, in what way to use the space, how to connect with the audience, what meaning to communicate, which ideas to focus on, what characterisation process to use and so on there are hundreds, if not thousands, of other choices that could have been made instead. Each choice has to work with the director's vision, as well as the overall creative vision for the production. But that doesn't mean that the director should necessarily be the authority on every decision made.

Whilst a few directors are highly prescriptive and operate in such a way that the actors and designers become the instruments to deliver a predetermined, defined work, most directors today strive to be far more collaborative. They trust that great ideas can come from anywhere and anyone, at any time. They also trust that they have the ability to unite a range of new and old ideas into a cohesive, creative and vision-serving dramatic work. They can discern which ideas need to be fleshed out and which would work best with some trimming. They can see when an idea is a stepping-stone to something else, rather a complete entity in itself. They're also able to see when an idea is not serving the production and needs to be let go. Most importantly they are able to take risks and be open to all ideas and possibilities, whilst moving clearly towards the creative vision.

The way a director communicates and interacts with others will reflect their approach, whether they are more prescriptive or more collaborative:



Show

The most prescriptive method for communicating ideas is for the director to show the actors what it is they're thinking by literally stepping into the playing space, taking on the relevant character and enacting the idea. Whilst demonstrating in this way may be the quickest method to communicate the director's idea to an actor, it is also the least likely to generate a motivated, committed and thoughtful actor. This in turn does not help the actor create a believable action or reaction in representational drama, nor a holistic, purposeful one



in presentational drama. Ideally this method is best used only when a director wants to demonstrate a choreographic sequence of movements.

Tell

When a director tells, informs or instructs actors about their ideas they are still being relatively prescriptive. Similarly to showing actors what they're thinking, explaining ideas without a two-way discussion is not likely to generate motivation, commitment and thoughtfulness in actors. Telling, as a method for exploring ideas, is best served when answering an actor's question or in giving notes after a run. When answering questions the adage of less is more typically works best. Contemporary directors will often strive to give actors the minimum (rather than the maximum) information they need to answer their question helpfully and to assist them in overcoming their challenge. This is to allow the actor to work the rest out perceptively, intellectually, emotionally or experientially for themselves. When giving notes, telling is effective when the director is sharing their observations from the run, rather than simply charging actors to change something.

Discuss

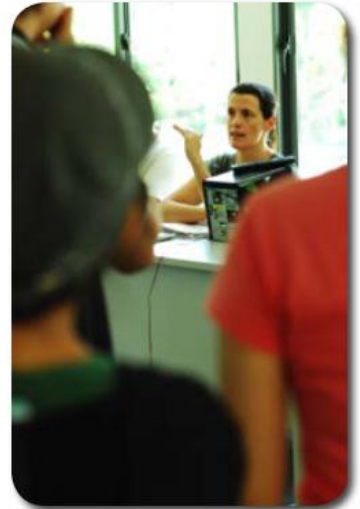
When interacting in a dialogue with the actor to investigate an idea, or series of ideas, the director is sharing the decision-making process with them. Both the actor and the director are able to participate in the discussion, with each person bringing their ideas and preferences to the interchange. Each is able to explain their reasoning as to why they might want or not want to do a particular thing. When taking this discussion approach more ideas are likely to be considered because when someone is putting forth their thoughts, this can prompt the other to think of a new related possibility. In addition, actors are more likely to buy into an idea if they themselves have been part of generating it. Discussion is a popular method for directors and it can be used in a wide range of exploration activities.

Question

The director doesn't have to have all the answers. If they want to truly collaborate with actors (designers, crew members and so on) and produce a drama work together as team, then they need to say less and listen more. If they're completely committed to making the production creative and innovative, and to outside-the-box-thinking, then they need to be open to ideas, answers to problems and ways of doing things coming from the actors and the other practitioners involved. In order to create a dynamic, explorative environment directors can ask actors a lot of quality questions: questions that get other people thinking, that encourage them to speak up and offer suggestions, that enable others to try out new possibilities that

Run

A performance of the production. It can also be rehearsing the show from beginning to end without stopping.



they might not have done before they were asked the question. Great questions are typically open questions and they start with 'Who', 'What', 'When', 'Where', 'Why' or 'How'. Questioning is a great way to explore more, new or alternative possibilities. It can be used very effectively during two-way interactive discussions with actors. A director can sometimes even use a question to answer an actor's question.

Open question

Using language to ask information of another in such a way that their response must be a developed, rather than a 'yes' or 'no', answer.

Hint

If directors really want to encourage actors to reach deeper down into themselves for potential untapped ideas, they could try asking, 'What else could you do?' If, when you're directing, you find that an actor is stuck for an idea and insists they can't think of anything, try saying to them, 'I know you can't think of anything [/an answer/an alternative/etc.], but if you could think of something, what might it be?'

Selective silence

This is a particularly useful technique for a director to use when they think the actor is on the verge of discovering something new or uncovering something unrealised before. Too often at this point novice directors will jump in and tell an actor something, even if it's done in good will to congratulate the actor that what they're doing is working well. Directors will often see/understand things before an actor intellectually realises the same thing, simply because they're watching from the side and they can see the bigger picture. The actor, by contrast, might need an extra few seconds (or minutes or days) because they are *in* the scene, experiencing the relationship dynamics and making the dramatic action happen. They may need some time to process what they've done or what they'd like to do, and a director needs to say nothing whilst the actor does just that. Of course, at other times actors will be a step ahead of a director precisely because they *are* in the scene. In either situation, directors will often be well served at crucial discovery points or times of struggle by saying nothing, and instead observing, waiting and wondering. If they're able to do this then it's likely that when the director eventually does speak, they will instinctively know whether to show, tell, discuss or question.



Internet exploration

Find out from a professional director about his approach to experimenting and exploring a play with actors:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBu255CjJyk

Activity 3.3: Exploring and experimenting

1. In the role of director, working with two short excerpts from a script you're studying in class, direct a pair or trio of actors.
You will use two different exploring and experimenting processes:
 - For one excerpt you will use a prescriptive directorial approach by showing or telling the actors everything you would like them to do, say, show and so on.
 - For the other excerpt you will use a collaborative approach by discussing, questioning and using selective silence. When taking this approach make sure you don't disguise any preferences or requests in leading questions. Truly aim to draw out ideas and possibilities from the actors encouraging their ideas and becoming a sounding board, rather than an instructor.
2. Compare these two approaches by:
 - rehearsing the scenes using the different directing approaches
 - performing the scenes for another group of the whole class
 - asking the actors how the experience was for them, including what they liked, didn't like, what was easy, what was difficult, and anything else that they feel is relevant
 - reflecting on the success of the:
 - enacted scene
 - relationships between yourself and the actors
 - relationships amongst the actors.
3. Write a report that discusses your experience with each directing rehearsal approach. Be sure to include the actors comments.

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

Jenny Davis – Director

JENNY DAVIS received a Centenary Medal in 2003 for services to the theatre. She is well known in Western Australia as an actor and has toured around Australia and to the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Brazil in numerous productions.

Her directing credits include *The Chatroom*, *The Vagina Monologues*, *Social Climbers*, and *Tango* for Perth Theatre Company, *Lipstick Dreams*, *Christmas Crackers*, *Double Diagnosis* and *By Degrees* for the Effie Crump Theatre, *Wold* at Stables Theatre, Sydney and *Wedding Games* for Handzon Theatre. For Midnite Youth Theatre Jenny has directed many productions including *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Fortinbras* and *Roses of Eyam*.



Jenny writes and directs for her independent theatre company Agelink Theatre, which produces plays based mainly on oral histories. Jenny was Artistic Director of the West Australian Youth Theatre from 1996-2006, directing productions such as *Cloudstreet*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *The Trojan Women*, *The Tempest*, *The Golden Age*, *This Endless Shore*, *Blue Remembered Hills* and *Our Town*. For Agelink Theatre Jenny has also directed *The Greatest Woman in the World*, *Quartet*, which toured Australia in 2005, and her own play *Dear Heart* (based on her Aunt's letters from WWII) which toured to London in 2008. Jenny also published *Dear Heart* as a novel with Allen & Unwin in 1998.

Jenny has appeared in many ABC radio dramas and has been a writer for ABC schools education programs.

WORKING WITH THE WEST AUSTRALIAN YOUTH THEATRE CO

1. First session

When meeting a new group or cast in youth theatre for the first time, my first session is always about getting to know each other and building trust.

Favourite exercises:

- Put the group into pairs and ask them to very quickly tell each other two facts about themselves and about their first experience either of being in a show or going to the theatre. We then sit in a circle and each person introduces their partner to the group, eg. 'Ryan has two sisters, plays the guitar and the first time he went onstage at nursery school aged four, he wanted to say everyone else's lines except his own.' It breaks the ice.
- We then stay in the circle for some games of name remembering of passing on a rhythm, eg. first person says their name along with a simple movement/rhythm. The next person repeats the name and movement and adds their own and so it continues. A large group will need prompting but it becomes hilarious and by the end of that game we all know everyone's names.
- We then progress to some movement and voice warm up exercises designed to be fun and free us in the space. For this first session I keep it as non-technical as possible while still introducing vocal concepts, eg. perform a sports action, eg. 'play' tennis/ bowl a cricket ball/ swing a golf club and make a noise to go with the action.
- From class suggestions we can then work to improve the sound, mentioning relevant factors such as breath, expansion of the chest, opening the throat, muscular activity of lips or tongue.

2. Audition process A

For youth theatre I like to do important works with large casts so that all members can be involved – maybe a leading role, maybe a chorus member. Often my productions incorporate live music. I want an ensemble company and I stress from the outset that EVERY member of the company is vitally important to the production and their creative input is welcome.

My audition process requires actors to have prepared a few lines from a speech – if possible one they know well because they have already performed elsewhere. I want no more than 2 minutes each. The actor performs these pieces with the whole class present; however the rest of the class has to be involved in the piece as required. For example:

- If the character is addressing a crowd, the class would become that crowd – silent or not as the auditioning person requested.
- Or, if the setting is a forest, the class could be trees.
- The actor might want to address one person only and want the others to be furniture.
- We might pretend the character is being interviewed and the class are reporters, or that the character is talking on radio and the others are listening and not watching (very useful if the actor is feeling especially nervous or stressed)

I always find it helpful if the class is actively involved and therefore assisting with the creative process for each actor.

3. Audition process B

It may be necessary to then try them out with a short piece from the play intended for production (usually in pairs) but I like them to have prepared well first, since not everyone is an accomplished sight reader. I will have given them my ideas about the character and the situation first and I will also ask them to have a second attempt with some new or added directions. This gives them an opportunity to demonstrate their flexibility and versatility.

Depending on the production I may well ask the actors to do something non-verbal, especially if the role demands physicality.

- I may only request that they perform a complex physical task in character.
- Or I might put on some music and simply say 'your character lets go!' (That is often a useful tool in rehearsal if things become 'stuck' or if you need to free up an emotional scene.)

4. First rehearsal

Unless I am working with a professional or very experienced cast I don't start with a reading of the play, which can be dispiriting.

My preferred process:

- i. Use a whiteboard to tell the play's story (plot). We do this as briefly as possible, act by act or scene by scene, and then try and encapsulate the plot in a couple of sentences, eg. ROMEO AND JULIET In this play a boy and girl from two rival families in Verona fall in love and marry secretly. The boy is banished after accidentally killing the girl's cousin in a fight and both boy and girl die by their own hands when a plot to reunite goes wrong.
This brings us to discuss the themes of the play, and again, we try to summarise the themes: eg. the play is about the beauty of young passionate love and the evils of factional hatred.
- ii. Outline my vision of the world of the play, including set & costume design.
This leads us on to talk about the context of the play – cultural, social, historical, political etc. I may ask the cast to each do some research about a relevant topic for the background of the play.
- iii. We look at excerpts from the play – key scenes or parts of key scenes, read, discuss and maybe try out on the floor. NB This is not a blocking session although I have on occasions done a first blocking of a chorus scene, in order to give the cast a taste of what is to come. It is very important to maintain everyone's excitement, even the smallest roles, since the cast may not meet again in its entirety until several rehearsals later as I only call cast as required – everyone's time is precious.

5. Rehearsal processes

Rehearsals always start with voice and movement exercises, wherever possible connected to the text.

Exploration of the text can include forensic research whereby the actor looks at the text for specific clues, eg to find all the observations made by other characters about your character.

Group creative exercises can bond a group well and also aid in finding a common purpose for the play, eg. each actor chooses a key phrase spoken by their character and we then craft the phrases together to make a free form poem on a large piece of paper and illustrate it. It becomes a bit like a mantra for the play and the poem can be an excellent foundation for vocal exercises.



There are many processes and techniques that can be used by actors to promote creativity and build a character. As a director I may employ any of them or none of them as the situation dictates. With youth theatre I have found a couple particularly useful:

Emotional memory

When tackling roles requiring the portrayal of great emotion, I often find it helpful to ask actors to sit with closed eyes and recall a moment in their life when they have experienced that emotion – the situation and context may be entirely different to that of the character's, they may even have been a small child at the time. The emotion itself is as vital and can feel as violent, no matter what the circumstances. They start by recalling the details of the incident and place and then try to recall the physical effect the emotion had on their body and the way in which they ultimately reacted. Sometimes one small thing triggered by that memory can be the key to how they play the scene with emotional truth.

Improvisation

- i. With plays that have complex language, e.g. Shakespeare – enacting a scene with mostly movement and gesture but also employing their own language can help demonstrate to the actor the level of emotion they need.
- ii. Where a play contains offstage or reported action or we need to find out more about the background of a character – improvising events offstage can be very liberating and give the actor an emotional memory to enhance the performance.
- iii. Using animal improvisation – choosing an animal that seems close to your character, observing it's movements and then moving through different situations and emotions as that animal can assist an actor who is having difficulty finding the physicality of their character. It's also great fun.

NB Improvisation must always take place in a completely non-judgemental atmosphere – there is no success or failure, only a level of discovery for the individual.

HOT TIP for opening night: Play a piece of music that affects you and then, alone and undisturbed, 'dance' the emotional journey of the play, ie. imagine you are telling the story purely through movement. I find it a terrific way to focus.

Keeping the end in sight

There are many functional and conceptual questions that a director might keep in mind when rehearsing to help move things forward positively and to address any issues before they become large problems.

Conceptual questions a director might ask include:

How clearly is the creative vision coming across?

- Directorial vision
 - In what way is the original directorial vision coming across?
 - How clear is the purpose of the production at this point?
 - How far is the play's current state from achieving the vision?
 - What changes to the original vision have occurred?
 - How are these having a positive impact on the production?

- How are these having a negative impact on the production?
- What needs to be done to realise the vision?
- Overall creative vision
 - How is the holistic creative vision coming across?
 - How is each design element contributing to the vision realisation?
 - How are the acting and the dramatic action contributing to the vision realisation?
 - What else needs to be done to realise the overall vision?
- The main themes
 - What message is coming across at each point?
 - How clear is the message?
 - In what way is it being created and communicated?
 - How does this link to the directorial vision?
 - How does this link to the overall creative vision?

In what way are symbolism and metaphor being used (or underused)?

- Production styles
 - How accurate and effective is the performance style?
 - How clear is the historical style?
 - What type of audience-actor relationship is developing?
 - What conventions are working well?
 - What conventions are not working well?
 - What does the production need more of?
 - What does it need less of?
 - What else might be done?

Performance style

Acting in a certain way that either focuses on imitating life or presenting ideas.

Historical style

The drama developed by a particular culture at a specific period in time that has a set of characteristics, conventions and, often, delivery techniques specific to that artistic type.

What dramatic meaning is being created?

- In what ways are each of the design components (scenographic, lighting, sound and costume design) contributing to dramatic meaning?
 - How might these be further capitalised on?
 - In what ways are they contributing ineffectively?
 - How might these be changed?
- In what way is the acting contributing to dramatic meaning?
 - How might this be further capitalised on?
 - In what way is it contributing ineffectively?
 - How might this be changed?
- What type of mood and atmosphere are being created?
 - How are they being created?
 - How does this serve the production and the vision?

- What else might be done to communicate the mood?
 - What else might be done to impact the atmosphere?
- How are these acting and design components contributing together to the unfolding of the dramatic action?
 - How are they not contributing?
 - In what way are these components working well together?
 - In what way are they not working well together?
 - What else can be done to strengthen their unity?

Functional questions a director might ask include:

Who in the audience can and can't see the dramatic action?

- Sightlines – What issues are there (if any) with the:
 - seating configuration?
 - structure of the venue?
 - scenographic design?
 - lighting design?
- Masking – What issues are there with the:
 - blocking within the playing space?
 - use of levels?
 - other uses of the set?

Masking

Interrupting the view of the audience by physically placing a person or object in the way of what they're focusing on.

Who in the audience can and can't hear?

- Actors' audibility – What issues are there with their:
 - voice projection?
 - body direction?
 - fitness levels?
 - distance from the audience?
 - costume restrictiveness?
- Sound design – What issues are there with the:
 - acoustics?
 - system layout?
 - amplification design?

Blocking

The planning process to decide where, when and how characters will move on stage during a performance.

When in the play can and can't the audience understand?

- Situation – What issues are there with:
 - establishing the time and space?
 - establishing the tension level changes?
- Role and character – What issues are there with the:
 - inner lives of the characters?
 - voice and movement choices by the actors?
 - interactions and dynamics between the characters?

- Dramatic action – What issues are there with the:
 - clarity of each occurrence, action, behaviour and verbal exchange?
 - connections between one event and another?
 - impact of one event on another?
 - rise or fall of the dramatic tension?

How are the focus levels of the practitioners involved?

- Fatigue – What's going well and what issues are there with the:
 - fitness levels of the actors, crew and creative team?
 - energy levels of the actors, crew and creative team?
 - duration of the rehearsal, construction or production sessions?
 - rest time in between rehearsals, construction or production sessions?
 - timing of the milestones and deadlines?
- Motivation – What's going well and what issues are there with individuals':
 - likelihood to speak up, question, push back or seek information?
 - ability to be heard during group discussions?
 - commitment to the production?
 - commitment to the role or job?
 - internal drive?
 - internal mental state?
 - internal emotion levels?
 - enthusiasm for tasks?
 - willingness to take risks?
- Creativity and understanding – What's going well and what issues are there with individuals':
 - processing of ideas, interchanges and activities?
 - reasoning for doing things?
 - critical thinking application?
 - generation of ideas?
 - exploration of ideas?
- Conflict – What's going well and what are the issues with individuals':
 - internal conflict with themselves?
 - external conflict with others?
 - how is any conflict having an impact on the individual, their work and the production as a whole?
 - how are they resolving the conflict?

What can I as director, either directly or indirectly, do to capitalise on what's going well and to facilitate changes if they're needed?

When the answer to any of these questions highlights a strength, then the director can ask, 'How can we capitalise on what's going well?' If, however, the answer to any of these

questions highlights that there *is* an issue, the the director must ask, ‘What can be done to help solve the problem?’ That doesn’t mean the director must personally set about solving every issue themselves, but it does mean they must facilitate some change. For example they could ask someone else to look into the issue. They might conduct a group brainstorming session or ask some thought-provoking questions of the actors or creatives. They might deviate from their original rehearsal or production plans, be flexible with the type or duration of the next rehearsal conducted, they could change who needs to attend a session or what needs to be completed and so on.

Hint

A director might even choose to do nothing when faced with an issue. If you, as a director were to make this decision, make sure it is an active choice. Whatever you decide to do, or not to do, should be the option that will best serve the production, not simply the one that is easiest or quickest to implement.

KONSTANTIN STANISLAVSKI

In the late 19th century, after Stanislavski’s famous 1897 meeting with Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, he set about creating a theatre industry that was independent of entrepreneurs and government politicians. This led to the establishment of the Moscow Art Theatre and allowed Stanislavski as a director to focus on the artistic components of the production, instead of the then-popular practice of bureaucrats making all the creative decisions. Never before with such totality and consistency had a director insisted on each and every production staged, from the acting to the design, being artistically unique. Similarly, never before had a director insisted on making the performance the most important part of an audience’s experience, rather than merely having theatregoers use the performance as a vehicle to socialise and network with each other, another practice popular at the time.

Stanislavski’s very early work as a director focused on giving extreme attention to every small detail, in the acting and the design, in order to create characters and their environments as believably as possible on stage. His directorial style was very autocratic and he had input into every aspect of a production. In fact he often had more than simply input as he would instruct actors, designers and managers with great specificity on what to do, and then insist they do it. He was extremely disciplined and hard-working himself, and demanded the same from everyone he worked with. This was not only in their great attention to detail, but also in their punctuality, commitment and, for actors, physical fitness.

One of the key developments of Stanislavski’s famous System of Acting developed during these early years was emotional memory, sometimes called emotional recall. This is where Stanislavski worked with actors to be able to experience real, raw emotions on stage as and when they were needed for a particular role, situation or event. The major premise of emotional memory is that the actor, after identifying the emotion required for a particular point in the play, would delve into their own personal past experiences, select

an event when they felt the same emotion, then relive that emotion by re-experiencing the past experience. Then, with the relived emotion still feeling raw, the actor would immediately undertake the scene from the play allowing that real emotion to continue. From this point on, whenever the actor does this scene in rehearsal or performance, they access their own experience and use it as a trigger to feel real emotions in the play.

In the first two decades of the 20th century, Stanislavski directed and acted alongside actors experimenting with many different activities, techniques and tools to create believable, emotionally-complex, three-dimensional characters on stage. In addition to emotional memory other parts of the technique that he used when directing included:

- given circumstances
- fundamental questions, including the *before-plan* – sometimes today this is called the back-story
- magic ‘if’
- objectives.

By the early 1930s Stanislavski had become troubled that actors would spend so much time exploring the inner lives of their characters and developing complex, emotional, psychologically-rich layers, that their physical embodiment and movement were infantile by comparison. Once they reached the point in rehearsals when they were ready to physicalise, it would be almost impossible to connect the externalisation with the internalisation of their character. In addition it was so late in the rehearsal process that there would be inadequate time to be able to try to rectify the problem. This would ultimately result in unbelievable, two-dimensional characterisation in performance.

Stanislavski identified that in real life there is interdependency between the psyche and the movement of a person. That the psyche has an impact on a person’s movement sits harmoniously with early parts of his acting System. But he also identified that movement has an impact on the psyche, for which he had no acting technique to use in directing actors. Stanislavski identified that the internal and the external must be explored simultaneously, to ensure psyche-physical connections are real and that the actor is able to bring a truly three-dimensional, believable, sustainable character onto the stage.

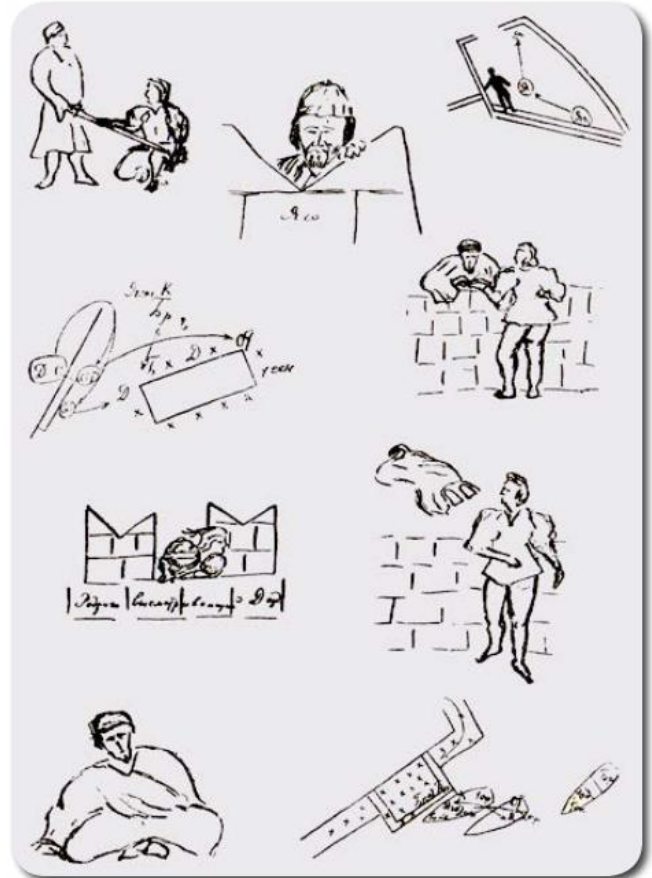
This realisation lead Stanislavski to develop a new part of the system of acting. The first record of him working on this new technique was in his 1930 production of William Shakespeare’s *Othello*. It is said that Stanislavski went away from the company and worked alone furiously on creating a production plan. Part of this plan was to explore the physical behaviour of the characters and to identify connections between these movements with the inner life. This early work paved the way for Stanislavski to develop his Method of Physical Actions during the 1930s.



A 1926 production of *The Days of the Turbins*
directed by Stanislavski

Stanislavski advocated that by the actor undertaking a strictly ordered sequence of predetermined physical actions (movements), which they had identified through earlier experimentation in rehearsal, then appropriate and necessary emotions for the scene would be triggered. Not only this, but that these emotions, buried deep in the subconscious, would remain inaccessible *unless* they were triggered by the corresponding physical actions. Thus for the remainder of his life, Stanislavski directed actors to use this method of physical actions and bring the subconscious to the conscious believably for performance.

For more information on Stanislavski's system of acting and how to utilise the various techniques see **Chapter 2: Acting techniques**.



Stanislavski's sketches on the physical actions of characters his 1930 production of Shakespeare's *Othello*

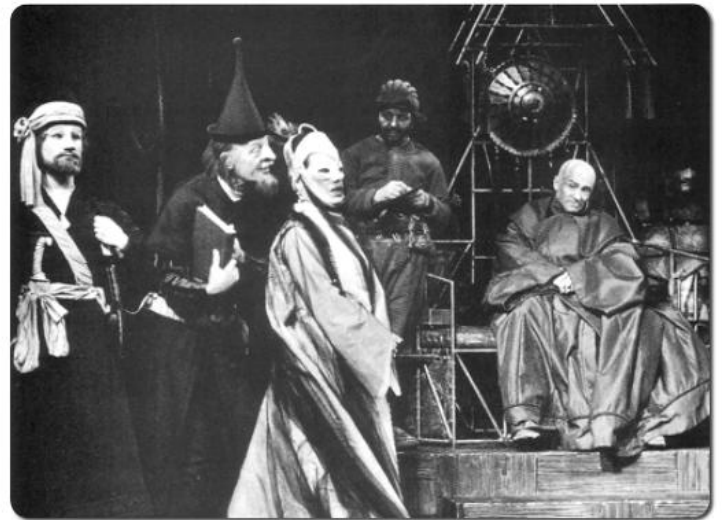
Activity 3.4: Borrowing from Stanislavski to direct

1. As a director working with two or three actors on an excerpt or scene from a play you're studying in class prepare it for performance using a Stanislavskian directing approach. (For more information see **Chapters 2: Acting** and **15: Form and Style**).
2. Write a report that details:
 - your rehearsal process
 - how you used a Stanislavskian approach
 - why this approach suited the script
 - what you would do differently to improve the next time you direct.

BERTOLT BRECHT

Brecht is a seminal theatre practitioner, to whom contemporary drama owes a great deal. He was one of the first to make non-realistic (presentational), didactic drama popular, without it being entertainment-focused. Brecht believed theatre should be accessible to everyone and that it should be a means to reveal social inequality and a prompt to bring about change.

Brecht was a director that took the convention of interpreting a playwright's script very liberally. If he didn't like some of the lines, if they were too sentimental or if he felt they were rhythmic for no purpose, he would change them. Similarly if he liked a particular actor, he would write him additional lines. Adapting the script would often continue right up to opening night, sometimes even after opening night. This practice was particularly demanding on the actors involved who had to be open to change, adaptable in delivering the change and highly effective in memorising lines quickly and accurately.



From a performance of Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in 1954 by the Berliner Ensemble

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Didactic theatre

Drama that is intended to teach something to the audience.

Hint

Brecht's practice of changing the lines of a script is not acceptable today, as the script remains the intellectual property of the playwright and not the director. If a director today wants to change the script text, they need to seek permission from the playwright to do so. The only exception is if the script is out of copyright (For more information see **Chapter 9: Management**).

In contrast to Stanislavski's approach which works well when directing representational drama works, Brecht demanded that actors *not* become caught up in the psychological side and emotionality of the roles they played. He insisted instead that they find a way to demonstrate the psychological or to shift emotions to some kind of concrete action, vocalisation or movement on stage. If they couldn't do this, Brecht worked with them to abandon their inner life entirely.

He also expected actors to be thinking actors, to truly understand the rich, diverse, contradictory society that they lived in; to notice the way in which poor, uneducated and marginalised members of society were unfairly treated, manipulated and controlled by the upper classes and those in positions of power. Brecht directed his actors to observe

and experience the world around them, from the mundane to the bizarre, the simple to the complex, the routine to the unexpected. He wanted them to then bring this understanding into the rehearsal space and use it, whether in the method to carry out a simple physical task or to communicate to the audience a social injustice.

Brecht was repulsed that theatre had become an exclusive upper- and middle-class experience, and instead he aimed to make drama works that were accessible for everyone, especially the masses. He stripped a script's story back to its bare bones and worked tirelessly to raise the subtext to the surface, so that the audience could understand every detail of the plot, every nuance of a role, every implication of an act. He often insisted on simple, versatile set pieces in productions, such as a chair for a chaise longue couch or a table for a ceremonial altar. Brecht would direct the actors to interact with the prop and set pieces in a way that added meaning to the objects and established time and space, instead of relying on complex scenography.

To minimise the emotional involvement of the audience with the characters and their plights, Brecht made frequent use of open white lighting. Colours, textural lighting patterns and other lighting design conventions can create psychologically-rich moods and powerful ambience, something Brecht was keen to avoid. In some productions the actors were directed to change their costumes in full view of the audience, rather than off stage hidden in the dressing -rooms, once again to keep members of the audience at a distance from dramatic action and constantly remind them that the play is a play and not real life. These conventions (such as changing on stage, using stark lighting, keeping props simple and relying on actors' *gestus* to communicate the psychology, emotionality, values and beliefs of characters) are part of the *Verfremdungseffekt*.

Brecht developed and used this technique, often referred to as the V-effekt (or V-effect in English), to alienate the audience from the dramatic action so that they were more clearly able to observe human behaviour, identify injustices and unethical practices, understand the core message of the directorial vision and rationalise an action plan for their own intentions, behaviour and actions in the future.

In Brecht's early years he directed the actors to imitate the natural chaos of real life by using cluttered spacing on stage, with messy or seemingly haphazard movement. In later years, however, Brecht came to the realisation that even natural chaos has order, systems and controls by institutional and governing bodies. His use of space became more patterned and the actors within the space needed to use more measured movement than they had done in the past, in a more prescriptive and demonstrative style.

When moving from sections of speaking to singing, Brecht directed the actors not to pretend it was a seamless transition, but to be aware of the real stop speaking/start singing change that it was, plus to demonstrate this awareness to the audience. Even when moving from regular speech to heightened speech, Brecht directed the actors to show the audience they were a man or woman choosing to speak in a more stylised, excessive way, informing the audience that a change in communication style was necessary in order to adequately communicate content.

Gestus

A Brechtian acting technique whereby the actors use expressive physical gestures, together with deliberate gists (attitudes), in order to convey specific meaning without allowing the audience to become too emotionally involved with the play.

Verfremdungseffekt

Alienation effect in English. A technique first employed in the West by Bertolt Brecht to distance the audience from the action, allowing them to think about, rather than emotive over, the events, as well as their causes and impacts.

Internet exploration

Hear from an actor who worked with Brecht:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbD_Frmga2E

Activity 3.5: Borrowing from Brecht to direct

1. As a director working with two or three actors on an excerpt or scene from a play you're studying in class prepare it for performance using a Brechtian directing and epic theatre production approach. (For more information see **Chapters 2: Acting** and **15: Form and Style**).
2. Write a report that details:
 - your rehearsal process
 - how you used a Brechtian approach
 - why this approach suited the script
 - what you would do differently to improve the next time you direct.

JERZY GROTOWSKI

Grotowski's unique style of directing and working with actors was honed across many years. As a young director in the late 1950s and early 1960s, although experimental, Grotowski focused on producing a dramatic work for an end goal; performance. He used the workshop and rehearsal time to prepare and craft a theatrical piece in order to perform it for an audience.

From 1962 onward his theatrical experimentation became much more focused on the dramatic and acting processes themselves, with performance being a by-product of the investigative process. Grotowski worked deliberately with his company of actors at the Theatre of Thirteen Rows on research, exploration and experimentation. This process-driven goal was cemented in 1965 when the group renamed itself the Laboratory Theatre and devoted itself primarily to theatrical research and investigation. It was during this period that Grotowski lead the actors through highly stylised and physical acting activities, reminiscent of the Asian theatrical techniques and styles that he experienced on the travels of his younger days.

Grotowski's work as a theatre practitioner, researcher and director of Laboratory Theatre was built on the practice of asceticism. Conscientious self-discipline, rigorous physical training, abstinence from many life-pleasures and total connectivity of the



physical with the internal were key to his work. He sought to eliminate all that was superfluous to or preventative from the connection of actor and spectator (audience member), something he advocated was the core purpose of drama. This connection was inherent in every aspect of his direction and his work, from the actors to the material they worked with, from the design components to the configuration of the audience seating.

This dramatic belief and exploratory goal led Grotowski to develop *Poor Theatre*. A style of drama that did away with elaborate sets, costumes, lighting and sound, and instead stripped these elements, and the actors, back to their bare essentials. He directed the actors to be inventive with their use of props and set pieces. A scarf could be a blanket one moment, a bird the next, followed finally by a candle flame. Grotowski would have everyone enter the space together, actors and audience members as equals. The former were there to present and the latter to witness, the actors to give and the audience to receive.

Grotowski did not 'train' his actors in skills because he did not believe in actors developing a repertoire of tools and techniques. Instead his primary aim was to work with them to eliminate absolutely everything and anything that was a barrier to self in performance; all disconnections, imitations and falsehoods. This accessing of the raw, real self was something he called the *total act*. According to Grotowski the total act is fundamental for an actor to be able to achieve an *act of communion* with spectators during a theatrical experience.

Not only did Grotowski direct actors to experience the total act, he also worked with them to eliminate any sense of voluntarily acting. This included *not* recreating something done in rehearsal, nor initiating a particular state of being or accessing something discovered in an investigative session. Instead he directed actors to have internal passivity or *non-action* when acting. This is reflective of wu-wei, a state of complete mind-body-soul connection from the Tao religion that allows the actor to be open to anything, to be triggered by any impetus and be able to do anything naturally on stage.

Asceticism

A lifestyle based on abstinence (removal) of worldly pleasures that may distract the individual from the achievement of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual goals.

Poor theatre

A dramatic style developed by Jerzy Grotowski that relies on minimalistic design, expelling clutter from the stage space and the actor's performance, in order to develop a connected actor-audience relationship.

Total act

A state experienced by an actor when s/he is authentically allowing their natural impulses to clearly and fully be directed towards a specific point, one that is fundamental to the performance.

Act of communion

A special, connected, transparent relationship between actor and audience member in Jerzy Grotowski's work that is only achieved by eliminating everything superfluous to the drama work.

Non-action

A state of the actor where they are only impulse-driven, so that every external or internal change is connected to the core, raw and real.

Internet exploration

Hear from Grotowski himself about his drama work at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1nA4HCa6zI

(You will need to click the cc button to get the subtitles)

Activity 3.6: Borrowing from Jerzy Grotowski to direct

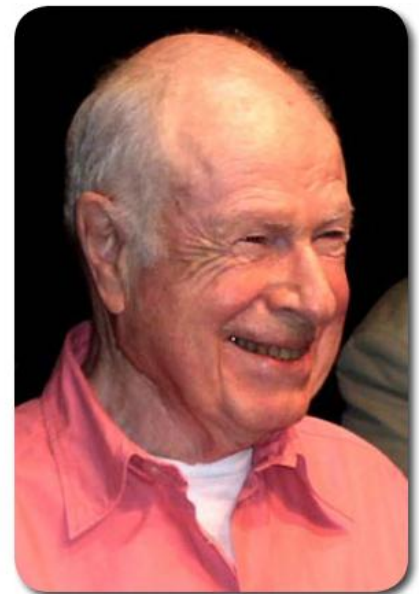
1. As a director working with two or three actors on an excerpt or scene from a play you're studying in class prepare it for performance using Grotowski's directing and Poor Theatre production approach. (For more information see **Chapters 2: Acting** and **15: Form and Style**).
2. Write a report that details:
 - your rehearsal process
 - how you used a Grotowskian approach
 - why this approach suited the script
 - what you would do differently to improve the next time you direct.

PETER BROOK

Similar to Brecht and Grotowski, director Peter Brook's work doesn't rely on set-heavy playing spaces, realistic script realisation and typical methods of performance. Instead Brook uses innovative scenography, a blended approach to script realisation and methods of performance that are often considered atypical of other contemporary directors. Specifically in directing actors, Brook focuses much more on physical ways to tell a story and shape characters, rather than using internal psychologically-driven methods. In doing so, the cliché of letting actions speak more loudly than words resonates in his productions. Brook works with actors to find the invisible in staging drama works. This is something he termed *Holy Theatre* or *Theatre of the Invisible-Made-Visible*.

Brook's direction focuses on making things that are invisible to the audience, visible. This includes through:

- highly physical, stylised movement and spatially dynamic interactions of the roles and characters
- the addition of roles such as ghosts, spirits and other ethereal beings
- specific, highly impactful and always meaningful special effects and occurrences
- sense-stimulating production values that work both individually and holistically.
- the use of adapted or non-traditional performance venues
- the use of relatively bare performance spaces.



Holy theatre

Dramatic performance that explores and communicates the intangible, unseen and immeasurable parts of human existence. The term was first used by Peter Brook.

Production values

Design components realised during performance.

By using the term *holy* Brook is referring not to theatre as a religion or faith, but rather that the practitioners and audience members approach, value and experience dramatic works with a type of religious zeal. That being part of drama works, whether as performer or spectator, is a way to communally experience revelations about humankind and to uncover more about the mysteries of being alive. One of the many ways that Brook's work and direction differs from that of Brecht is that he believes in theatre as a vehicle for everyone to discover more about human existence, rather than an avenue for a theatre ensemble to teach specific truths and political views to an audience.

By using the term *invisible* Brook's direction focuses on creating communication acts based on a need to pass on a particular emotion between actor and audience, production elements and audience. If the audience are unknowingly or subconsciously affected by an act in performance it is, for them, an invisible experience. If, however, the audience are consciously moved by the act it is for them a visible experience. For example agonising guttural animalistic wails of a man at his murdered lover's grave are more likely to affect the audience in some way than if he tried to hide his sobbing. This prompting of the audience to react and the raising of their awareness, this making the invisible visible, is the corner stone of Brook's direction whenever working with actors, designers and theatre artists.

In order to make the invisible visible, Brook breaks with many established theatrical conventions. He continuously strives not to imitate reality, but to go beyond the boundaries of reality, to break the rules of theatre, to challenge the expectations of audience, all in order to find out more about human beings. If an audience expects a certain type of venue, he might change the venue. If they're used to being a particular proximity from the actors, he might bring the actors closer, perhaps place them at an unusual level or remove physical barriers between them and the audience. If people are used to seeing pretend or highly-manufactured water, earth, wind or other natural elements on stage, Brook might not only bring the real thing into the playing space but somehow have the audience interact with it. He might even shift an audience and the production out to a non-theatrical venue where the water is a real stream, the ground is the actual earth and the wind blowing is made by nature and not an electric fan. Of course the only reason Brook would consider doing any of these things is if they helped achieve the holy act; bringing the actors and audience together in some kind of communion, making the invisible visible, serving the directorial/creative vision, helping to tell the story or revealing insights about the characters.

One historical style that Brook draws heavily on in his direction is Antonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty* from the 1920s. Artaud utilised acting and design in such a way as to shock the audience into a new thinking and alternative states of being. Unexpected occurrences, displacing events, affronting behaviour, seemingly invasive design components and other violent elements make up this theatrical style, all with the aim to shift the audience into some kind of spiritual awakening. Brook uses many of these practices, but where Artaud focused on enlightenment spiritually, Brook focuses more on enlightenment about human kind.

Theatre of cruelty

A style of dramatic performance first developed by Antonin Artaud that attempts to mentally, physically, emotionally and/or spiritually shock the audience into understanding the repressed, primitive nature of humankind.

Hint

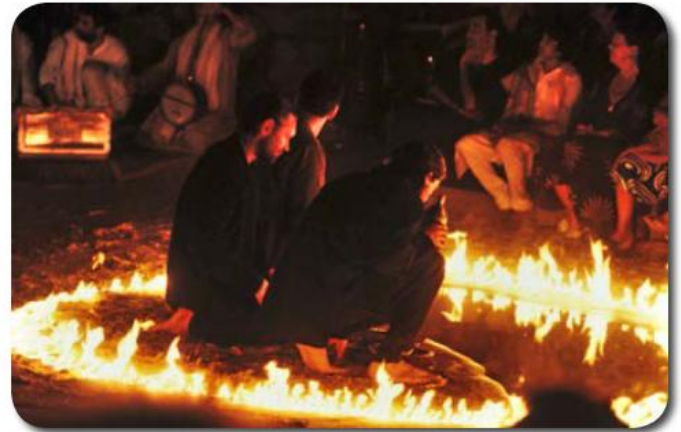
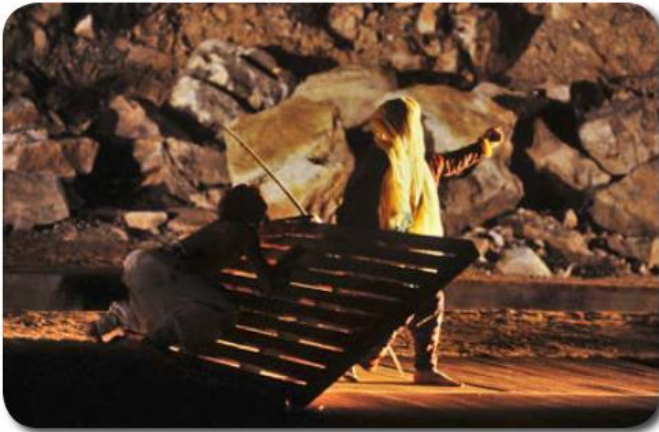
'Cruelty' in this theatrical style does not mean violence, brutality or torture. Instead it is some kind of extreme, powerful, often unexpected force or immersive experience that thrusts itself on the actors and the audience bringing about a change in state.

Internet exploration

Watch an interview with Peter Brook at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sx2qHHFS5Yk

Below are images taken by Daniel Cande of one of Brook's most famous productions *Le Mahabharata*. This play had three parts and went for a total of nine performance hours. Although the images are of the original 1985 Avignon, France performance, Brook toured the production across the world for several years.



Activity 3.7: Borrowing from Peter Brook to direct

1. As a director working with two or three actors on an excerpt or scene from a play you're studying in class prepare it for performance using a Peter Brook style of directing and a holy theatre production approach. You could also draw from some of the conventions of Antonin Artaud's theatre of cruelty. (For more information see **Chapters 2: Acting** and **15: Form and Style**).
2. Write a report that details:
 - your rehearsal process
 - how you used a holy theatre (or theatre of cruelty) approach
 - why this approach suited the script
 - what you would do differently to improve the next time you direct.

CHAPTER 4

Scenography

Key Concepts

- ☛ Scenography
- ☛ Principles of design
 - Elements of design
- ☛ Design options
 - Props
- ☛ The scenography design process
 - Creative team discussion
 - Script clues
 - Research and investigation
- Experimentation and drafting
- Card models
- Dramatic elements
- ☛ Scenography and performance styles
 - Representational drama and the box set
 - Presentational drama and set versatility
- ☛ Sourcing set pieces

SCENOGRAPHY

Prior to the turn of the 20th century a production's theatrical design was in some ways secondary to characterisation and on-stage action; it had been an addition that aimed to adorn the roles and characters, provide functional furniture pieces and signifying backdrops, and impress the audience with technical tricks. But over the last 120 years, this focus has shifted vastly. Design has become very much an integral part of the realisation of overall creative vision, and a way to provide a creative environment in which the dramatic action can unfold, through which dramatic meaning can be communicated. The creative vision, building off the director's vision, is imagined collectively by the members of the creative team.

The scenographic, costume, lighting and sound designers collaborate in the creation of their designs. They also need to work very closely with the other members of the creative team, such as the director and dramaturg, to make sure there is harmony to the designs, and that they work effectively on both artistic and functional levels together.

Scenography

Design of the theatrical space including, but not limited to, the set, incorporating the elements of drama in order to create a place for performance whilst engaging the audience.

Director's vision

The clear and defined conceptualisation by the director of the way a dramatic work will be realised in performance in order to communicate identified meaning to a particular audience, in a specific location at a point in time.

Inner world of the play

The imagined setting, including the time and space of a drama work, reflective of real cultural, socio-economic, political, historical and environmental landscapes.

A realistic set for an August Wilson play in the Thomas Theater at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival
Photographer Amy Richard



The scenographer is responsible for creating the set and props for a play's performance. They also need to look holistically at the production and design anything and everything that will form, be part of and have an impact on the entire playing space. A scenographer is required to manipulate the space in relation to the elements of drama such as the character/role and relationships, situation, time and space, symbol and metaphor, mood and atmosphere. Not only must the scenography be an effective place for the performance to physically take place in, it must also be contextually appropriate. That is, it should successfully communicate to the audience historical, geographical, environmental, political and social information about the inner world of the play.

Elements of drama

Components essential to every drama work that create, communicate and increase dramatic meaning.

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

When working on a production a scenographer will use, whether consciously or not, the principles of design to generate their creations. The principles are the rules that designers, similar to all visual artists, must work with if their creative concepts are going to be realised effectively on stage. Being effective is made up of both aesthetics and functionality. The aesthetics of the design are directly related to whether the work is visual appealing, engaging and/or interesting for the audience. Functionality refers to whether the scenography ties in harmoniously with the other design areas, the overall creative vision of the production and, at a fundamental practical level, can be realised successfully on stage and in performance.

Aesthetics

In general:

The engagement generated and appeal invoked by data about an object or creature that is collected by the human senses.

In philosophy:

A critical reflection on visual and performing arts, culture and nature.

There are eleven principles of design that scenographers must work with. These are:

Balance

The elements are laid out symmetrically. The arrangement can also be asymmetrical yet balanced, if the audience experiences a psychological sense of equilibrium.

Contrast

The use of one element, or group of elements, is juxtaposed with or against another. The objects in the design are seen to be in opposition to each other by the viewer (audience member).

Emphasis

When an element is used at a specific place in the design in such a way so as to draw the viewer's eye to it. Most usually this focal point is accented because of its importance. In visual arts emphasis is often called dominance.

Harmony

Each of the design elements used relate to one another in some way. Most typically they will share a common trait or are used similarly.

Movement

The elements are being used in such a way that the design seems to be active, when it is not. The use of diagonals, changes in light/dark and the overlapping of similar shapes can suggest movement.

Pattern

A consistent repeated use of an element in a recognisable way. These can be made through regular repetitions in the same or connected areas of the design to form a sense of connection within the work. If irregular repetitions are made then any sense of connection is likely to be disjointed or absent entirely.

Repetition

Duplicating an element in the same way throughout all or several parts of the design. Reusing the element in this way helps to create a sense of cohesiveness and unity in the design.

Rhythm

The elements are used so that not only movement within a design is suggested, but that the movement is ongoing.

Principles of design

Guidelines used by members of the creative team in the generation of artistic ideas.

Although utilised for centuries, architect Walter Gropius streamlined them and arts students first formally studied them at Bauhaus School in Germany in 1919.

Scale/Proportion

Where the same or related elements, such as shapes or lines, are used multiple times in different sizes. The size of one shape is relative to its different-sized twin, and therefore depth of field or distance is suggested.

Unity

The relationship between the elements brings them together in a particular way. In combination the whole is greater than the sum of each individual part.

Variety

One element is used differently in one section, when compared to how it has been used in most of the design. There is some sort of subtle or overt change.

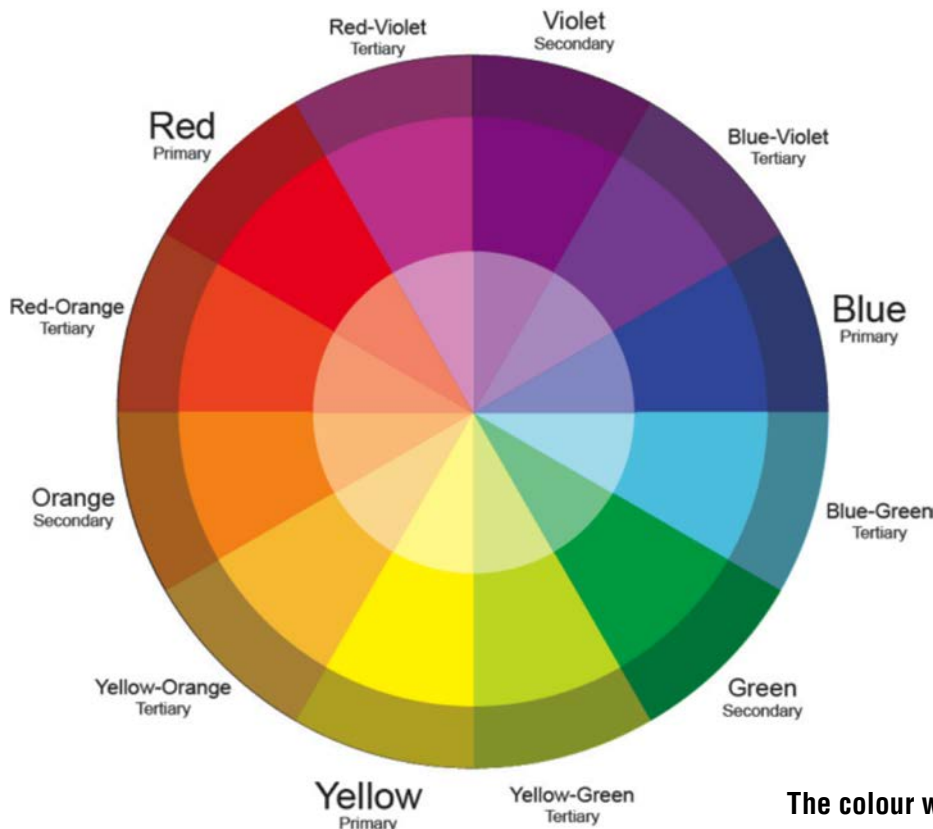
Elements of design

In contrast to the governing principles, the elements of design are the components that scenographers use within the design principles to create their work. In theatrical design, scenographers need to consider six elements:

Elements of design

Characteristics essential to artistic works. They are the individual components that can be defined in isolation and yet are treated in various ways and sequences to create a design.

Colour



The colour wheel

This is the part of light reflected by objects that human beings see as colour. The three primary colours that form the basis of all others are red, yellow and blue. It is by mixing these colours together in different combinations that other colours, called secondary colours, are formed. Complimentary colours are found opposite one another on the colour wheel. They are especially important to the design principles of contrast and emphasis.

Line

A series of points that, side-by-side, appear linked. Although a line on the canvas may appear finite, it's possible to imagine it continuing on beyond the design borders.

Shape

When a line surrounds or encloses space then it creates a shape, otherwise known as a form. It's possible to differentiate a shape from the other shapes or from space around it either by its boundaries (lines) or colour.

Space (including 3D form)

Sometimes space refers to the area that a form occupies, and at other times space is the area in-between two forms. In scenography space can be two-dimensional, such as the surface area an object occupies on a painted backdrop or perhaps the distance and planes between two such painted objects. More importantly theatrical space is three-dimensional: it is the physical space that a chair occupies within the playing space and it's also the distance between two such chairs.

Texture

The quality of the physical layers of the design. This can be the actual quality of the surface, or simply the appearance of the surface.

Value (including tone)

Value refers to the shading added to part of the design that suggests volume, weight and three-dimensionality. It's usually achieved by varying the lightness or darkness of elements, or by putting one thing alongside some contrasting thing. Similar to vocal tone, adjusting the value of elements in a design can suggest emotions and feelings.

Vocal tone

The variance of space within the muscles of the mouth, nose and throat areas to add emotional characteristics to vocalisation.

Internet exploration

Find out more about the elements of design at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-cgXR8tCkM

More information on the elements of design, including line, is available at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuTHWYt_shk

The element of colour is focused on at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UdAbVHzQ6Q

Activity 4.1: Principles of design experimentation

1. Consider how some of the design elements (eg. colour, space and value) and principles (eg. balance, contrast and scale) were utilised in a production of *Mother Courage* at the UK National Theatre:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYolkxJzbBM&list=PL48EDBCB4915D0ACA&index=6
2. Choose two elements and two principles to discuss in a report. Make sure you use examples from the production

Design options

A scenographer will use the elements as the basic design components and the principles to then organise, sequence and utilise those elements, in order to create their scenic design. In theatre, by contrast to many visual art forms, the scenographer is only ever working with three-dimensional space. Because of this they can draw on a vast array of different materials, equipment, objects and techniques to realise their design.

Set

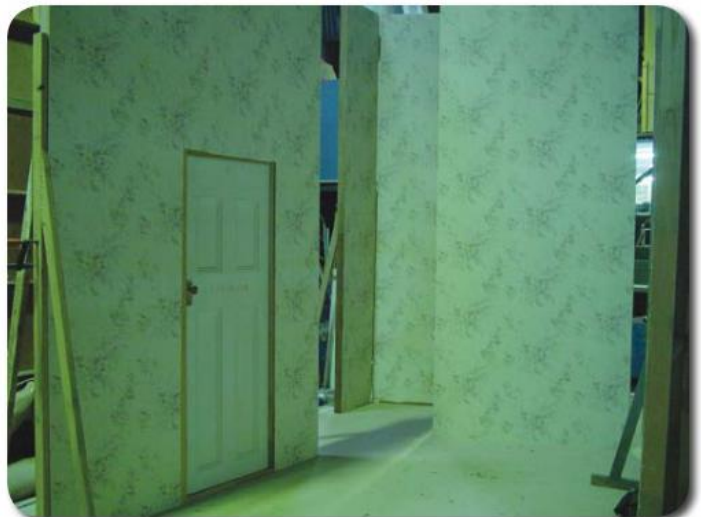
Move items onto and place them within the playing space for use in performance.

Strike

Remove items from the playing space once they have been used during performance.

Flat

This is a rectangular frame, typically made from wood, onto which a canvas is stretched. Flats are often freestanding and supported from behind with an a-frame, which is then held in place by sandbags. Sometimes flats are fixed to the floor for a production and remain in place throughout the performance. Flats are most usually painted to create mini-backdrops. They can also be constructed completely of timber, with plywood replacing the canvas.



Foam sculptures

Large pieces of foam can be sculpted into specific shapes with detailed contours or decorative ornaments, and then painted to look realistic. The type of foam used is similar to that found inside the boxes of new electronics to keep the equipment from getting damaged in transit. Foam sculptures make great set pieces not only because they can

be customised to suit the time period and cultural and artistic demands of the set, but also because they are extremely lightweight and thus can be set or struck from the stage very easily and quickly.



Stairs

One way a scenographer can split the levels of the performance space and give the illusion of two different environments or rooms, without having to add walls, doors or windows is by using stairs. By using stairs in combination with rostra independent settings (locations) can be suggested to the audience.

Scaffold

Temporary raised metallic towers and platforms are scaffolds, and these can be used to enable actors and crew to move from one level of the performance space to another. They can be integrated into the set behind flats and backdrops, allowing characters unseen to go 'up' or 'down' levels. Scaffolding is used in the non-theatrical construction industry to help the workers reach the higher levels of the new buildings. Scaffolds traditionally were made of wood, a practice that is still popular in Asia, such as in when constructing the adapted venue spaces for classical Chinese opera.





The scaffolding bars and ladders can be hidden from the view of the audience, with only the platform floor itself exposed. This is more popular in representational drama where it's important to create the illusion that the inner world of the play is real. In presentational drama, however, the scaffolding may be fully exposed to the audience, as a reminder that the play itself is a performance and not an imitation of real life.

Presentational drama

Drama that shows itself as a theatrical experience to the audience whilst the dramatic action unfolds. Because it focuses on the communication of ideas or the offering of a theatrical experience it often makes contact with the audience during performance.

Representational drama

Drama that imitates life as it explores human psychology by placing characters in life-like situations and relationships on stage. Because it's an imitation of life the characters don't know the audience is there.

Rostra

Scenographers may use raised rectangular platforms within their scenic design. Typically this is either across the entire stage to raise the playing space and improve the sightlines of the audience, or in partial areas to designate separate locations.



Masking

Theatrical matt black wool curtains that absorb light are called masking. In representational drama they are typically hung behind and at the sides of the playing space to conceal the offstage areas. While they may be used in the same way in presentational drama, they are often more exposed to the audience and sometimes are even brought into the playing space where they are used by the actors as set pieces.

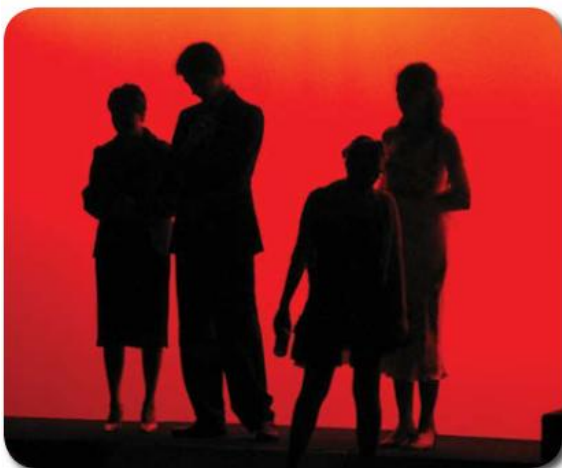
Inner world of the play

The imagined setting, including the time and space of a drama work, reflective of real cultural, socio-economic, political, historical and environmental landscapes.



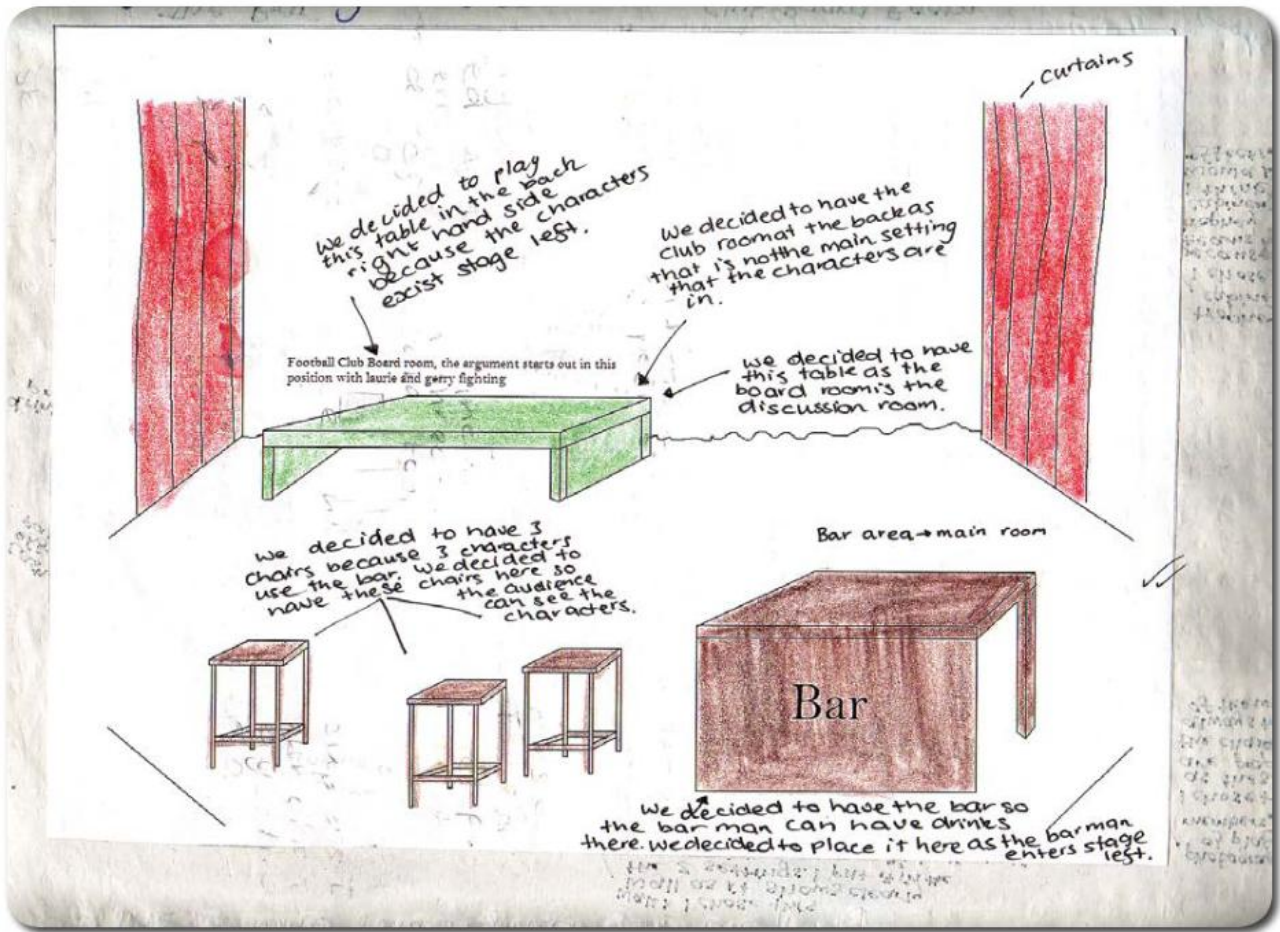
Scrim

Stretched cloth, screens, scrims and the like can be used in scenography. A cloth might be used functionally to separate two spaces or it could be used to project images onto. These could be backlit, producing silhouettes, or used to project images and moving footage.



Cyclorama

This is a large taut white cloth that stretches across the width of the stage at the back of the playing space. Lighting, often coloured, is focused onto the cyclorama to help communicate the setting time and space, as well as to create mood and atmosphere. Increasingly cycloramas are being used in theatre as projection screens for still images or moving footage.



Example of a student's set design

Activity 4.2: Scenography design

- Using the set pieces and options on the previous pages, design the scenography for a scene or play you are working on in class at the moment. You should consider and justify:
 - the style of the play
 - the venue you will perform in
 - what and how each piece will be used
 - where you will use the set pieces in the performance space
 - if you will need any other set furniture pieces.
- You should draw a top view (bird's eye view) and a front-on view.
- Don't forget to label your design and to write a report justifying each decision.

Space

The geographical place, such as the room, building, suburb, town, city, state and country of the inner-world of the play. It reflects, whether actual or imagined, the environmental physical and contextual factors of that place.

Time

The year, month, date, day and hour of the inner world of the play. It includes, whether actual or imagined, the environmental physical and contextual factors of that period.

Props

Items that can be picked up, carried or used by the characters or roles during performance are called properties, or 'props' for short. A personal prop is an item that is continuously carried on and off stage by an actor during the course of the performance and remains with the actor in their dressing room when they're not on stage. General props are those objects that are either pre-set on stage by the crew, carried on stage at some point by an actor, or used multiple times during the performance by different characters.

Props

Prop' is an abbreviation in drama commonly used instead of its full term 'property'. A property is an object that is used by a character on stage.

The responsibility of designing props usually falls to the scenographer. Sometimes personal props might be designed instead by a costume designer. They can be real working objects, especially in representational drama. The more stylised, rare or expensive a prop in reality, the more likely it is a fake version will be created for the stage.

Internet exploration

Have a sneak peak at the props department of the Royal Shakespeare Company at: www.rsc.org.uk/explore/60-seconds/how-to-get-a-head-in-props.aspx

Activity 4.3: Props

1. Choose one prop that is needed in a scene from a play you're working on in class at the moment.
2. Create a design for the prop on an A4 or A5 sheet, in colour and labeling the major features.
3. Make sure it is stylistically and contextually appropriate.
4. Write a paragraph justifying your creative and functional design choices.

The scenography design process

In order to create a successful design, a scenographer needs to follow a series of conceptual, experimentation and practical process steps. By making sure each step is carefully undertaken, the final product is more likely to include creative and innovative ideas that enable a stylistically accurate design, harmonious with the creative vision and perfect for the dramatic action to unfold within, that also functions efficiently and works seamlessly with all the other production elements.

Creative team discussion

Firstly the designer needs to read the play and meet with the director and, if possible, the other members of the creative team. The director will have a clear vision of how they want to create the overall production, which themes, focus areas and purpose they want it to concentrate on, what they are trying to say about the wider world and society, and how they propose saying it. Today some directors may have ideas, perhaps even some sketches, about how the playing space could be used or of some of the design components they'd like the designer to consider incorporating in their design. It is the job of the designer to investigate these suggestions, together with as many other new and different ideas and possibilities as possible, even if it means going back to the director with a totally different concept. Most importantly, the designer needs help to realise the overall creative vision through every element of the scenography.

In exploring the different stages of the scenography design process, this section will investigate the way a professional designer designed the scenography for a real production of Steven Berkoff's *Agamemnon* at the Singapore Repertory Theatre.

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Alex Brown – Set designer

An architect by profession, Alex is British (Scottish) by birth, and has travelled and worked in Africa, UK, North Cyprus and Hong Kong. He now lives and works in Singapore where he is director of design company Wu + Brown. Alex's most recent set designs include The Young Company's *Agamemnon*, *Little Prince* and the Lyric Opera's *La Traviata*.

Below are some of the concepts and design work of Alex's set for *Agamemnon*

Script clues

The scenographer will reread the script (several times) looking for clues that will have an impact on their design work and also to understand the play from the point of view of the director and other creatives. They will visit the venue to investigate the performance space and backstage layout, the auditorium sightlines and to gain a general feel for the space.

Research and investigation

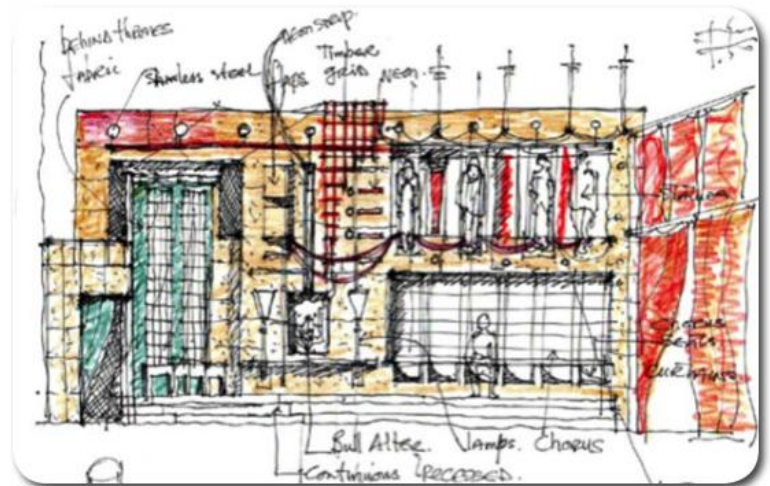
A scenographer will conduct research to find out any historical, geographical, political, environmental or social factors which could have an impact on their design. This research could take the form of reading books, searching for internet information, interviewing people, making field trips to relevant urban constructions or natural environments, and observing people/events. Pictorial and written data will be gathered during this period for the designer to use as reference material; guidelines to continually refer back to.

The scenographer's research: Minoan history and culture



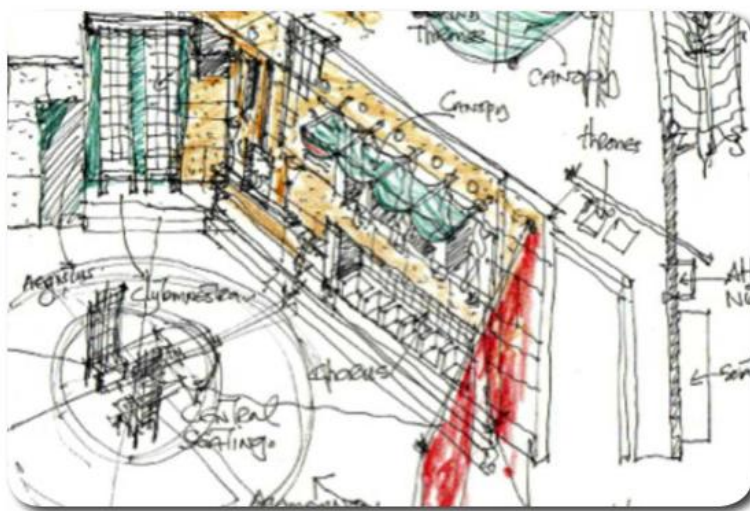
Experimentation and drafting

The designer will begin to explore their ideas and start to put them on the page. They sketch potential set pieces and props exploring colour, playing with texture, drawing and manipulating design motives and so on. They will then more formally begin to draft potential sets as two-dimensional drawings.



Once they are satisfied with the ideas and their developments, and have devised a set design, they will paint/draw a final draft. They will usually complete a front and a top view (bird's eye) of the design.

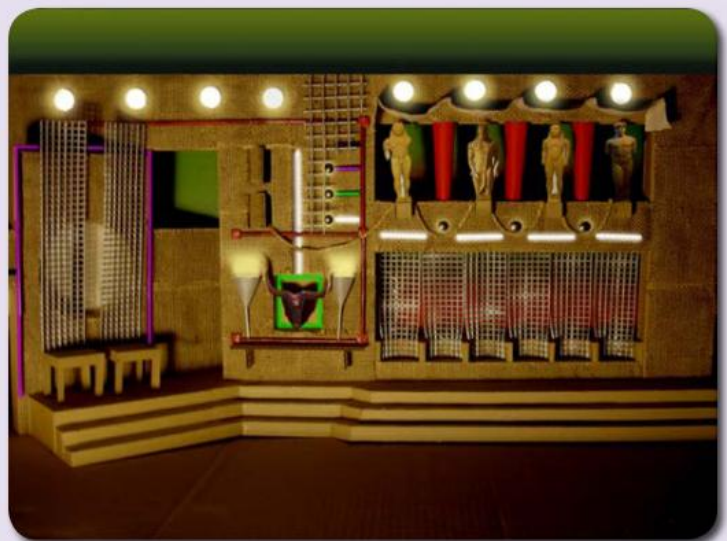
It's important that a scenographer remembers they are not a solo artist and throughout this process they need to continually dialogue with the director and other designers. This is to ensure everyone is moving towards similar goals and that their designs will function together harmoniously with the other components on stage in performance.



Key concepts from the designer of *Agamemnon* about their design are:

- a fusion of antique and modern imagery
- a highly textured set design using sackcloth on the walls
- an articulated and powerful flat wall set
- a slightly rundown decayed environment
- neon and detailed point lighting
- essentially sinister in feel.

Agememnon Final card model



Card models

It's then time to create a three-dimensional white card set model that is to scale and undertake costings for the creation of the proposed set. After initial approval of the white card model from the production manager and the director, a scenographer often produces a full-colour set model to scale. Finally the white card model or, if there is one, the full-colour set model will then be formally presented to the creative and production teams, cast and crew.

Once the scenographic design has been agreed to by the director and signed off by the production manager, the construction crew take over. They will build the set, paint the backdrops, source the set pieces and make any adjustments to existing furniture or sets which the company might want to recycle for the scenic design of this latest production.

Internet exploration

To hear about the design process go to:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UY9j8NOQhGQ

Activity 4.4: Script clues and design conclusions

1. Read over the initial notes of scenographer Andrew Lake after he combed the script of *The Haunting of Daniel* Gartrell by Reg Cribb when looking for script clues at the beginning his design process.
2. Consider the initial thoughts that Andrew made after reading and sleuthing through the script.

Past/ History/ Character

"The Well" – Sam Long

Dark Ominous Presence/ Darkness/ Haunting/ Spooky/ Never seeing the full picture.

Sepia Tone

Malevolent/ Hidden Power/ the birds are the Gargoyles/ owns the inhabitants

Kaos/ Decay/ anger

Aboriginal/ Back to the earth (buppini)

Staycess/ nothing moves

Design Notes - Andrew Lake

August 4, 2008

3. Consider the notes (on the following page) that Andrew made after sleuthing through the script during his second read.
4. Write a mini-report of three paragraphs discussing what script clues might have lead Andrew to come up with some of his initial thoughts.

The Haunting of Daniel Gartrell

Perth Theatre Company

SCENE 1 pg3 - *We hear a voice from the darkness. These words crawl into the ether.*

A darkened room. We sense its mustiness and disorder even through the dim light. We hear a knock at the door upstage. There is no answer. Another knock We hear a voice coming from outside.

A Darken Room

A Large vase – a present from Daniels ex wife

A Torch

(Scene 1 in the dark moonlight through windows)

" If I want to roll up the carpet & shove it up my ass then I will do that"

An Arm Chair

A Glass of wine

Tedium Vite?

The are in the western suburbs Sydney

A Cat

Bedroom Door – where is it

Drinks Cabinet (Lots of booze to choose from)

Black cockatoo's are on the roof they are every where On the roof

The Latvian play?

Drinking Brandy

Craige has a dictophone

Real ice in the brandy

SCENE 2 pg15 - *Lights up. Post dinner. Daniel is pouring a couple of wines. Daniel holds up a scotch glass.*

Glass of scotch

Wine Bottles & Glass's

Daniel tilts Craig's head back in the chair. The whole chair follows. – pg20

Daniel throws his glass pg 23 (would be costly)

SCENE 3 pg27 - *It is the next day. A hard looking woman of about 39 is unpacking some groceries. There is a knock at the door.*

Large Water Melon

Pg28 Daniel is out on the back porch (where?)

A Bin?

Sarah looks out the back door (where is it) pg 31

Daniel walks in from back porch (where?)

SCENE 4 pg37 - *We hear strains of the poem drifting out of the blackness as if from a dream.*

The screech of the cockatoos drown out the poem.

The screeching stops abruptly as if sucked out of the air.

There is a knock at the door. The room is black. Another knock.

No answer.

The door is pushed open. It creaks slowly.

Craig turns the light on.

Daniel is seated in his armchair. He barely registers Craigs' presence. He has a drink in his hand

(the cat has some significance)

the house is a pigsty

the pistol (gun) is a water gun with vodka in it

Old wooden Trunk – our whole history is in that trunk

Musky, Old, Newspaper clippings, Reviews, Lots of photo's.

Design Notes - Andrew Lake

August 4, 2008

Dramatic elements


Scenography, like all the design components of a theatrical production, needs to incorporate, create and reflect the dramatic elements, including role, character, relationships, situation, space and time. It is also one opportunity, from a more artistic viewpoint, to work with and communicate symbol and metaphor, mood and atmosphere.

Using symbol and metaphor in a design is a perfect way to help explore themes and the dramatic meaning. These can be overt and functional symbols, such as the thrones (of royal characters) being raised higher than the regular playing space (for the lower classes) in *Agamemnon* explored earlier in this chapter. They could also be less tangible links, such as that set's hessian walls signifying the earthy-coarseness of Agamemnon's adulterous wife and cousin.

The emotions and feelings of the characters and the audience members can be influenced by the scenography, as can the pervading atmosphere of a scene or the entire production. For example *Agamemnon*'s high walls, practical (non-theatrical) lights facing the playing space/audience, and large god-like sculptures may contribute to the emotions of insecurity or detachedness experienced by the characters and roles, and perhaps give them an oppressive feeling. The tall mesh panels and red curtains could help to create an authoritative-heavy, uncaring atmosphere, one with a great sense of foreboding, suggesting that insurmountable difficulties lie ahead in the production.



Activity 4.5: Draft design

1. Read through scenographer Andrew Lake's initial notes and draft design that he sent through to the director of a production *The Haunting of Daniel Gartrell* at the Subiaco Arts Centre. These are presented on the following page...
 2. Write a report discussing what you notice about the:
 - style of the play
 - creative vision
 - dramatic elements (time, space, situation, mood, atmosphere, symbol, metaphor, character/role, relationships)
 - way the set reflects the initial script clues in **Activity 4.4**
 - acting functionality of the set.
- 

The Haunting of Daniel Gartrell

Design Notes: Andrew Lake

4th August 2008

Hi Kirsty here we go, this is just a draft to start getting things going and for you to be able to comment, think of it as food for thought. I'll rant and rave & I've some questions but I'll come to that. I've started from quite a literal point of view re: the space but I'm trying to provide an asymmetrical space so we don't get trapped into an apex (the corner) Some things will be in note form, let me know as I'm sure you will ha ha.... if something doesn't make sense.

I'm drawn to finding more uses for the books - broken leg on table replaced by books - Ottoman legs books (what do you think about an Ottoman?) - Couch & chair at table stabilized by books of junk, even a shelf that runs across the top packed with junk, books etc. Particularly so the edge is not clearly defined.

Re: Furniture and colour, what do you think about the chair being the only thing with any sense of colour everything else is of a darker and similar tone? and everything is well worn.

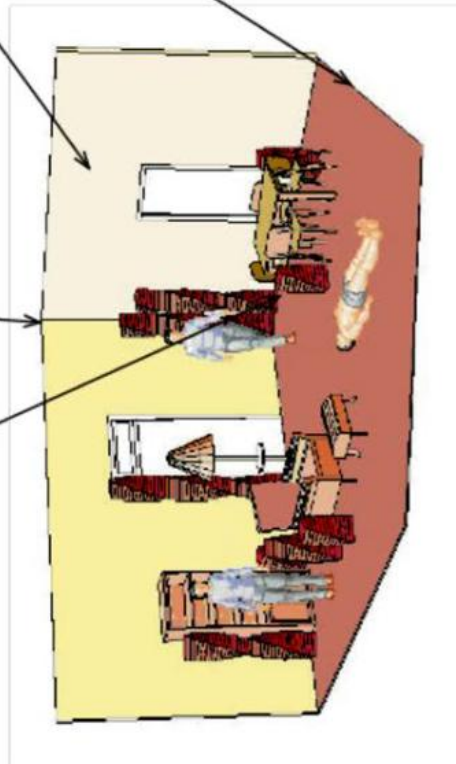
Re: Daniels torch I imagine its a dolphin like the ones your dad or grandad would have had really old and shithouse same tonal quality as the rest of the room.

Disregard the colour of the model its just helps to distinguish between objects.

Walls crappy with non-descript wall paper slightly pealed in some areas and stained from, smoke, dirt, grease etc. - the colour a dirty beige fading darker at the top and bottom.

Disregard the hard edge as discussed I imagine it is worn dirty carpet that fades darker towards the U/ & D/S edges giving you full use of the D/S areas.

I suppose I'm working on it becoming more organic but grounded in realism, bearing in mind the cost. As it is we will be pushing it.



Re: the doors I've been looking at the spatial arrangement so one door is not more prevalent than the other. The stage right being the front door & stage left the bedroom. I do have a number of concerns Re: on the back porch pg.28 Sarah looking out at him, and when he walks back in, whether there is a possibility of using the vomitorium(?) as another entrance exit? Same for Scene 8 the possibility of using it whether he is standing there calling puss or walks into it to exit? quite an interesting possibility assiting with the intimacy.

Conceptually it has a way to go but I think there is something in the spatial arrangement, particularly with the use of gobo's and the noir style, lots of fantastic lighting possibilities. I know there are things still missing but I'll pass them on as I progress.

Re: the smashing of the glass is there another way to approach this as it will be costly? pg.23

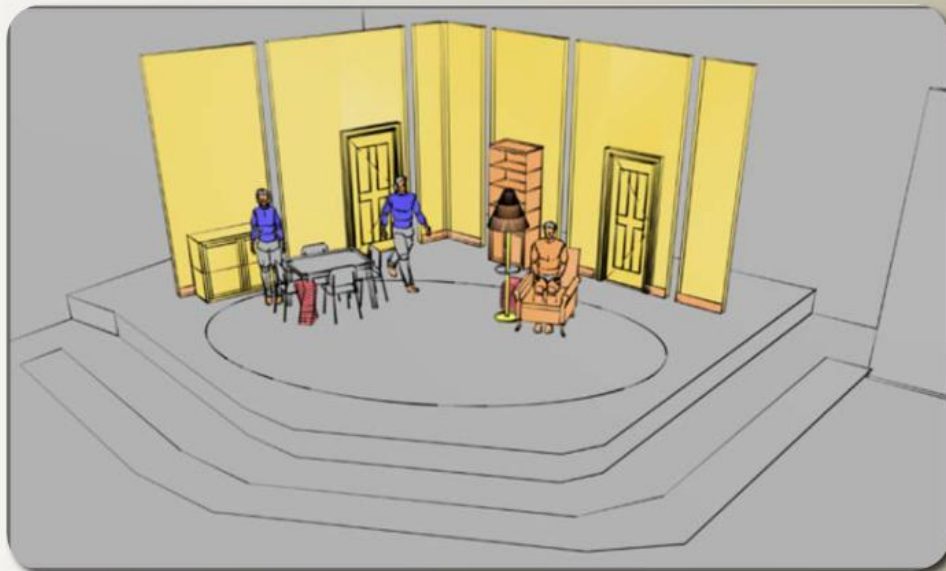
Activity 4.6: Final design analysis

1. Explore Andrew's design notes to the director about changes he was wanting to make to the design (See **Activity 4.5** for the initial draft design):

'Find a way to break the wall or leave gaps, cracks to create a sense of there being a malevolent presence surrounding Daniel's world, seeping in. Each strip between the cracks, still wallpapered and crappy fading blacker at the top and bottom. I suppose it is a reflection of where he is metaphorically and his psychological state of being.'

2. Investigate the final design that incorporated the changes in the front elevation view below and the aerial elevation view, colloquially called the bird's eye view, on the next page:

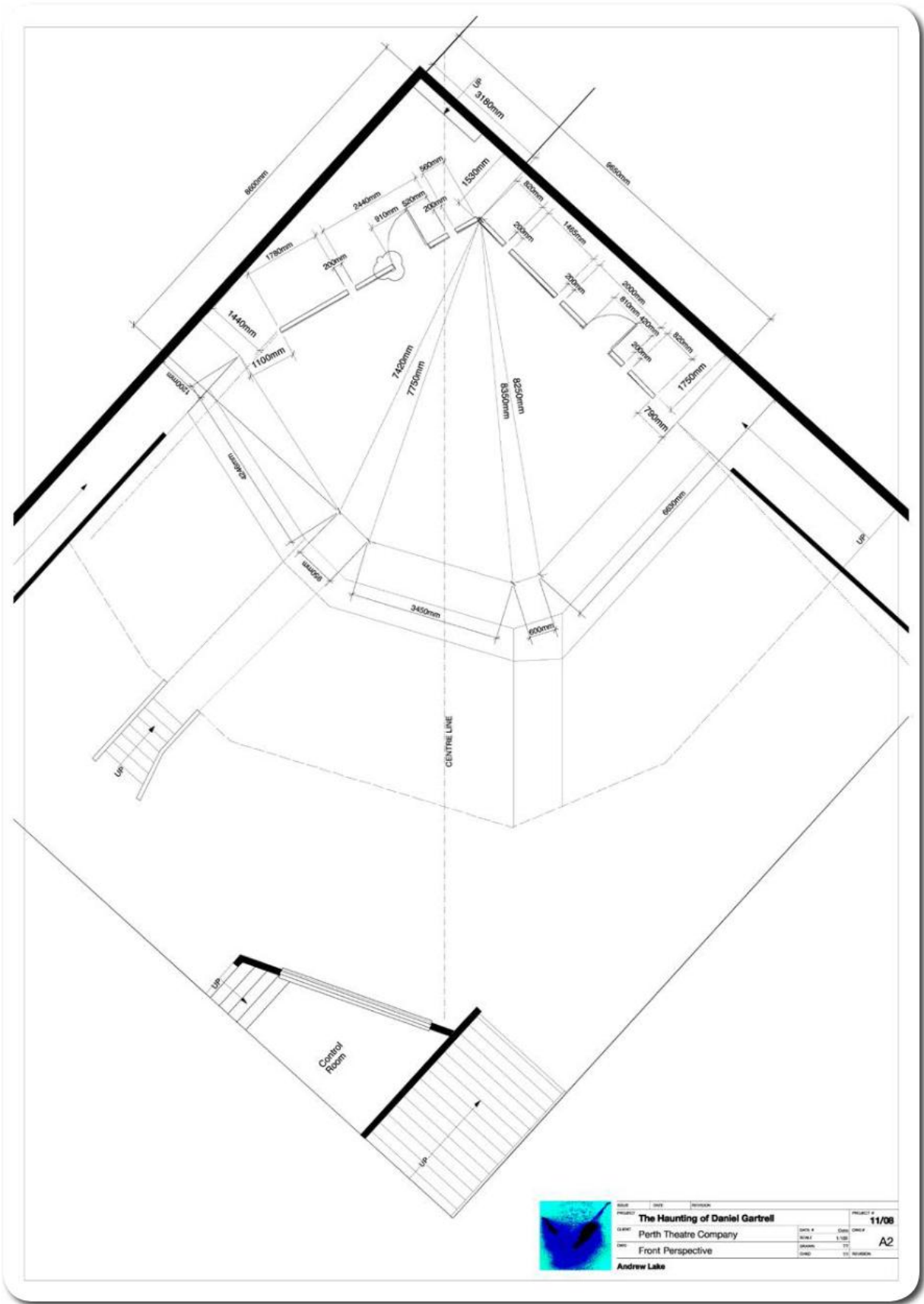
Elevation view
A drawing that shows the side or front of the design.



3. Write a report that:
 - outlines the way the final plan changed from the original sketch
 - discusses in what way the final design reflects Andrew's script clues, his initial ideas and his later notes.

Internet exploration

See the design drawings for a professional show at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5x2A6-GIXU



SCENOGRAPHY AND PERFORMANCE STYLES

Whilst there are endless possibilities in designing the scenography for a theatrical production, there are certain conventions that are commonly used in certain performance styles.

Representational drama and the box set

In representational genres a stage design convention that is often used is the Box Set. This is a scenic design that has three walls, one S/R, U/S and S/L, and sometimes even a ceiling. There are typically doors and windows in at least some of the three walls to allow for entrances and exits. If the venue has a proscenium arch, the S/R and S/L walls will usually connect to or extend behind the D/S arch.

The box set is extremely well suited to realistic and naturalistic plays because it is used to recreate the walls of a life-like room. Obviously there is little flexibility in such a set, because walls can't easily be moved during a performance. This means that the action of the entire play takes place in the one room of a box set. Sometimes the playing space behind the walls can be used and the audience watches the action through the open window or door. If there is an apron in front of the proscenium, then the designers and director may manipulate this space to form another playing area that is separate to the room of the box set beyond the arch.

Stage geography

The nine basic areas of the stage delineated by combining six terms; stage (S), right (R), left (L), up (U), down (D), centre (C).

Proscenium arch

The architectural vertical frame that surrounds the front of the stage separating the playing space from the audience.

Apron

The section of stage that protrudes out in front of the proscenium arch.

Hint

One way to overcome the immovability of a box set is to actually fly in the three walls for a particular scene. This means the theatre venue must have a fly tower above the stage where the set pieces can be stored when they are not being used. To rent a theatre with this facility, construct such a design and then operate it is usually very costly. Flying in a box, or any type of set, usually only happens on a big-budget production. Also it's likely there would be problems flying in S/R and S/L walls because they would need to be hung from up-to down-stage making them then physically clash with the horizontal lighting bars. Alternatively a box set could be trucked in (on wheels or tracks) from side stage. There would, however, need to be a great deal of wing space to store such a set piece and it would be highly unlikely that this off-stage space would be the equivalent of the entire width of the proscenium like a traditional box set.

Internet exploration

To investigate a professional box set go to:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahnIcII-EdM&gl=SG&hl=en-GB

Activity 4.7: Box set design

1. As a scenographer create the scenic design for a representational play that you're working on in class using a box set convention.
2. You should take the following into consideration when creating your scenography, the:
 - space and time of the inner world of the play
 - mood and atmosphere you'd like to create
 - symbol and metaphor that you could be reflected in the design
 - way you could reflect role, character and relationships in the design
 - logistics needs of the play (eg. the entrances and exits)
 - functional needs of the play (eg. the activities that need to take place in the performance space).
3. In your design, you should include:
 - an A3 coloured front-view drawing, with the major features labeled
 - an A3 black and white bird's eye view
 - a list of script clues with accompanying interpretation/artistic notes
 - A4 report discussing the:
 - artistic design choices
 - functional design choices
 - stylistic design choices.

Presentational drama and set versatility

Sometimes a designer needs to create a very versatile and highly stylised set to accommodate multiple settings within the same play. This is particularly common in presentational drama. One popular method to do this is designing the playing space so that its major design component is both immovable and also a relatively blank canvas that can be used in a wide variety of ways during performance. The changing time and space of the inner world of the play can then be communicated through the physicalisation of the actors and the dramatic action itself as it unfolds. See **Example 1** presented on the following page.

Another way a scenographer can create a design that allows for multiple settings within the same presentational play is to design the non-realistic set pieces so that they can be moved and configured in different ways to indicate the changing settings. As such set pieces need to be easy to move around the playing space, the designer may use castors (wheels) or consider lightweight, but strong material. See **Example 2** presented on page 123.



EXAMPLE 1

The same large rectangular sandpit and five packing crates change from a fruit market, to a meeting hall, and then to a farmed field.



Photos from *The Masrayana*
courtesy of The Open Stage

EXAMPLE 2



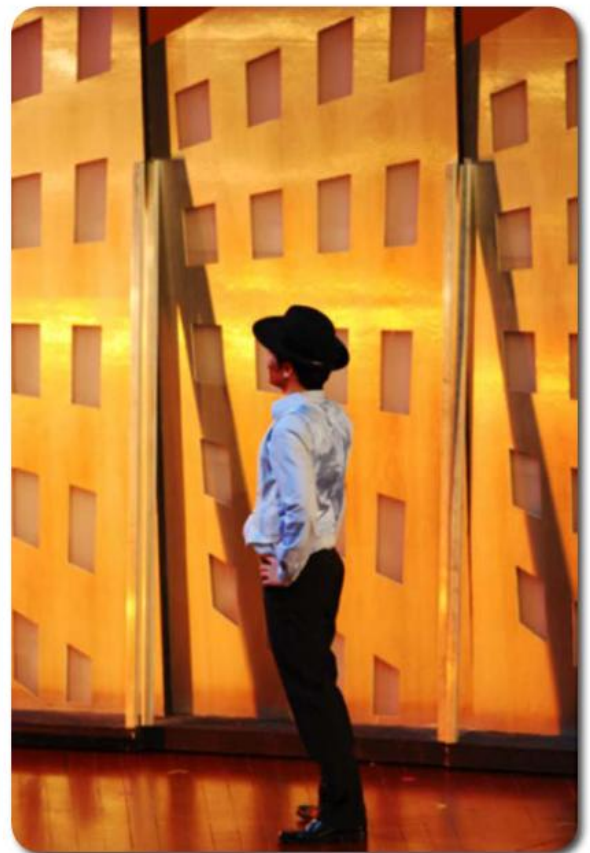
Moveable set pieces (often called trucks) are used side-by-side to create the interior of a restaurant kitchen in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*.



The same moveable set pieces are separated to create entrances and exits to hotel guest rooms.



The reverse side of these moveable set pieces, now separated, form individual buildings with alleyways in between.



When side-by-side the set pieces are terraced buildings on one street.



When tilted on its side and dressed in cloths a single set piece becomes a commercial laundry basket.

Activity 4.8: Presentational drama design

1. As a scenographer create the scenic design for a presentational play that you're working on in class using either:
 - a stylised, fixed (immovable) and generic playing space
 - non-realistic, moveable set pieces that can be reconfigured.
2. You should take the following into consideration when creating your scenography, the:
 - space and time of the inner world of the play
 - mood and atmosphere you'd like to create
 - symbol and metaphor that you could reflect in the design
 - way you could reflect role, character and relationships in the design
 - logistics needs of the play (eg. the entrances and exits)
 - functional needs of the play (eg. the activities that need to take place in the performance space).
3. In your design, you should include:
 - an A3 coloured front-view drawing, with the major features labeled
 - an A3 black and white bird's eye view
 - a list of script clues with accompanying interpretation/artistic notes
 - a report discussing the:
 - artistic design choices
 - functional design choices
 - stylistic design choices.

SOURCING SET PIECES

So far this chapter has explored scenographic design where each component has been either constructed from scratch or adapted from existing set pieces from previous productions. Often a designer will incorporate real pieces of furniture into their design. This could be to save on construction costs, to ensure the set perfectly matches with the period of the inner world of the play or to help give the scenography a realistic, life-like quality.

For a production of *The Haunting of Daniel Gartrell* by Reg Cribb, scenographer Andrew Lake sourced furniture pieces in op shops and wallpaper from a building supplier for some parts of his design:



The Haunting of Daniel Gartrell
Designer: Andrew Lake



Activity 4.9: Sourcing props

1. As a scenographer sketch the design for a scene from a play you are working on in class and include at least two furniture pieces in the design. You should make sure the design is stylistically, artistically and functionally appropriate.
2. Find real furniture pieces either in a store (or someone's home) that would be ideal to use if the design was being realised on stage. For each set piece you should:
 - source the set piece
 - take a photo of it
 - write a report with four paragraphs discussing:
 - price (if there is one) and why the cost is justified
 - stylistic choices (representational or presentational)
 - creative/artistic choices
 - functional choices.

CHAPTER 5

Sound Design

Key Concepts

- ☛ Sound design
- ☛ Principles of design
 - Elements of design
- ☛ Sound design options
 - Sound effects
 - Soundscapes
 - Music
 - Voice-overs
- ☛ The sound design process
 - Creative team discussion
 - Script clues
 - Initial thoughts
 - Research and investigation
 - Experimentation and drafting
 - Final design
- ☛ Sound realisation
 - Sound creation
 - Sound documentation
- ☛ Sound system layout
 - Sound bump-in

SOUND DESIGN

One of the ways to help establish time and space, create mood and atmosphere and convey the dramatic action in a performance is through the sound design. A sound designer is a specialist responsible for designing the sound both artistically to help create the inner world of the play and the ambiance of the production, as well as functionally to configure the system layout and ensure effective sound audibility by the actors, crew and audience members. The scope of this designer's work includes focusing on sound as part of the dramatic action, as well as sound that enhances the action. In either approach, the sound needs to work

Dramatic action

The presenting, exploring and resolving of a situation in theatrical performance.

in harmony with the other design areas, such as the scenography, costume and lighting design, the director's concept and the overall creative vision of the show.

Creative vision

The shared clear and defined conceptualisation of the creative team, typically initiated by the directorial vision, of the way a dramatic work will be realised in performance in order to communicate identified meaning to a particular audience, in a specific location at a point in time.

Inner world of the play

The imagined setting, including the time and space of a drama work, reflective of real cultural, socio-economic, political, historical and environmental landscapes.



Photo courtesy of arts agent Ms Charlene Lim

A sound designer, like any type of theatrical designer, uses the principles and elements of design when creating for a dramatic production.

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

The design principles are the rules that designers must work with in order to create designs that will work effectively in performance. The twelve principles of design that sound designers work with are:

Balance

Where the elements are heard in an even and congruous way, creating a sense of equilibrium.

Principles of design

Guidelines used by members of the creative team in the generation of artistic ideas.

Although utilised for centuries, architect Walter Gropius streamlined them and arts students first formally studied them at Bauhaus School in Germany in 1919.

This could perhaps be with ambient music coming from both the left and right sides of the stage, at the same levels. The sound designer could choose, however, to use the elements inconsistently or asymmetrically, engaging more with the psychology of listeners.

Contrast

The use of one element, or group of elements, is juxtaposed with or against another. The audience hears the sounds in the design in opposition to each other.

Emphasis

When an element is used at a specific point in the design in such a way so as to draw the listener's attention to it. Most usually this focal point is accented because of its importance within the dramatic action or creative vision of the production.

Harmony

Each of the design elements used are related with a sense of tranquillity or affinity as a collective. Most typically they will share a common trait or are used in similar ways.

Movement

The elements are being used in such a way that the sound, the objects associated with the sound, or the actions suggested by the sound, seem to be active, when they are not. For example the use of changes in volume, tempo or the overlapping of different sounds can suggest movement.

Pattern

A consistent repeated use of an element in a recognisable way. These can be made with regular (or irregular) repetitions, and they form a sense of rhythm (or not) within the work.

Repetition

Duplicating an element in the same way throughout all or some part of the design. Reusing the element in this way helps to create a sense of cohesiveness in the design.

Rhythm

The elements are used so that not only movement is suggested, but that the movement is ongoing. Part of this is an alternation between strong and weak sounds, or loud and soft sounds.

Scale/Proportion

Where the same or related elements, such as pitch or volume, are used multiple times at different levels. For example, the loudness of one sound is relative to its duplicate with a different volume level, and therefore distance between them and passing time is suggested.

Tempo

The rate or speed at which elements are used.

Unity

The relationship between the elements brings them together in a particular cohesive or connected way. Together the whole is greater than the sum of each individual part.

Variety

One element is used differently in one section, when compared to how it is being used in most of the design. There is either a subtle or overt change.

Elements of design

In contrast to the governing principles, the elements of design are the components that scenographers use within the design principles to create their work. In theatrical design, sound designers need to consider five elements:

Elements of design

Characteristics essential to artistic works. They are the individual components that can be defined in isolation and yet are treated in various ways and sequences to create a design.

Duration

The length of a sound or series of sounds.

Pitch

The frequency of a sound. These can be categorised into three groups; high (treble), mid-range and low (bass).

Silence

Silence is similar for a sound designer to the element of negative space for a costume, scenographic or lighting designer. The silence in between sounds can communicate meaning and have an impact on the mood just as much as the sounds with volume themselves.

Tonal colour

The emotional qualities of the sound. Tonal colour can be as simple as whether a sound seems warm or cold, open or closed, inviting or exclusive, rich or thin.

Volume

The loudness or intensity at which sound is heard.

SOUND DESIGN OPTIONS

A sound designer can use many different components to create the design for a theatrical production, such as:

- Sound effects (sfx)
- Soundscapes
- Music
- Voice-overs.

Sound effects

A designer might utilise specific sounds at certain points in a play to literally represent or imitate naturally-occurring sounds from real life. Sound effects are often used to suggest the occurrence of an event. This includes an event that is a fundamental part of the dramatic action, but can not be generated by the actors on (or off) stage. Such real sounds are not possible because of the performance nature of the experience that is, it's a nonreal or imitated event) or because the production values do not allow it. For example a prop glass made from sugar does not make the same sound as a real glass when smashed on the floor.

The firing of a fake plastic gun doesn't sound the same as a real metallic gun. Similarly the sound of wind rattling a window in a storm can't naturally occur when inside a theatre venue.

Sound effects are also used to highlight, exaggerate or emphasise a sound that *can* be generated by actors on stage. Whilst a scenographer can make a door squeek when it's opened, a sound designer can add an effect that makes a *menacing* door squeek or perhaps a *humorous* door squeek by using the elements and principles of design in different ways.

In addition to suggesting or highlighting events that occur on stage sound effects are also frequently used to:

Sound effect

Noises, other than speech or music, that are added to a performance to enhance dramatic meaning or action.

Production values

Design components realised during performance.

Suggest the existence of an unseen location

For example, the sound of unseen moving car engines indicates the inner world of the play is near a road. Sound effects like this often have a direct connection to the dramatic action. If the sound of a car coming to a stop, with a car-door opening and shutting, precedes an actor entering the playing space, the sounds are being used to indicate the character has just driven (or been driven) to that particular location. Effects also can be used effectively beyond the realm of dramatic action. If, for example, the effect of a car engine starts playing very softly, increases to a loud peak and then slowly dissipates again, the effect is being used to either establish the time and space of the play, and/or help create the mood and atmosphere.

Suggest the occurrence of an unseen event

For example, the sound of loud music is played through a speaker located on one side of the stage. When the effect is played and all the actors turn to look at that side of the stage, the sound is being used to suggest that someone (or something) has started playing music in a nearby area or adjacent room. Although this type of sound effect is always part of the dramatic action, the level to which it is involved may vary. If the characters refer to it in what they say or how they interact with each other, it has a major part to play. If the characters instead reference it more subtly through their stage business or body language only, the designer and director may be using the sound to reveal insights about the characters, their relationships, the themes, dramatic tension and so on.

Soundscapes

A soundscape is a series of sounds, effects and/or music that have been put together to create an audio track that plays for a specific section of a production. Usually a track of this type is created to enhance the mood and atmosphere of the play, rather than literally to suggest dramatic action. Soundscapes can be used softly in the background of a scene or they can be a dominating feature of the performance.

Soundscape

A track or music piece made up of a series of sounds that provides atmospheric backing to dramatic action.

A purely music-based soundscape, with identifiable melodies or rhythms that plays for a period of time while the characters speak and interact on stage is called underscoring. The musical 'score' plays 'under' the dramatic action. Underscoring is not commonly used in the representational drama forms of realism or naturalism, because this would not be indicative of real life. It is, however, more frequently used today in presentational drama, especially in highly stylised theatre where the production values are sometimes designed in such a way that the audience's attention is intentionally drawn to the sound. One of the most obvious forms of underscoring, one where the sound in itself is noticeable to the audience is musical theatre. In the sections that have underscoring the characters do not sing to the music, but speak to one another with regular dialogue while the orchestra (or a prerecorded soundtrack) plays instrumental music underneath their speech.

Underscoring

Atmospheric music that plays continuously throughout a dialogue or unspoken section of performance.

Representational drama

Drama that imitates life as it explores human psychology by placing characters in life-like situations and relationships on stage. Because it's an imitation of life the characters don't know the audience is there.

Presentational drama

Drama that shows itself as a theatrical experience to the audience whilst the dramatic action unfolds. Because it focuses on the communication of ideas or the offering of a theatrical experience it often makes contact with the audience during performance.

Hint

Underscoring, whether a soundscape or instrumental music, is used excessively in the film genre. Often a scene can seem sparse or incomplete to the audience if there's not a background soundscape of some kind playing, even though they may not be consciously aware of its absence.

Internet exploration

Watch a class of high school students experimenting with vocal, body percussion and found objects in a live creation of a soundscape at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2QICy8b_rk

Activity 5.1: Design brief analysis

1. Your job is to consider how a designer is considering creating the sound for a (fictitious) production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*.

Whilst this play may be naturally suited to a representational performance style, imagine the production director is keen to attract a new teen/young adult audience. These are people who may not be used to going to the theatre, and the director is thus looking to incorporate a more presentational approach in the performance style. Below is an excerpt from the director's vision and sound design brief for this fictitious production of the play.

2. After reading *The Crucible* design brief outlined on the next page, watch the trailer for a movie version of the play to understand more about the inner world of the play:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfitwioCZ50

3. Write a report that describes your initial, overall response to the design ideas for a new (fictitious) contemporary production to be staged at PICA.
4. Then continue your report by answering these questions:
 - How do you think the sound designer is incorporating the directorial vision into their work?
 - What technologies would the sound operator have to use?
 - What special skills might they (or the sound operators) have to acquire?
 - What technical and staging difficulties could potentially arise implementing the sound design?

Production context

Play: *The crucible* by Arthur Miller

Venue: Perth Institute for Contemporary Arts (PICA)

Audience: Teens to mid-thirties, including school groups

Location: Northbridge

Stage: Small black box style room with intimate raked seating

Notes

Northbridge is a city location with many restaurants, bars and cafés that has a well-established culture of young adult patronage at night. The venue is a regular 'theatre' space, but it often houses contemporary productions that push conservative drama boundaries.



Thoughts from the director

The aim is to integrate *music* and *digital media* recording/data projection so that they are fundamental to the interpretation and realisation of the text. They would be utilised in ways that are stimulating and engaging for a young audience (late teens through to mid-thirties). The sound designer/operator, cameraperson and recording editor would form a 'tech' group, along with the lighting operator (and/or designer). The sound designer/operator would almost take on the role of a nightclub DJ.

At the beginning of the play the tech crew would enter with the audience, go on to the stage and meet with the waiting Abigail. The tech group are being contracted by Abigail who is planning to make a fake 'documentary' on witchcraft. She has been inspired by the artistic team behind The Blair Witch Project of Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez. This team marketed their film as if it was a real documentary, and indeed when it was first released many audience members (and their concerned parents) believed that it was a recording of real events. In the production Abigail plans to put her documentary on the internet and make money from it.

Sound designer's overview:

The sound operator is on stage the entire time; C/L and semi-facing/on a front angle to the audience at a set of dual-record decks.

Vinyl recordings of current club music (house and/or acid jazz, etc.) will be mixed live by the DJ onstage.

The play is underscored throughout like the soundtrack to a film. This is to (a) reinforce Abigail's manipulation of the events as a 'documentary'/film for her personal financial gain/satisfaction as the controller; and (b) engage the youth audience who are typically used to concurrent multi-sensory stimulation through the internet, social media and the film and TV industries.

There will be sections of loud, prominent music (such as the additional pre-Act I section) and sections of more subtle underscoring.

There will be sections where the audience can literally feel the bass vibrating through their rib cages as they sit in their seats.

Silence will be used for the first time after the desertion of Abigail partway through Act IV and through to the curtain call after the end of the show. At this point most of the crew should leave, and thus the audience will clearly see the DJ exit accompanied by the editing and lighting technicians.

Music

Soundscapes are not the only area of sound in which a designer might use music. There are four other ways that music is frequently used in drama works:

- House music
- In-action music
- Lyrics
- Scene change music

House music

Music that is played through the auditorium 'house' before a performance, during interval and after the final curtain call is called house music. This type of music is not part of the dramatic action. It can, however, be used by the designer to help to establish the setting of the play (time and space of the inner world of the play), create the mood and atmosphere, suggest symbol, metaphor, thematic focus and tension as well as potentially highlight or foreshadow key events that make up the dramatic action. Like any component of the sound design, the house music must match with the overall creative vision of the production.

In-action music

The playing of or listening to music can form part of the dramatic action. Sometimes certain roles or characters will deliberately listen to music from a computer, MP3 or CD player, or even a radio, record player or gramophone as appropriate for the historical context. If technology and the scenographic design allows for it, the designer may choose to have the actors control the music and play it through a device within the playing space. Alternatively the sound technician could operate the music from their sound desk, while the actors enact playing the music through prop sound devices on stage.

Sometimes characters need to play instruments on stage. If an actor has the skill to play the instrument at the appropriate level required, the designer may opt for them to play live. If they don't have the skill, or if the instrument is a prop (which could easily be the case for an acoustic piano, organ or any other large, heavy, expensive instrument), or if it's a presentational piece of theatre, the designer may have the music prerecorded and played back through the sound system, while the actor mimes to the track.

Lyrics

In some forms of presentational drama, music is used by the playwright and the composer as a method of communication. In such situations the roles and characters will sing or dance (or do both) to music, 'speaking' to one another and the audience through the lyrics they sing. This is different to in-action music because, as the characters sing, they believe they are *speaking* not *singing* to one another in a regular, natural way to each other. Sung dialogue and monologue can be found in forms such as Brechtian theatre, musical theatre, opera and some types of Asian theatre.

Hint

When lyrics are used to communicate between characters on stage, the creation of the music itself is the job of the composer and not the sound designer. The mixing of the sound, however, is the sound designer's job.

Scene change music

A designer will often play music from the end of one scene to the beginning of another. This technique is most frequently used in presentational drama, when set and prop pieces need to be changed by the cast or crew.

Scene changes

The movement of set and props between two sections of a performance.

Voice-overs

Recordings that capture the spoken voice only, are called voice-overs. When played during the performance they form part of the dramatic action. In representational drama they will be heard by the roles and characters on stage and will influence their actions and the events that take place. These could be in-action announcements, such as those heard in hospitals, sports arenas and public buildings. They might also literally be the pre-recorded voices of roles and characters, such as characters that never appear in the playing space, or ethereal creatures, spirits and ghosts that are heard but not seen.

In presentational drama, in addition to voice-overs being used in the same way as representational plays, they also could be announcements that are not part of the action. These voice-overs are made to the audience and/or the actors and serve as vocal headings for scenes and episodes to come, or as ways to highlight certain character attributes, conflicts, events and themes. Voice-overs of this kind are one way to prevent the audience (and sometimes the actors) from becoming too caught up in or emotionally involved with the play, encouraging them instead to more actively think about the content, issues and themes of the play. Brecht's epic theatre is a style that is suited to employing this verbal signage technique to remind the audience they are watching a play and not real life, to enable them to consider how the challenges faced by the roles onstage occur in real life and thus encourage the audience to take action and positively change the world they live in.

Hint

If voice-overs are part of the dramatic action they are considered sound effects and are the role of the sound designer. If they are announcements to the audience they are considered messages and fall under stage management's responsibility.

THE SOUND DESIGN PROCESS

Similar to a scenographer following a process when designing the set, props and aesthetics for the performance space, a sound designer too has a series of steps they typically utilise when creating the sound for a production. This includes:

- Creative team discussion
- Script clues
- Initial thoughts
- Research and investigation
- The design
- Sound documentation

Creative team discussion

Usually a sound designer is contacted by a theatre company or a director (or both) about the possibility of coming on-board the creative team for the production of a particular dramatic work. The sound designer, like any designer, is typically approached in this way either because of their prior working relationship with the director or the theatre company, or their past experience with the dramatic style or the playwright's body of work. At this contracting point, if the play has not been published, the designer is likely to be given a copy of the script to help them consider whether they will join the project or not. Even at this early stage they may begin to identify script clues about the sound and start generating some initial design thoughts. Once they agree to be part of the creative team they will spend time with the director discussing the play, the production and the director's vision for the piece. Ideally they will also meet with other members of the creative team, such as the scenographer, costume designer, lighting designer and dramaturg (if there is one), to discuss the production itself and all the design components holistically, as well as to begin to formulate an overall creative vision for the production.

Script clues

Playwrights will often include information about the sound design within their stage directions of a script. These are helpful clues for the designer that need to be identified and considered, and both creatively and functionally. Similarly the characters and roles may refer to the sounds they hear during performance in their dialogue or they may make sounds by using props, musical instruments or other devices in a certain way. A sound designer needs to go through the script and identify any such stage directions or verbalised clues.

Hint

Like all stage directions, just because a playwright has described the way they envision the sound at a particular point in the play, doesn't mean it has to be created in that way during performance. The suggested sound could be adapted or replaced entirely with something else. It could even be deleted altogether, provided that this works with the dramatic action and the overall creative vision of the piece.

Consider the excerpt on the following page from the presentational play *The Masrayana* by American playwright William C. Kovacsik. Note the sound clues from the playwright that the sound designer has identified in lead pencil. They've also started to consider where exactly they might stop and start the different types of music in this episode.

Episode

Sections of some drama works in which a sequence of dramatic action unfolds and/or a communication interchange occurs.

EXCERPT FROM *THE MASRAYANA*
by William C Kovacsik

Playwright suggests slow rhythmic music is to be played

Designer notes that music is needed

Narrator's line references a train (potential SFX)

Playwright suggests a dance

Designer marks potential places to start and stop dance music

Designer is considering a train SFX

Playwright suggests tempo is to increase

Designer's considering starting music at alternate points to playwright's suggestion

Playwright suggests tempo increases once again

Designer marks the potential dance music to underscore dialogue

THE MASRAYANA - 7

COPAL

BHAGWAN

COPAL

NARRATOR

Scene two: In which Larma Pal journeys to Dhamalabad, to apply for a bank loan.

(Music plays; the rhythm is slow.)

What Mr. Masra does not know --

(KANALL MASRA enters upstage. The rhythm of the music grows faster.)

What he could have no way of knowing --

(BHAGWAN NERA enters upstage, from the opposite side of the stage from KANALL MASRA.)

-- that, while he was sweating in a third class rail car, making almost eighteen hours to make the trip to Dhamalabad.

(KANALL and BHAGWAN approach each other. The rhythm of the music goes faster still.)

[dance interlude: "The Dance of the Corrupted Hearts"]

a meeting was taking place. Words pass, money is exchanged...

(KANALL and BHAGWAN shake hands. BHAGWAN affixes official stamps on two documents.)

-- and a deal is made.

(BHAGWAN exits.)

Kanall goes to Larma Pal, the only man in Durgut with an automobile. More money changes hands.

(LARMA PAL enters. KANALL gives money and one of the two documents to LARMA PAL. KANALL exits.)

Larma Pal drives faster than might ordinarily be advisable in order to insure that he arrives in Dhamalabad before Mr. Masra, and goes to see the bank officer. Money is exchanged a third time. Larma Pal manages to leave the bank just before Mr. Masra arrives.

(The BANK OFFICER enters. He is met by LARMA PAL. LARMA PAL gives the BANK OFFICER half of the money he received from KANALL, and also hands him the document with BHAGWAN's seal.)

The music stops. (COPAL enters the bank. He is met by the BANK OFFICER.)

Initial thoughts

Once the script has been read the sound designer will begin to write down their thoughts, ideas and feelings about the sound. They could use a variety of methods to capture these initial ideas, such as writing directly into the script itself, into a note pad or in a software program on a computer. They might draw images, use colour, make brief dot points or write lengthy paragraphs. They could reference other artists, sounds, productions or music. Whatever method the designer chooses they must ensure they document their first reactions, instincts, emotions and ideas. The more they read the play, the more likely their ideas will change, develop or at least be added to. Documenting initial ideas gives the designer something to come back to at a later point in time.

In the next excerpt from *The Masrayana* the designer has notated some initial thoughts and potential ideas for the sound directly onto the script page. They have also added a sticky note at a later date with additional notes about the sound. By examining the sticky note it's possible to see they are beginning to adapt initial thoughts in a drafting (or more accurately perhaps *redrafting*) process.

EXCERPT FROM *THE MASRAYANA*
by William C Kovacsik

THE MASRAYANA -- 13

GOPAL.
This is outrageous!

BANK OFFICER
I said good day, sir!

NARRATOR
Scene three: in which Mr. Masra confronts his tormentors.
(BHAGWAN sits, sipping tea. GOPAL enters.)

BHAGWAN
You're back. Was it a successful journey?

GOPAL
You have no idea what happened to me!

BHAGWAN
Not until you tell me.

GOPAL
They told me I was dead!

BHAGWAN
Ah.

GOPAL
Can you imagine such a thing?

BHAGWAN
It is difficult to conceive.

GOPAL
They even showed me a death certificate! And it had your signature on it!

BHAGWAN
You're not serious?

GOPAL
Here. Look.

(GOPAL hands the document to BHAGWAN.)

BHAGWAN
Remarkable.

Handwritten notes and annotations:

- Idea to include only the melodic line of music
- Designer also considering silence element and rhythm principle (no melody) to begin the section of music
- Potential starting place for music
- Starting the music here was also considered
- Additional thoughts added at a later date
- Music - CALMING leads on (in app.) after being announced loudly by percussion. Has abrupt end of unit. Abrupt end on actor cut.
- Music linked to mood/atmosphere: Calming music being opposite Gopal's mood
- Element of volume: Loud start
- Elements of contrast & duration, Principles of rhythm, contrast, imbalance & disharmony: Calming music, yet impactful start & abrupt end
- Music to potentially play through this entire episode

Research and investigation

The sound design should be continuously evolving throughout the preproduction and rehearsal periods. Often a designer will also make some minor adjustments during the technical and dress rehearsals, and the preview stages. It's important that a designer doesn't block, discredit or discard an idea too early in the creation process because it

seems impossible to realise or perhaps because they believe the other creatives won't like it. The creation process is about generating lots of ideas and exploring different possibilities with these ideas, before locking down the final sound design for a production.

Not only is experimentation important during this stage, but the designer also needs to do their own research about the time period and geographical location of the inner world of the play, as well as the style of the piece. A designer will not be able to create realistic sound effects in representational drama without accurately understanding the historical landscape. Nor will they be able to create sound that is suitably stylised for a piece of presentational drama if they don't know about the historical style.

The final area of investigation is attending rehearsals. Reading about the world of the play and discussing it with the director won't give a designer a felt-sense or experiential understanding in the same way that rehearsals will. Rehearsals are, after all, physical explorations of the script by living human beings in three-dimensional space. If the designer is going to be able to create sound that is integrated harmoniously with the other design elements and will work seamlessly with the characters' interactions and unfolding dramatic action, whilst also effectively having an impact on the audience, they need to combine what they learn in rehearsal with the creative team discussion and their own research and experimentation. Most importantly designers always keep in mind the first sound design draft is just that – the *first* draft. Sound, like all design areas, should go through a series of redrafting versions before final decisions are made.

In the next excerpt from *The Masrayana* it's possible to see three different stages or drafts for the sound.

EXCERPT FROM *THE MASRAYANA* by William C Kovacsik

The diagram illustrates the iterative process of sound design through three drafts of a script excerpt from *The Masrayana* by William C Kovacsik.

First draft: The original script text, which includes dialogue between NAVI, BHAGWAN, and a NARRATOR, as well as stage directions like "(NAVI, GOPAL, and BHAGWAN exit.)" and "(GOPAL and NAVI enter together.)".

Second draft (blue pen): This draft adds handwritten annotations. "Rhythm" is written above the first line of dialogue, and "Melody" is written below the narrator's line. A blue arrow points from the "First draft" label to these annotations.

Third draft (lead pencil): This draft adds a detailed sound design note in a green box, written in lead pencil. The note reads: "Sang Navi's former from U. Starting a perc-memo in intro 'Scene II...' major key. Shro to spspearced to (unresolved chord on Bagwan's entrance psc)". A blue arrow points from the "Second draft" label to this note, and an orange arrow points from the "Third draft (lead pencil)" label to the same note.

Experimentation and drafting

Sometimes a young designer will go with the first idea that they think of to create a sound or solve a sound problem. Whilst these ideas may work, it is the job of the sound designer to ensure they spend adequate time experimenting with a range of potential ideas. At this creation stage, it's important to remember there's an 's' in *options*. Having only one idea, no matter how creative, is not an option but a single solution. Therefore a sound designer needs to create a design draft with their first idea, and then put it on hold whilst asking themselves some questions:

- What else could be done with the sound at this point?
- How else could option one sound be generated or delivered?
- What would happen if the elements of design were changed so that the sound was longer in duration, shorter in duration, louder, softer and so on?
- What would happen if the principles of design were changed so that the sound was played sooner, was delayed, sounded several times, was a repeat of an earlier sound, had multiple layers to it and so on?

Every experimentation should be captured through description or drawing (on paper or the computer), or roughly recorded (through the computer or even a smart-phone). Then the designer can review all the potential ideas and drafts later, to choose which one (or two) to develop further or utilise.

Activity 5.2: Sound experimentation comparison

1. Watch this short clip as students work with Steppenwolf Theatre Company to explore and experiment with sound design for a scene from a play:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7D4dX7H_J8
2. Write a report that analyses and compares how each of the groups experimented with sound design for the given scene. You should discuss their experimentation with the:
 - elements of design
 - principles of design
 - dramatic action
 - mood and atmosphere, as well as any of the other dramatic elements
 - dramatic meaning.
3. At the end of the report include at least one paragraph describing what you might experiment with if you were designing the sound for the same scene as the students.

Activity 5.3: Sound design exploration

1. Read the script excerpt below from *The Masrayana* by William C Kovacsik.

NARRATOR

Even the most charitable observer would have called Kanall lazy and good-for

GOPAL

Kanall, come over here and help us say hello to all these people!

(KANALL comes to the edge of the stage)

KANALL

Do it yourself!

(KANALL exits)

GOPAL

Still, it's a very good life.

NARRATOR

Mr. Masra had no idea how his life was about to change, and the various twists and turns that would eventually bring him to my door. Perhaps watching his journey might prove illuminating for you, as it did for me. **Prologue: in which Mr. Masra, on his way to the village of Bisgurti, stops at the crossroads to talk to the policeman's dog, who always waits for his master at that spot.**

(GOPAL enters. He kneels and speaks to an unseen dog.)

GOPAL

Shiva! Sit...sit! Good boy! Are you waiting for the constable? He'll bring you your dinner, don't you worry! You want to lick my car? Go ahead, I won't stop you. Look at you...what a simple life. Nothing worldly except dinner and your master, who loves you as if you were his child. I wish we could have it that easy. All right. I have to get into town to see Mr. Nera. No, I can't stay here. You stay. Stay! Good dog.

(GOPAL exits.)

One of the roles is a dog. The director has chosen not to include a real live dog in the production, an appropriate choice for the presentational play. The sound designer has been asked to include some sound effect to represent the dog to be played while the actor mimes patting and playing with the dog. The designer has added a post-it note outlining that they intend to use percussion to represent the dog.

2. Investigate some of the different types of percussive instruments you might use at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-ycEDcx-I0
3. As a sound designer write a report that outlines:
 - which percussive instrument you would choose to represent the dog
 - why you would choose that instrument
 - how it could be used (don't forget about the principles and elements of design)
 - whether you would have it as a pre-recorded sound effect or played by a live musician
 - why you would choose this way of sound realisation.

Final design

After the designer has finalised which ideas they will (and which they won't) use, they are ready to start realising the sounds and preparing for performance. Sometimes the designer will mix this final design stage with the realisation stage. Unlike scenographic and costume design, a sound designer can't show a director and the rest of the creative team two-dimensional sketches to look at when seeking approval, they can only provide sounds to listen to. This means they are likely to have already identified where sound will be incorporated into the production and are likely to have created rough versions for the team to listen to. This is why it's important to experiment and draft thoroughly, and for the sound designer to communicate with the team about the possibilities and preferences along the way.

SOUND REALISATION

Once the designer does make the final design choices for a production they need to realise the sound. When focusing on this stage, there are two steps they will consider:

- Sound creation
- Sound documentation

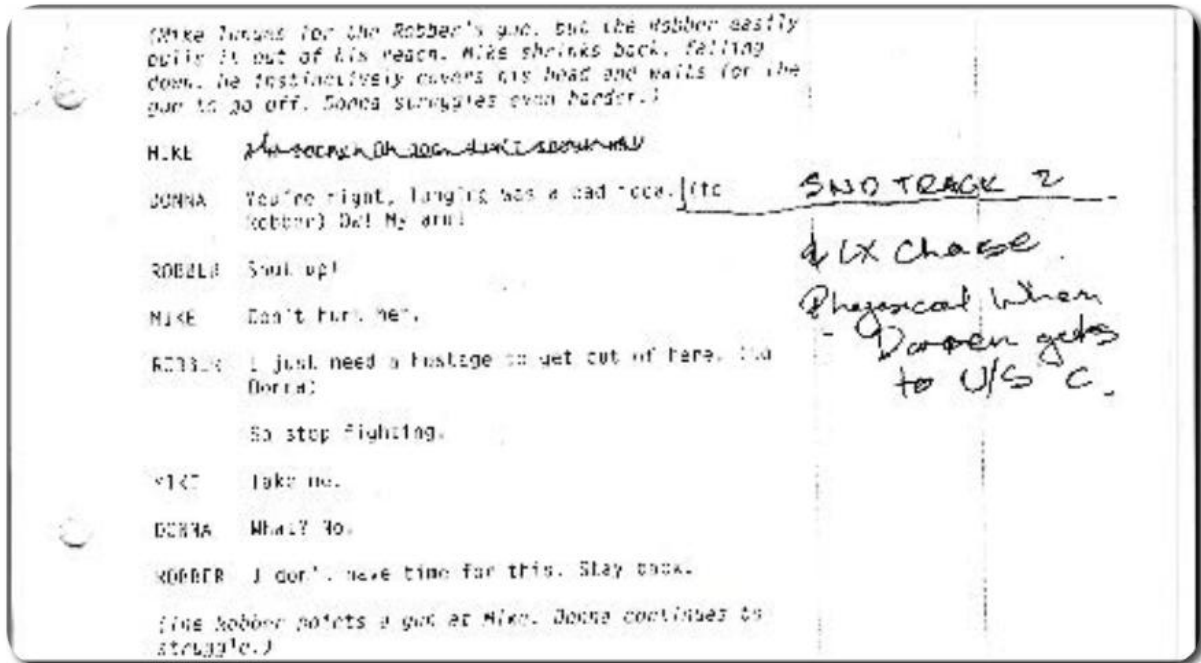
Sound creation

Designers decide whether the sound will be played live during the performance or whether it will be pre-recorded and then played back through sound equipment. If they opt for live sound generation, they might select acoustic or electric instruments, objects that have been specifically created to make sound effects, or everyday objects that can be struck or scraped to produce sound. If they choose pre-recorded sound they might record instruments and objects in advance, or they could source existing recordings of effects, music and other sounds. They might remix the material to create something new or simply use it unaltered as is. Most usually pre-recorded sound today is played back during performance in a digital format, such as through a computer or CD player.

Sound documentation

Finally the designer needs to create the documentation that captures the design parts, as well as when each of these parts will occur during the running of the play. They need to make a sound plot which lists the sound effects, soundscapes, music and voice-overs that will be utilised in the performance. Sometimes the first version of this plot occurs in the designer's script itself with the designer notating each sound cue directly on the page.

Excerpt from a production of
Love and Robbery
by Antoinette Mullins



Once the designer has gone through the script and notated the cues, they can create the separate final plot that itemises, in sequential order, each of the cues. This plot will be utilised by the designer, the sound operator and the stage manager during plotting and teching. For each sound cue, the sound plot will include information on:

- what page in the script it occurs
- which specific character's line or action to start it on
- if it's a long sound, what specific character's line or action to finish it on
- what equipment will be used to produce it
- if it is pre-recorded or amplified, what level to play it at
- any additional relevant notes that the sound operator and crew need to consider.



Usually the sound operator and the stage manager will create a refined sound plot document called a *cue sheet* that helps them make sure each sound cue takes place at the correct place in the correct way during the show. Therefore it's crucial that designers make sure they create an accurate, comprehensive and clear plot for the operator and the stage manager.

Internet exploration

Take a look at a professional theatre company's sound cue sheet at:

<http://frictiontheatrecompany.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/files/2014/06/Screen-Shot-2014-06-01-at-20.55.06.png>

SOUND SYSTEM LAYOUT

The final component that a sound designer has to consider is the sound system that will be used during performance. For most contemporary productions this will focus on designing the layout of the sound system, from where to position the sound desk so that the operator can best hear the actors as they speak and the sounds as they're played, through to where to position the speakers for maximum creative and aural impact. Designing the sound system also can include amplification, such as the use of microphones in large venues, venues where the acoustics are poor, or to hear the singing actors in a musical.

Using microphones to simply make sure the actors are heard by the audience is only one part of the jobs of the designer when considering microphones and the sound system. Much more importantly they, and the sound operator during the run, will mike the performers and the musicians in order to balance the sound appropriately, plus add any creative or enhancement effects into the sound mix to achieve the quality of sound they are looking for.

In designing the sound system layout, a sound designer will need to consider:

- including audio equipment (such as microphones, leads, and mixers)
- accessing the microphone equipment (wired or radio)
- positioning speakers (audience speakers and actors' foldback)
- operating the sound desk (mixing and effects)
- using sound equipment (such as computers, cds, and amplifiers).

In best practice, sound designers will map out the sound system layout on a hand-drawn or computer-generated map. This will cut down the time it takes to install and set up the sound equipment during bump-in.

Foldback

Monitor speakers facing the actors on stage to enable them to hear the sound effects, music and, if they're microphoned, their own voices.

Bump-in

Moving and setting up production equipment and materials into a performance venue for show-run.

Internet exploration

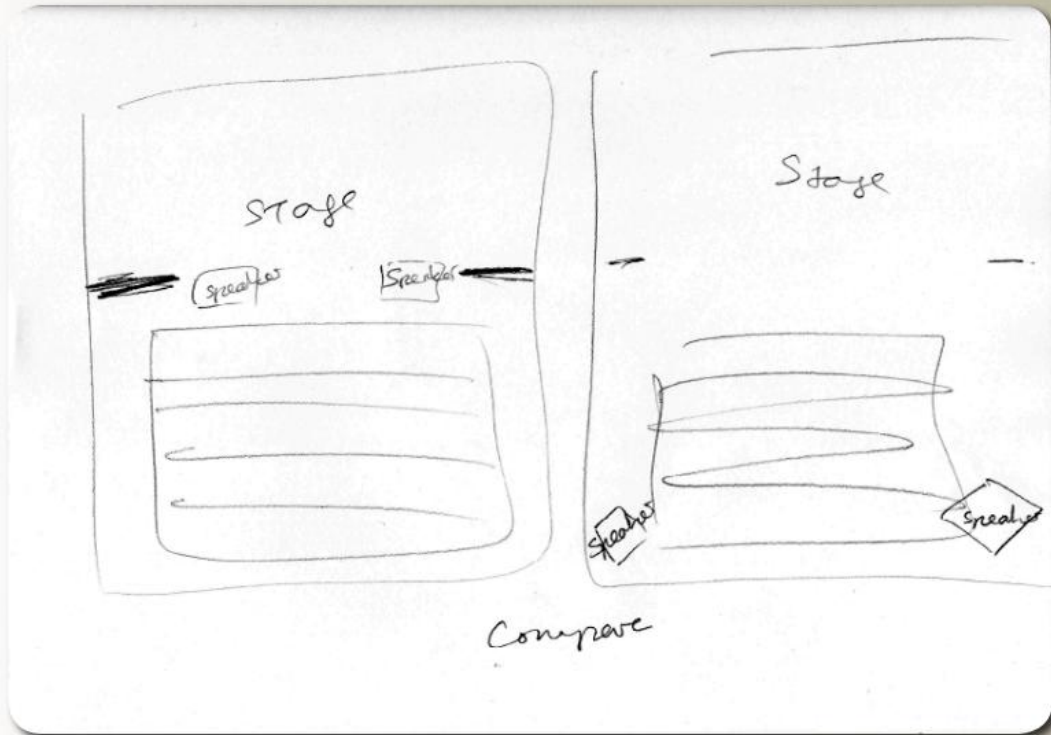
For a comprehensive investigation of amplification and the voice on stage go to:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HzedVMQjaU

Activity 5.4: Sound layout

1. Imagine you are the sound designer for a production of a script that you're working on in class in a proscenium arch theatre venue. The script must need sound design, calling for sound effects, soundscapes, music and/or voice-overs.

Study the two possible speaker configurations below and choose one for your sound system layout.



2. Write a mini-report that outlines why you made your choice, including:
 - in what way your choice matches the play's performance style
 - in what way your choice matches the play's historical style
 - the impact it will have on the audience
 - anything else you think is relevant.

CHAPTER 6

Lighting Design

Key Concepts

- ☛ Lighting design
- ☛ Principles of design
 - Elements of design
 - Mixing colours
- ☛ Lighting design options
 - General wash
 - Spotlight
 - Cyclorama
 - Available lighting
- ☛ Lighting fixture options
 - Fixture types
 - Accessories
 - Lighting design process
 - Creative team discussion
 - Script clues
 - Initial thoughts
 - Research and investigation
 - Experimenting and drafting
 - Final design
 - Elevation views
 - Cue synopsis

LIGHTING DESIGN

An important part of most dramatic productions is the lighting design. Even if a professional company staging a play chooses *not* to use theatrical-style lighting, then they're almost certainly making a *design* decision to not do so. Lighting design is one avenue to realise a production's creative vision and, as such, a lighting designer needs to work very closely with the director, the design team and the dramaturg to make sure their lighting is harmonious with all the other components.

An audience member will still 'see' the lighting, even if they're not focusing on it. They certainly need lights to be able to visually observe what's going on in the performance space. However, when a lighting state or a change *is* the main focus, and it shouldn't be, then the designer is not doing their job effectively. When the audience is focusing on the lighting, then they're being distracted from the characters' relationships, the dramatic action or the thematic focus of the play.

Creative vision

The shared clear and defined conceptualisation of the creative team, typically initiated by the directorial vision, of the way a dramatic work will be realised in performance in order to communicate identified meaning to a particular audience, in a specific location at a point in the future.

The only time this might be appropriate is either when:

1. **The lighting *is* the dramatic action:** for example, the lightning in a storm, or a blackout in the middle of the night or coals burning in a fireplace grate.
2. **Lighting is being used in a didactic manner:** for example, when house lights come up in the auditorium during an actor-audience interchange, or the designer wants to draw attention to an actor being in a spotlight for some reason, or the stage is lit in fluorescents lights (instead of theatrical lights) during an emotional scene to remind the audience that it's a play and not real life.

Whether lighting design is to be consciously or subconsciously experienced, it needs to work on two levels:

- functionally
- aesthetically.

From a functional perspective lighting is needed for the audience to see the interactions of the roles and characters and the inner world of the play they inhabit, plus any important production factors that need to be communicated to the audience. Whereas from an aesthetics perspective the lighting needs to help communicate the dramatic action, realise the directorial and the overall creative vision, be related to the characters' emotions, relationship interactions and plot tension. Lighting can also be used to assist in establishing the time, space and situation of the play.

Lighting design should contribute to a felt-sense that the audience experiences. It should have an impact on their mood, the atmosphere of the drama, their relationship with the characters, and the way they interpret the dramatic action. All of this without audience members being consciously aware that it is affecting them.

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

The principles of design are as important to a lighting designer as they are to any theatrical designer or visual artist. Principles are guidelines that a designer will follow and rules they will work within to ensure their design works effectively in performance.

Didactic theatre

Drama that is intended to teach something to the audience.

Aesthetics

In general:

The engagement generated and appeal invoked by data about an object or creature that is collected by the human senses.

In philosophy:

A critical reflection on visual and performing arts, culture and nature.

Inner world of the play

The imagined setting, including the time and space of a drama work, reflective of real cultural, socio-economic, political, historical and environmental landscapes.

Felt-sense

An inner knowing combined with a physical sense of awareness.

Principles of design

Guidelines used by members of the creative team in the generation of artistic ideas.

Although utilised for centuries, architect Walter Gropius streamlined them and arts students first formally studied them at Bauhaus School in Germany in 1919.

Whilst the lighting of a production is not perhaps as easily tangible as the set, props or costumes, it doesn't mean that the principles are any less important to this area.

There are eleven principles of design that lighting designers work with. These are:

Balance

This is where the elements of design are laid out in a symmetrical way. Arrangements can also be asymmetrical and yet the work appears balanced, providing that the audience experiences some kind of psychological sense of equilibrium.

Contrast

The use of one element, or group of elements, is juxtaposed with or against another one. The lighting components or lit areas of the stage are seen to be in opposition to one another by the audience member.

Emphasis

When an element is used specifically to draw the audience's attention to it or to the part of the playing space that it occupies. Most usually this focal point is accented because of its importance. In visual arts emphasis is often called dominance.

Harmony

The design elements that are being used relate to or connect well with each other in some way. Most typically they will share a common trait or will be used in a similar way.

Movement

The elements are being used in such a way that the design seems to be active, when it is not. It can also promote a sense of movement of the playing space, the roles or characters within the playing space, when there's none.

Pattern

A consistent repeated use of one element, or a group of elements, in a recognisable way. These can be made of regular (or irregular) repetitions and they form a sense of rhythm (or not) within the work.

Repetition

Duplicating an element in the same, or a similar, way consistently throughout all or some part of the design. Reusing the element in this way helps to create a sense of cohesiveness and unity in the design.

Rhythm

The elements are used so that not only movement within a design is suggested, but that the movement is regular and ongoing.

Scale/Proportion

Where the same or related elements, such as positive (lit) or negative (unlit or shadowed) shapes, are used multiple times in different sizes. The size of one shape is relative to its different sized twin, and therefore depth of field or distance is suggested.

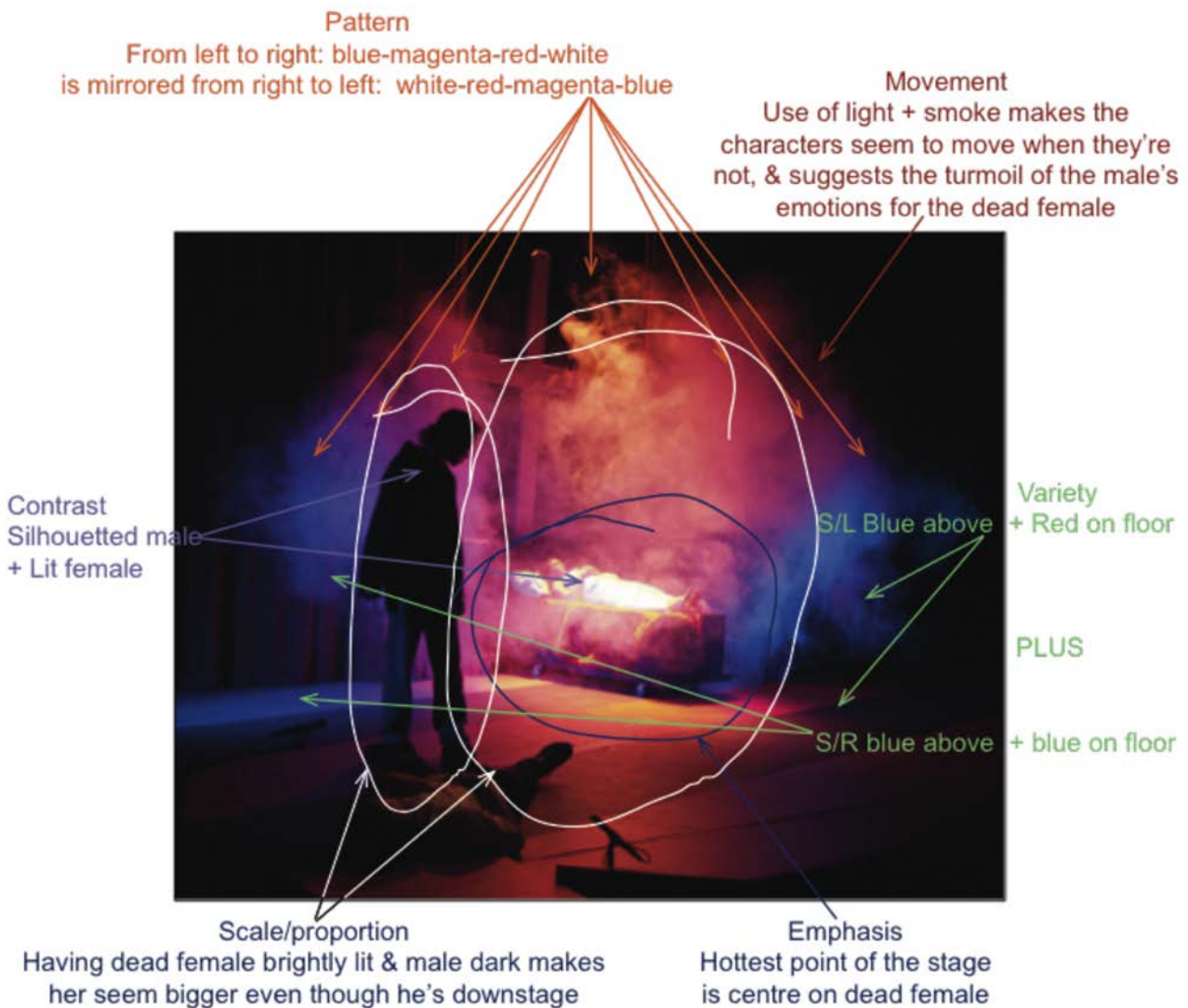
Unity

The relationship between the elements brings them together in a particular way. In combination the whole is greater than the sum of each individual part.

Variety

One element is used differently in one section, when compared to the way it is used in another part of the design. This can be either a subtle or an overt change.

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN IN PRACTICE



Hint

Whilst it's possible to see the way many of the principles have been used within the one lighting state in the image on the previous page, doesn't mean that a designer will use this many in every lighting state. Designers use the principles both within one lighting state and, more often, across several lighting states. The scene above is at the climax of the play where a young husband is about to commit suicide at the tomb of his wife who he believes to be dead. The stylised lighting reflects the dramatic tension, complex plot point and turbulent relationships, so it's appropriate for the designer to make complex use of many of the principles within the same lighting state.

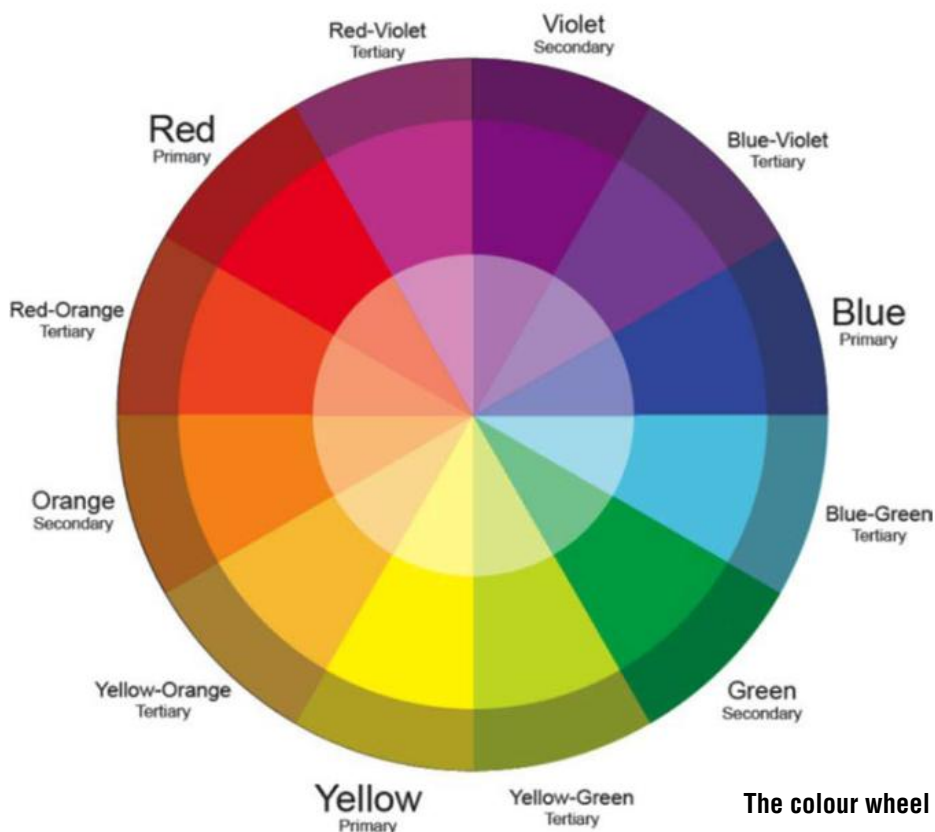
ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

In contrast to the principles being the guidelines, the elements are the design components that lighting designers use within the principles to create the lighting. In drama, lighting designers need to consider six elements:

Elements of design

Characteristics essential to artistic works. They are the individual components that can be defined in isolation and yet are treated in various ways and sequences to create a design.

Colour



This is the part of light reflected by objects or split through a prism that human beings see as colour. There are primary and secondary colours. In lighting the primary colours differ to the other design and visual arts areas, and are red, blue and green. It is by mixing these colours together in different combinations that other colours, called secondary colours, are formed. Complimentary colours are found opposite one another on the colour wheel, and are especially important to the design principles of contrast and emphasis.

Line

A series of points that, side-by-side, appear linked. Although a line across a stage may appear finite, it's sometimes possible to imagine it continuing on beyond the design borders.

Shape

When a line surrounds or encloses space then it creates a shape, otherwise known as a form. It's possible to differentiate a shape from the other shapes or space around it either by its boundaries (lines), colour or absence of light.

Space (including 3D form)

Sometimes space refers to the area that a form occupies, and at other times space is the area in-between two forms. In lighting design, although viewed from one position, space is always three-dimensional.

Texture

The tactile quality of a light, even though it's not tangible. This can be the quality of the light itself, or it can be the light in relationship to something else such as smoke, a set piece and costume.

Value (including tone)

The intensity and brightness of light in a design. The mixture of light and darkness, light and shadow in the playing space. Value in a design is often used to suggest emotions and feelings.

Activity 6.1: Element of drama analysis

1. Analyse the two images below. They are taken at the same point in a production where a wife joyously tells her husband she is pregnant. The lighting designer is experimenting with colour during a technical rehearsal.



- ➔ 2. Write a mini-report that discusses for each photograph the way colour:
- evokes the mood and atmosphere of the scene, that is. a joyous couple and a celebratory mood
 - helps to establish the situation, that is the wife is pregnant
 - contribute to the unfolding of the dramatic action, ie. the wife is telling the husband her news
 - might have an impact on the audience.

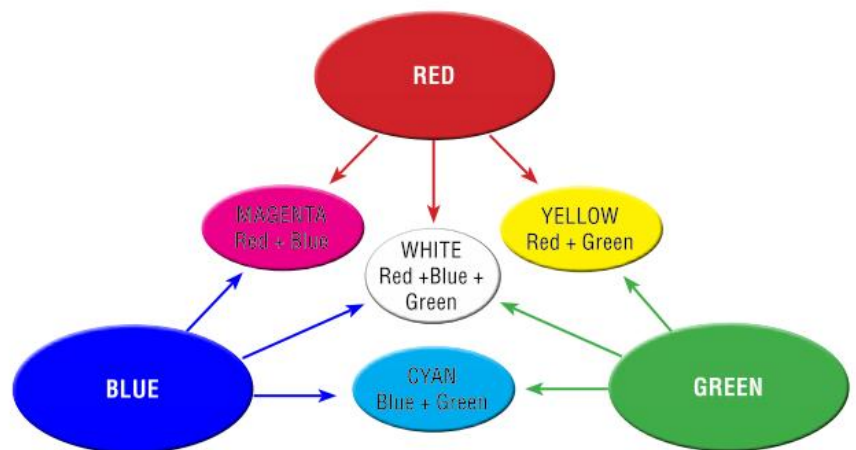
Make sure you include your reasoning in detail.

Mixing colours

Every primary school student knows from art class that only three colours are needed to be able to make all the other colours. By mixing these primary colours of red, yellow and blue in different combinations, the spectrum of the colour wheel can be created. In theatrical lighting, however, although there *are* primary colours, the three *types* of colours are different. In lighting the primary colours are:

- red
- green (not yellow)
- blue.

This means when a designer is mixing gels, they need to work out which gels to put on which lights, to get the colour effect they want.



Red



+ Blue



= Magenta

Photos courtesy of The Open Stage

Hint

When all three primary colours of light are mixed together in equal amounts they form white. This differs to the mixing of the primary colours of the other design and visual arts areas. For those other areas the primary colours are red, yellow and blue, and when the same amount of each of these are mixed together black is achieved.

Internet exploration

To investigate colour and light theory go to:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPPYGJjKVco

Activity 6.2: colour mixing experimentation

1. Working in a group of four people to experiment with mixing colours in lighting. You will need:

- 3 x torches
- 3 x rubber bands
- 1 x piece of green cellophane
- 1 x piece of red cellophane
- 1 x piece of blue cellophane

Cover the light end of each torch with cellophane and secure it there with the rubber band.

2. Shining the torches onto a white wall or a large piece of white paper, experiment with mixing colours firstly using combinations of two torches, then finally three torches. What do you observe?
3. Next place an everyday object, such as a coffee mug or pencil case, in front of the white wall and shine the torches onto the object, firstly using one (then two, then three) torches. What do you observe?
4. Experiment mixing colours onto at least three different everyday objects. Ideally the objects should be different textures, shapes and colours. Be sure to reflect on each stage of the experiment.
5. Finally have a person stand in front of the white canvas and experiment by mixing colours onto their face. What do you observe?
6. Write a report that captures your experimentations with mixing colours onto a white canvas, as well as onto the various objects and a person.

Lighting design options

In order to functionally enable the actors and the playing space to be seen, as well as create the inner world of the play and aesthetically work within the creative vision, a lighting designer will create a series of lighting states that occur sequentially as the dramatic action of the play unfolds.

There are many different types of states that designers can use, including:

- General washes
- Spotlight
- Cyclorama light
- Working light

General wash

One of the most common states used by designers are general washes. These are states where the entire playing space is lit evenly, so that every part of the stage, from the main acting areas to the little-used areas, are lit. In a general wash the intensity of each of those areas is lit at the same level as the next. Washes are also seamless in that the audience can't notice where one light beam ends and another begins.

Washes are typically used when the dramatic action requires most of the playing space to be used or when the designer wants to create a sense of vastness where, for example, the inner world of the play supposedly continues beyond the stage that the audience can see. General washes are also used in clearly confined spaces, such as the interior drawing room of a house, when the designer wants to light the entire room from its left to right, upstage wall to proscenium arch borders in a box set, as if one of the characters in the play has turned on the interior room's lights.

In representational drama designers will often use two general washes; one warm and one cold. A warm wash might be used to suggest the time of day, such as the early hot afternoon or the vibrant sunset late in the day. It can also be used to help communicate the location (space) of a scene, for example a beach, farm paddock or a particular geographical place (like Las Vegas or the pyramids in Egypt) by day. A warm wash can also be more aesthetically used to match with the emotions that the characters are feeling, the atmosphere of the scene or the positive nature of the events of the dramatic action at a particular point. These washes typically use pinks and oranges in the gels to give a subtle warm tint to the playing space.

A cold wash can also help to establish the time of day, such as the still pre-dawn or the cool night-time. Locations such as backyards and verandas at night, or frosty mountain ranges and vast cold lakes in the wilderness might be lit with a cold wash. Cold, like warm, washes are also used to aesthetically set the mood, help create atmospheric tone and reveal insights about characters' emotions and psychologies. These washes typically use lavenders and blues in the gels to create a subtle cool playing space tint.

Wash

A general fill of light or colour across the stage playing space created by lighting fixtures.

Box set

Scenographic design using three joined walls; left, up-centre and right of the playing space that are connected to the proscenium arch to indicate a room or indoor space.

Hint

Just because the mood and atmosphere of the play at a particular point is light, joyous or loving doesn't mean the designer must use a warm wash. Similarly if there is a great deal of tension, sadness or discontent amongst the characters, designers don't have to use a cold wash. Sometimes the designer might use lighting that's in opposition to what's happening in the dramatic action because of the directorial or creative vision, or perhaps because they want to connect with the subtext or maybe because they don't want to pre-empt the audience's reaction to good (or bad) news too soon.

Warm and cold washes are also frequently used in presentational drama for similar purposes to those of representational styles. A typical difference is that the colours tend to be more intense and bold. Also the designer may focus on more clearly or explicitly connecting with the emotions, mood, atmosphere, symbol, metaphor and tension of a scene for the audience, at the expense of realistically or accurately communicating time and space.

Photos courtesy of The Open Stage



Spotlight

When a designer wants to highlight a particular character or event within a specific area of the playing space, they will use a spotlight of some sort to do this. Spotlights draw the audience's attention to that one particular place that is being lit.

Focus

The point where lighting rays converge on an object, person or playing space. Also a verb indicating the adjusting of lighting fixtures to converge on the desired point.

The most commonly known type of spotlight is the movable follow spot.

This is a fixture that is hand operated where the technician moves the direction of the beam to literally follow the actor as they move throughout the playing space. The technician must match the follow-spot's beam with the actor's face as they move.

There are many other types of spotlights that are commonly used by designers, which have a fixed focus. These result in a beam that is static and thus consistently lights only one place within the playing space in one particular way.



Cyclorama

A very large white cloth, sometimes called a 'cyc', is often used in theatre, particularly in a presentational drama piece. The inclusion of a cyclorama is a decision of both the lighting designer and the scenographer. This is because it not only is it used as a lighting convention, but it also forms part of the physical environment of the playing space.

A cyclorama will hang in the upstage area across the back of the stage where it will be stretched and pulled taught. It acts as a blank canvas upon which gelled lights are focused. A cyclorama might be used to create a literal skyline background for an outdoor setting, or in a more stylised non-tangible way to help create the mood and atmosphere of a scene.

Cycloramas are lit by several series of floodlights that are placed either on the ground focused upwards, or suspended from the lighting grid and focused downwards. Depending on the length of the cyclorama, at least three battens will be used. Each batten is made up of three or four floods, each typically with a different coloured gel. These gels can, of course, be used in their pure (non-blended) form. Frequently, however, designers will mix the cyclorama colours together during a single lighting state to achieve a colour blend that best matches the aesthetics of the scene. In order to mix the colours evenly across the stage the lighting designer will need to duplicate the gel type and order across every batten.

A lighting designer will use cyclorama lights in combination with other front-of-house and above-stage rigged fixtures to create different lighting effects during performance.

Whenever a cyclorama is being used, the lighting designer will need to work very closely with the scenographer to ensure this part of the staging serves both areas of design, as well as the entire production and creative vision.

Cyclorama

A large stretched taught cloth covering the back of the performance space upon which lighting is focused or images are projected.

Lighting grid

A series of metallic pipes attached to the ceiling above a stage from which to hang lighting fixtures.



No cyclorama lights, above-stage fixtures only



Cyclorama, above-stage and front-of-house fixtures



Cyclorama lights dominate, with low level from front-of-house



Cyclorama lights only

Top three photos courtesy of The Open Stage

Available lighting

Some styles of presentational drama traditionally use the regular lighting that is available. These are the nontheatrical lights that are used in everyday life, such as the fluorescent lights found in a meeting hall, school classroom or indoor community sporting facility. Sometimes this type of lighting is called *working lights*.

Low-budget, ensemble and didactic theatre are frequent users of working lights. Although usually it is the working lights found directly above the playing space that are used, those in the auditorium above the audience may also be incorporated so that the whole internal venue is exposed. Working lights can't manipulate an audience's interpretation of meaning to the same extent that theatrical lights can.

Because the characters, the playing space and often the non-playing space areas are revealed, the audience are not able to easily forget they are watching a play. It is for this reason they are more able to analyse and contemplate what they are seeing whilst they are seeing it. This suits the aim of didactic theatre in particular as it tries to share new information and perspectives with the audience, in the hope they will learn something and take action with that learning once the play finishes.

Sometimes these types of drama will use theatrical lights in such a way that they appear to be regular non-designed working lights. This could be because the working lights within a venue are insufficient to light the playing space. It might also be because the venue is so large that the audience wouldn't be able to see the stage, nor the actors in it, without powerful theatrical fixtures.

LED lights

An acronym for a type of semi-conductor that emits visible light called a light-emitting diode.

Ensemble theatre

Drama works that are created and performed by a group of theatrical practitioners.

Activity 6.3: Available lighting or theatrical lighting?

1. The images below are from a presentational play where the leading character had his identity stolen from him by a jealous brother and corrupt officials, leaving him and his family for dead. Imagine the lighting designer was considering using working lights, instead of theatrical lights, for this didactic play.

Image A



Image B



Photos courtesy of The Open Stage

- ➔ 2. Analyse the two images on the previous page and answer the questions in written form:
- How might the lighting in image A suit a didactic theatre piece?
 - How might the lighting in image B suit a didactic theatre piece?
 - Other than what you've already discussed in response to question 1, why might it be a better choice to use working lights, such as in image A?
 - Other than what you've already discussed in response to question 2, why might it be a better choice to use working lights, such as in image B?

Lighting fixture options

In order to realise a lighting design, designers will need to select specific lights. There are three basic categories of lighting fixtures available to them for theatrical productions:

- Spotlights:** including fresnels, profiles, pebble convexes (PCs) and ellipsoidals
- Floodlights:** including cyclorama floods, general floods, Parcans (PARS) and eye lights
- Special effect lighting:** including moving lights (also called intelligent or robotic lights), strobes and custom-made lights

Fixture
A theatrical light.

Custom-made
Created following specific specifications for a particular production.

Fixture types

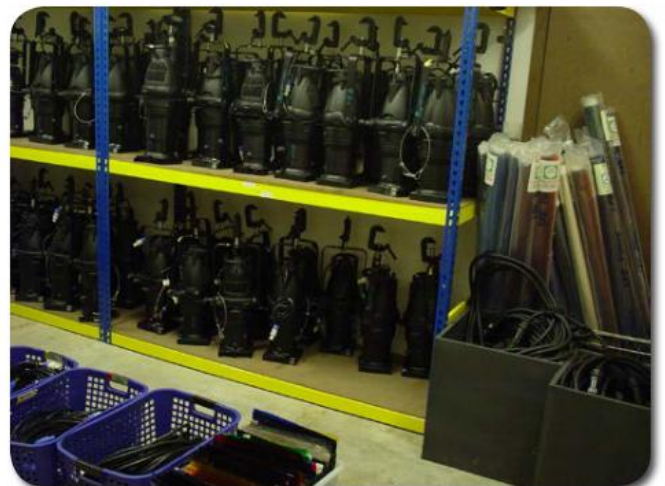
There are many different professional lights that a designer can use to create interesting and artistic theatrical lighting. Some of these include the:

Fresnel

This fixture has a changeable beam size from small to large, depending on the size and type of the fresnel. The edge of the light is soft and fuzzy.

Profile

The beam of light that shines from this light is very controllable. Not only can the beam size be changed, but also the edge of the light shape. This light can have a hard and distinct edge, or a soft and fuzzy edge as the designer prefers.



Beam
A ray or shaft of light.

Parcan

This light comes pretty much ready to go in that the beam size and edge can't be changed. Coloured gels can (and frequently are) added to this light. Parcans are cheap to buy and light to carry (when compared to other theatre lights).

Floodlight

These are used to light the cyclorama at the back of the playing space. They often come in rows of three or four and are rigged on the lighting grid or placed on the floor. Sometimes they're called *cyclorama* or *cyc* lights.

Rig

A set up in a particular way.

Pebble convex (PC)

This fixture is similar to a fresnel in that it has a changeable beam size from small to large, depending on the size and type of PC. Although the edge of the light is soft and fuzzy, it is less so than a fresnel.

Hint

Often a backstage area needs additional low level light to be added so that cast and crew can see when they're waiting to go on stage or are working in the wing areas. It's the job of the lighting operator or the stage manager to set up the floor electrics and blue lights, not the lighting designer, to enable actors and crew to move around backstage and front-of-house safely during a performance.

Accessories

Designers will frequently add lighting accessories to specific fixtures to make particular effects. Accessories are a very important design component when working with the elements and the principles of design.

There are many different accessories available in lighting design including:

- Gels and gel frames
- Gobos and gobo holders
- Barn doors

Gels

Lighting designers will add colour filters in front of fixtures to change the colour of the light. These filters are made of and called *coloured gels* or simply *gels* for short.

Original gels were made from gelatine, a substance made from collagen found in living creatures. From the mid-1970s synthetic materials, such as polyester, have been used to make coloured filters instead. These are more heat resistant, have increased durability and omit less noticeable odours when filtering lights, compared to the original gelatin-based material. Despite being made from non-organic material, they are still called gels to this day.



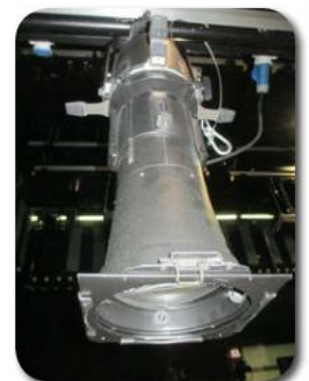
Not every fixture needs to be gelled and designers may choose for some lights to be left in their natural state. This is called open white; *open* because the front of the fixture is left exposed, and *white* because the light generated is the original white (or relatively close to white) light.

Gobos

In order to create the illusion of a window or some other object that does not physically appear in the playing space, a lighting designer will use a gobo. This is an attachment that slides in front of a profile and creates a shadow effect on stage. It is the shadow that creates the illusion that the real object exists. Gobos that represent real objects are frequently used in representational drama.

Gobos can also be used, particularly in presentational drama, to add texture to the playing space rather than to suggest the existence of an object. For example a gobo that has lots of small holes in it will create a dappled-light effect and give a very textural, three-dimensional sensation to the stage. Whereas one that has thin wavy lines in it will create a rippled-light effect giving a sense of movement to the playing space.

To add a gobo to a lighting fixture the technician will slide the gobo into the holder through one of its sides. The holder is then loaded into the fixture itself by sliding it into a slot that sits between the light source and the lens.



Gobos in presentational drama – suggesting different spaces inside a mansion evoking a particular mood and atmosphere, and perhaps also suggesting different times.



A gobo in representational drama – delineating a real window for the actor to look out of.

Barn doors

To change the shape of the beam of a fresnel an attachment, called a barn door, can be added to the front of the fixture. This lighting accessory has four foldable metal plates or doors. In it's completely open configuration a door makes no change to a beam. But when its folded inwards it interrupts the throw of light and makes two effects:

1. The beam becomes smaller on the corresponding door side.
2. The curved edge of the beam is replaced with the straight edge of the door.

Barn doors can be used to match the beam of light to the straight edge of a set piece, such as a flat. This then prevents any spill of light into an area that doesn't supposedly exist (according to the inner world of the play) or isn't wanted by the designer. This is particularly useful when designing for representational drama where the illusion of real life is important and being able to see a non-acting area of the stage or into the wings would be inappropriate. In presentational drama barn doors can also be used to suggest the straight edge of a room in an empty playing space.



Activity 6.4: Lighting design

1. Imagine you are a lighting designer creating the design for a scene from a play you're working on in class.
2. Create a design using two types of lights (and as many of each type as you would like), plus any of the accessories you feel appropriate.
3. Write a report that lists the lights and accessories you would use, and describe how you would use them to light your scene. Be sure to justify each choice.

The lighting design process

The lighting designer uses a design process to create the lighting for a production. Although this process has the same stages as those used by other types of theatrical designers, the deliverables within some of the stages are quite different.

The typical process stages that a lighting designer will use are:

1. Creative team discussion
2. Script clues
3. Initial thoughts
4. Research and investigation
5. Experimentation and drafting
6. Final design

1. Creative team discussion

Once contracted to come on board a production the lighting designer will have discussions with the director, the dramaturg and, wherever possible, the other designers on the creative team. The director will share their ideas and directorial vision with the creative team. This team, in turn will share their instincts, thoughts, feelings, preferences and, if there are any, potential problems they can foresee with each other. Together, they will agree on the creative vision for the production. As with all design areas the lighting must both functionally and aesthetically contribute to the production, whilst working cohesively with all the other production elements and helping to realise the overall creative vision.

Ideally the lighting designer will work very closely with the scenographer when designing the lighting. This is sometimes difficult because the final design material of a scenographic design must be completed well before rehearsals begin. This is so that the actors and director can bring the script and the characters to life whilst accurately knowing how the performance space will be configured. By contrast the lighting designer may begin their work well before rehearsals begin, but they certainly won't be completing it until just before the show opens. Attending rehearsals will be part of their investigation work. If the scenographer is overseeing the set build, then there is usually the opportunity for the two designers to work closely together.

Show opens

The first of several performances has occurred.

Hint

During the set build, when the lighting designer is undergoing their investigation and experimentation work, there might even be minor adjustments made to the set because of lighting related issues. If the scenographer has, by this point, handed over the set build to another person, then the lighting designer may need to find other creative ways to solve any lighting-set related issues.

2. Script clues

If the lighting designer has not already read the script several times and begun to comb through it for clues that will have an impact on the lighting, they will certainly start this immediately following the initial creative team discussion. They're looking for suggestions from the playwright about the lighting, as well as information from him or her about the setting (time and space of the inner world of the play) and the situation the characters find themselves in.

Further than simply these literal references, the designer is looking for any other information they can glean from the script about the emotions and psychological state of the characters, their journeys as the dramatic action unfolds and the shifts in dynamics that might occur as their relationships change. These more subtle script clues will have an impact on the tension, mood, atmosphere and potential use of symbol and metaphor; dramatic elements that should be integrated, reflected and supported through the production's lighting design.

Script clues will typically be found in the setting notes, stage directions and character lines.

Setting notes

Details in a script from the playwright describing the time, place or context in which dramatic action of the play occurs.

Stage directions

An instruction included in the script by the playwright for the actors about a character or the action.

3. Initial thoughts

Good lighting design, like all design, is about exploring multiple ideas and possibilities in a range of different ways. What a designer thinks of as a great idea one day, they might want to dismiss the next. Conversely, something that jumps into their head that they want to forget today, might be a solution to a problem or a highly creative possibility in a few weeks' time. It's imperative that lighting designers capture their initial thoughts, the first time (or as close as possible to the first time) that they read the script. This is no matter how crazy, impossible or irrelevant the ideas might appear to be. After all, the audience only gets the chance to have a first impression of the play because they will watch the performance only once. The lighting designer's first impressions, instincts and unplanned reactions are similarly important.

Designers capture these initial thoughts in a variety of different ways. They might make annotations directly in the margin of the script or they could put them into a design notebook. These notes might be words written in dot points or full sentences, or they could be sketches, doodles or symbols drawn in colour.

It doesn't matter how the initial thoughts are captured as long as they *are* captured. Some designers find that it's the act of identifying a specific thought in the first place and then the capturing of it when writing or drawing it, that makes the idea clear. Not only does this allow the designer to come back to the idea at a later date and review it after they've potentially forgotten all about it, it's also likely that the process of capturing the idea will prompt another new thought or possibility.

4. Research and investigation

When a production is set in a particular time and space, the lighting designer researches and investigates that period and location. They need to find out about the historical, political, social and environmental landscape of the inner world of the play. They may also need to research the playwright's context or do some investigation about the audience who are likely to watch the production. In a representational drama researching and

investigating helps the designer to accurately and realistically reflect the time and space in the lighting. If it's a presentational play the lighting is likely to be more stylised and to suggest time and space, rather than imitate it.

There are many ways that a designer can conduct their research. Reading relevant newspaper articles, non-fiction books and good quality fictional novels can help the designer to understand the inner world of the play. Many of these are available in e-versions online or through an old-fashioned visit to a library. Sometimes designers might be able to interview people who can share valuable knowledge about the play's time and space because they lived (or are living) in that location or during that era. These interviews might be conducted face-to-face, via telephone or through online technologies. A visit to the performance venue is always valuable if the designer has never worked there before so that they get a first-hand understanding of the playing space, sightlines, backstage area, audience's first impression of the venue and so on.

5. Experimenting and drafting

During this stage, lighting designers will begin to play with different potential options for the lighting design, some of which may have similarities to each other and other alternatives that may have nothing in common. There are many different ways to reflect reality on stage in representational drama, just as there is a range of approaches the designer can take to *not* imitate reality in presentational drama. The designer is looking for a core to his or her design, an essence that will flavour every design decision they make. Eventually this central core will become the backbone for the design and the designer will capture it in a design statement.

Design statement

A very concise description of the designer's concept for the production, including their creative intention and sometimes details about their process.

As outlined previously in the initial thoughts stage, lighting design is a process and as such there should be many different versions of the design before it is finalised. Of course each draft is unlikely to include a completely detailed plan, but the designer must ensure they keep refining, adapting and experimenting with ideas as they go along. This could be individual or reflective work at home, it might be as they sketch or make notes when watching a rehearsal, or it may be when throwing ideas around in discussion with other members of the creative team.

Great lighting designers experiment with the different types of lighting states they could create on stage and the different parts of the stage they could create these states for. They also consider the different types of fixtures that they might use to realise the states, whilst keeping in mind the equipment that will be available to them at the performance venue.

Hint

Designers should always keep each draft of their design. This allows them to go back to an earlier design if the current one doesn't work, or if they don't like it. If they're designing by hand on paper, they need to make sure they don't throw anything away. If they're designing using software on a computer, they need to save every version by sequentially numbering or dating each one.

6. Final design

After extensive experimenting and drafting, it's time for the lighting designer to finalise their design. This should reflect their single finalised design statement. Once they have decided what lighting states they will create within the playing space and the lighting fixtures they will use to do so, they need to document their choices. They will create a:

- Lighting plan
- Cue synopsis

Lighting plan

This is the main document of the lighting designer's work. It is an aerial (top) view of the venue, usually both the stage and the seating areas, with all the information on it that's needed to rig (hang) the lights. It will include information about:

- fixtures
- accessories
- rigging
- lighting bars
- channels.

Channel

A pathway between a lighting console and a fixture, which is controlled by either a physical slider or a virtual number on a console, to change the intensity of the fixture.

Fixtures

In order to be able to create this document each fixture is drawn on the plan using a symbol. Whilst there are different types of symbols used, in Australia typical symbols include:



Internet exploration

Find out how a professional draws fixtures on a plan at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2-X2BiRJPQ

Accessories

If gels are being used then the number, not the colour, of the gel is included directly in front of the fixture symbol on the plan. Gel numbers are specified by the manufacturer and are internationally accepted.

Rigging

Lighting fixtures can be hung in many different places within a theatre venue. The designer needs to specify on the plan exactly where they want each fixture rigged, as well as which basic direction each will be pointing towards.

Lighting bars

For some venues the bars onto which the lights are hung are permanently fixed and thus the plan is used to show only where the lights will be added to the existing bars. In other venues, however, the lighting bars are flexible and can be moved. In this second type of venue the designer is not only specifying where on the bars the fixtures will be rigged, but where the actual bars will be rigged within the auditorium.

Channels

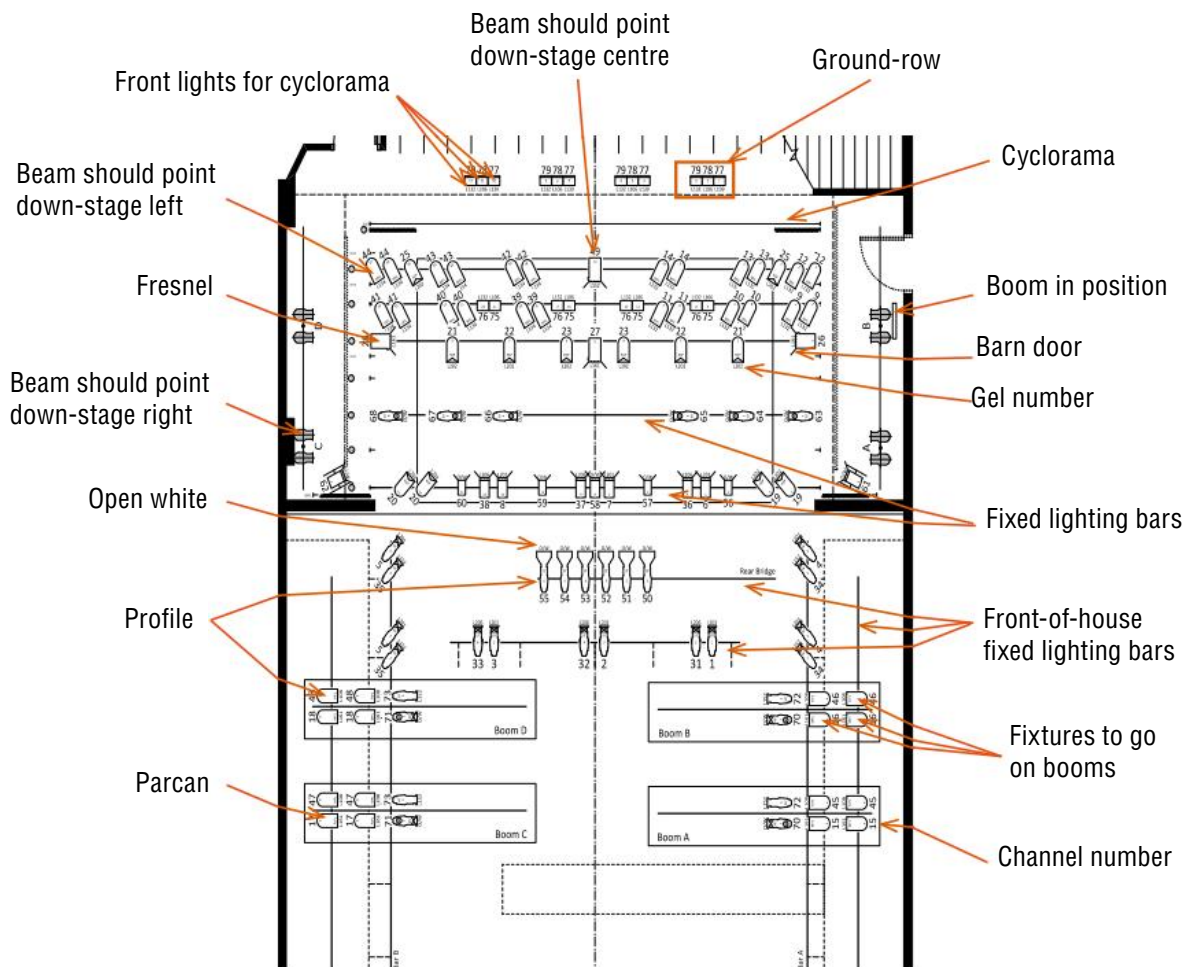
Channels are part of a numbering system defined by the designer to coordinate his or her design during the plotting session. Each fixture is plugged into a particular socket (a circuit) that ultimately will connect to an operational toggle (a fader) on the lighting desk. Sometimes several fixtures can be plugged into the same circuit and thus will be operated together as a collective light source.

Note: Channelling is pretty complex. Understanding that channelling needs to occur in lighting design is enough at this stage in your drama studies. At this level you are not expected to be able to channel lights, nor deal with the electrical side of lighting.

Internet exploration

Hear from one lighting designer about his design process and some of the final choices he made at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3K8UXfvrgg



LIGHTING PLAN EXAMPLE

The final complete aerial view will include not just where the lights are to be rigged, but also detailed information about the way the whole lighting design works as one within the venue. This will include:

- a legend on the side with a summary of the fixtures
- the location of the bars and fixtures
- a key on the side with the configuration of any fixtures and their accessories (if such detail is needed)
- accessory notes, such as a gel summary
- any other notes that are applicable
- scale information
- theatre company information
- lighting designer information.

See the example provided on the following page.

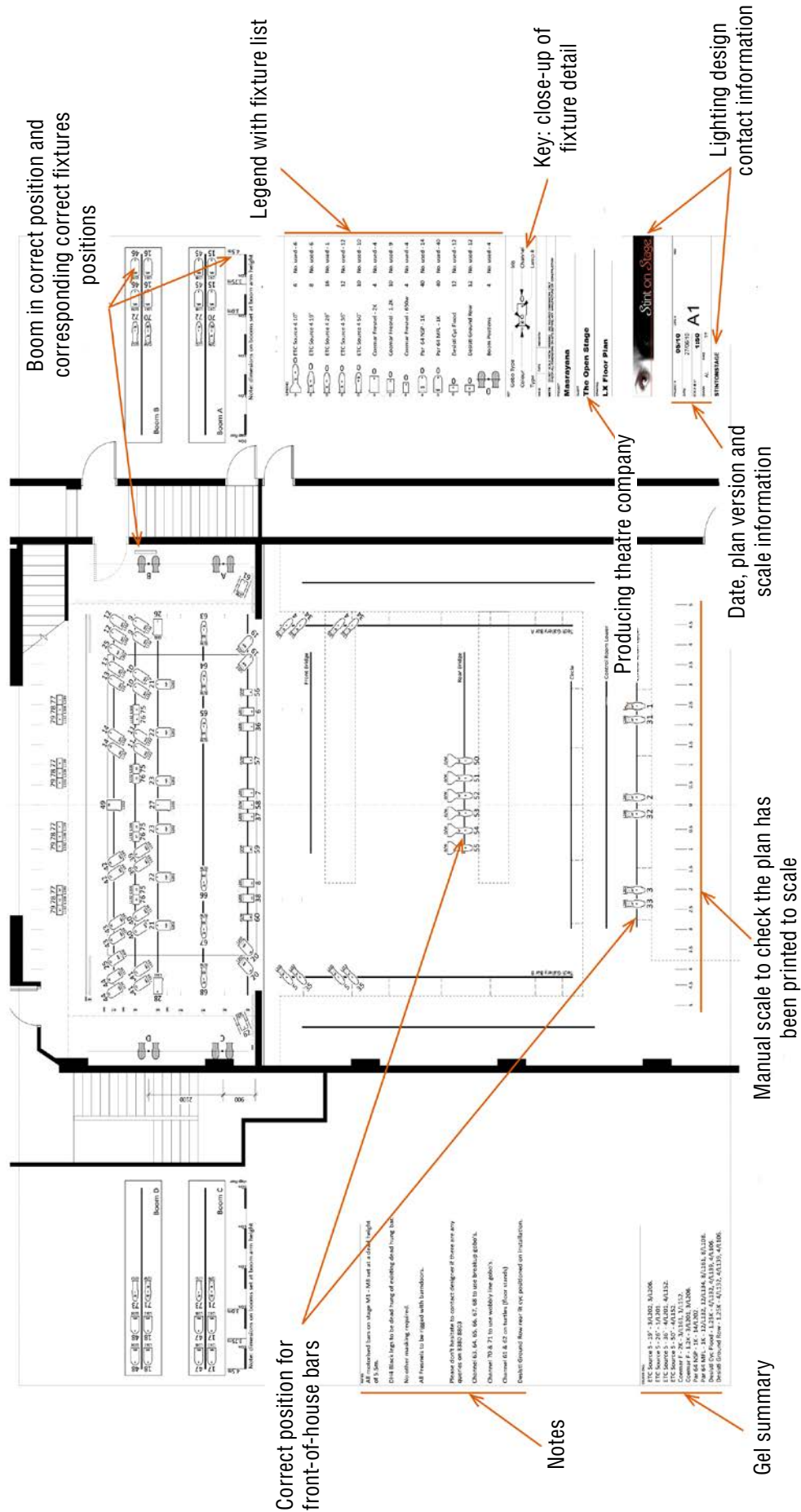
Activity 6.5: Lighting design

1. Imagine you are a lighting designer creating the design for a scene from a play you're working on in class using the venue provided over the page.
2. Create a design using as many types of lights (and as many of each type as you would like), plus any accessories you feel appropriate.
3. The venue that you will be working is a black-box, end-on stage with three lighting bars above the stage and two front of house.
4. Draw a lighting plan that includes:
 - a bird's eye (aerial) view drawing
 - a legend
 - a gel list
 - notes.
5. Write a report that describes why you have selected each light and each light position. Be sure to justify each choice.

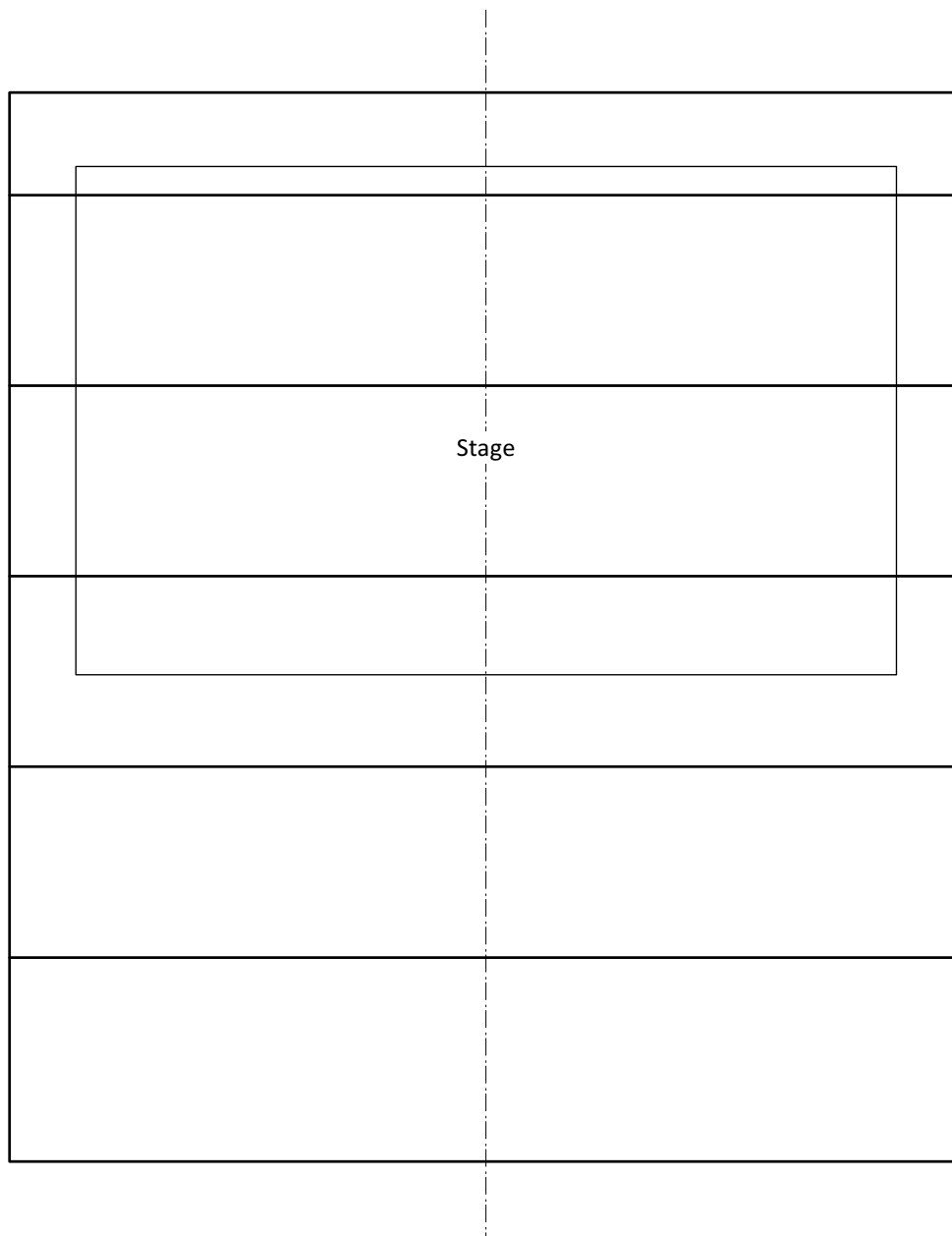
Internet exploration

Watch a designer begin to realise his lighting plan at the venue at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NQtgCIWRgA



COMPLETE FINAL LIGHTING PLAN EXAMPLE



Elevation views

In order for the stage management team and venue crew to visualise how the design fits within the theatre holistically, the lighting designer might include additional elevation views and sections of the venue. Often however, if the designer creates such documentation, it is for their personal use only.

Elevation view

A drawing that shows the side or front of the design.

An elevation view is simply a specific perspective from a particular place in a venue. So, in lighting, it's likely to be the perspective of the lights (and sometimes the set) from a particular place in the theatre. It could be a bird's eye view looking down, it could be a front-on view from an audience member's seat and so on.

A side-section, is a view of the venue where a wall or a part of the building has been cut away. A side-section is useful for a designer to explore the angles of the lighting in relationship to the stage. It also will clearly show where flexible lighting bars need to move to or where any free standing bars should be added. Side-sections allow a lighting designer to check the beam angles of the fixtures. They will check the angles for two reasons; to ascertain:

- that the actors are lit from the angles they want them to be lit from
- there are no lights shining directly in the audience's eyes.

Note: Fixture beam angles are pretty complex.

Being able to read a side elevation and identify the plan parts, as well as checking that no light is directly shining in the audience's eye is enough at this stage in your drama studies. At this level you are not expected to be able to accurately calculate beam angles in relationship to the light focus on actors' faces.

See the example provided on the following page.

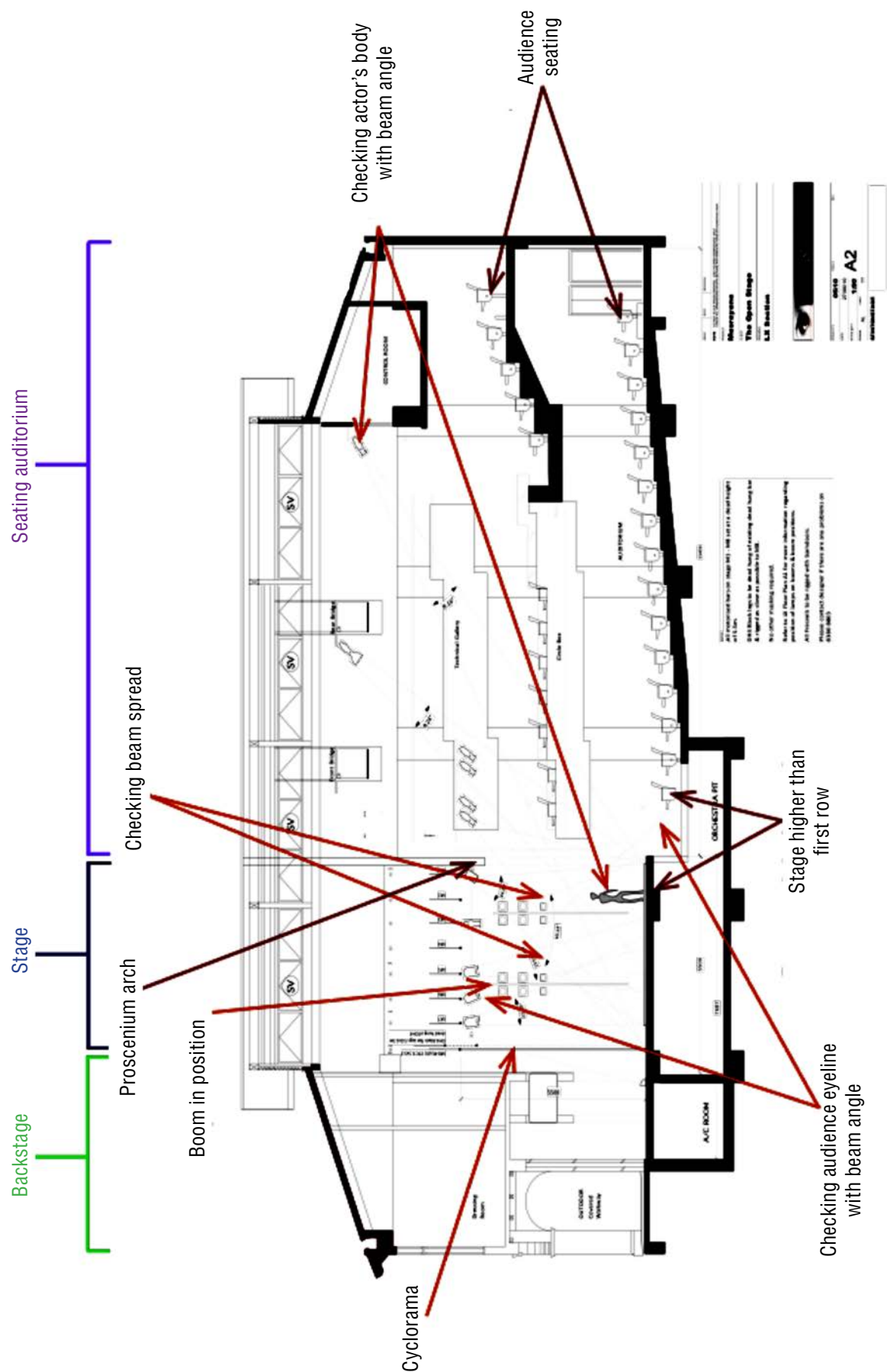
You should now complete **Activity 6.6: Analysing a lighting plan document** (see over the page).

Cue synopsis

The cue synopsis will outline *which areas* of the stage are to be lit, *when* they are to be lit and *how* they will be lit. A synopsis does not usually include fixture information, but rather comprises a general description in words about how the lighting states will look or feel.

Lighting plots are written sequentially, ideally with cue line information also included. In the synopsis each new state is listed and described one after another. The lighting cue numbers for each change are added in numerical order. They include information about how long a new state will take to fade in, and how long the old state will take to fade out will also be included.

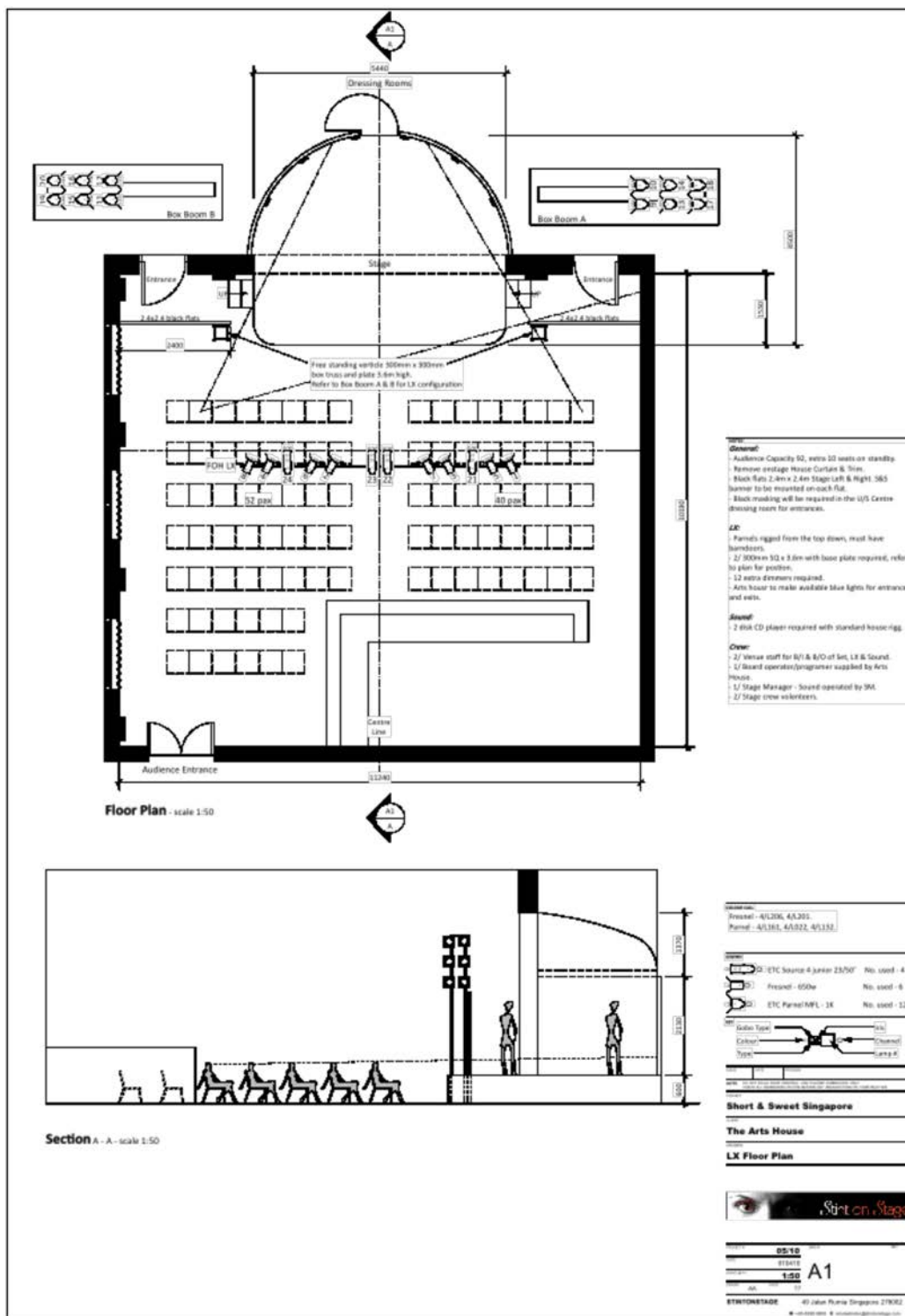
An example is provided on page 174.



SIDE SECTION
COMPLETE FINAL LIGHTING PLAN EXAMPLE

Activity 6.6: Analysing a lighting plan document

Below is a final lighting design. Identify and label as many of the components as you can. Don't simply focus on the lighting information, but on all the venue information as this is also relevant to the lighting.



CUE SYNOPSIS EXAMPLE

Fade-out time in seconds of the old lighting state

Fade-in time in seconds of the lighting state

Notes about quality of lighting state

Notes to add an old state into this new one

Lighting cues in numerical order

Additional lighting cue added at a later date

Notes about changing lighting state during sound effect

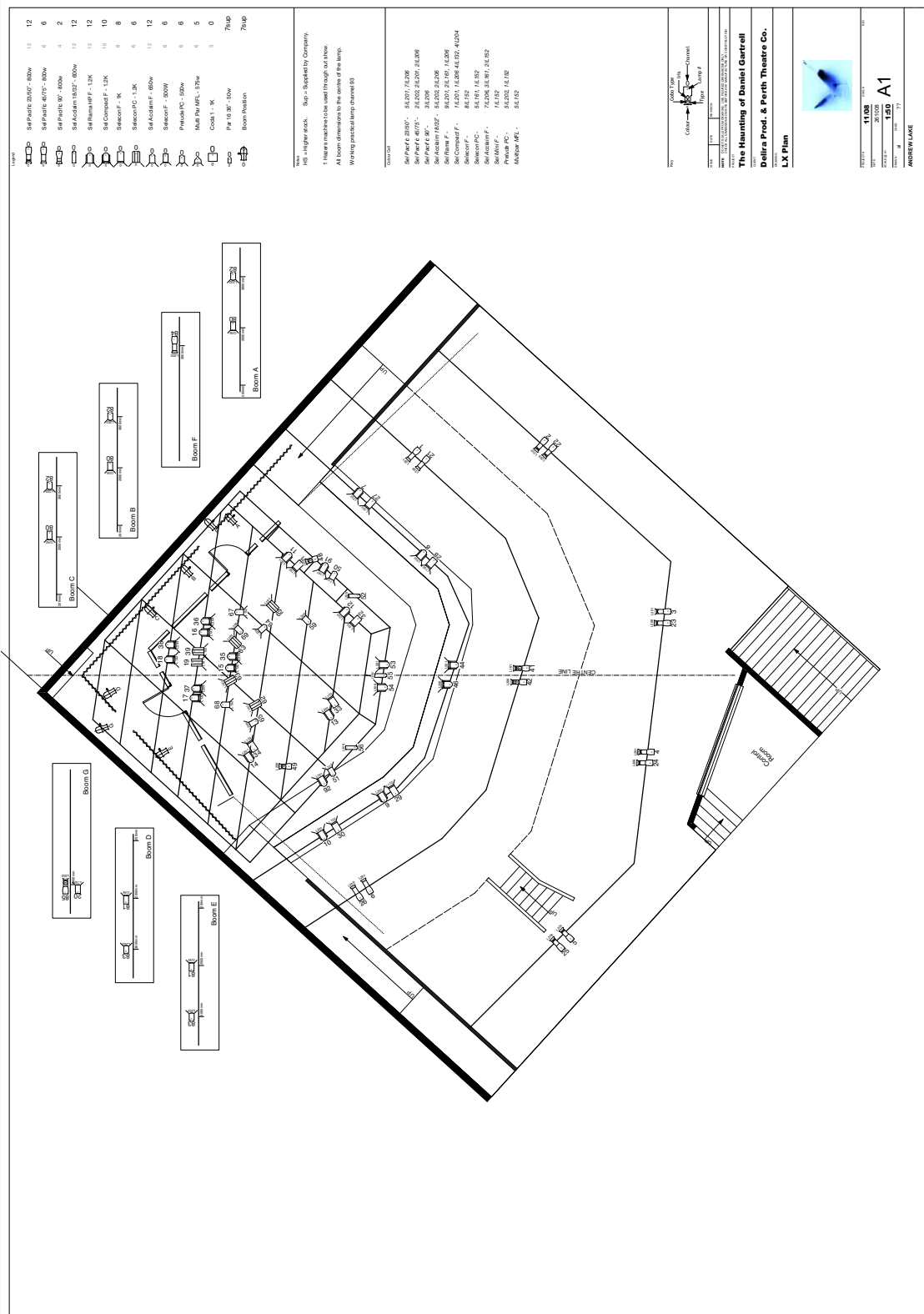
Notes about cue line to start lighting change

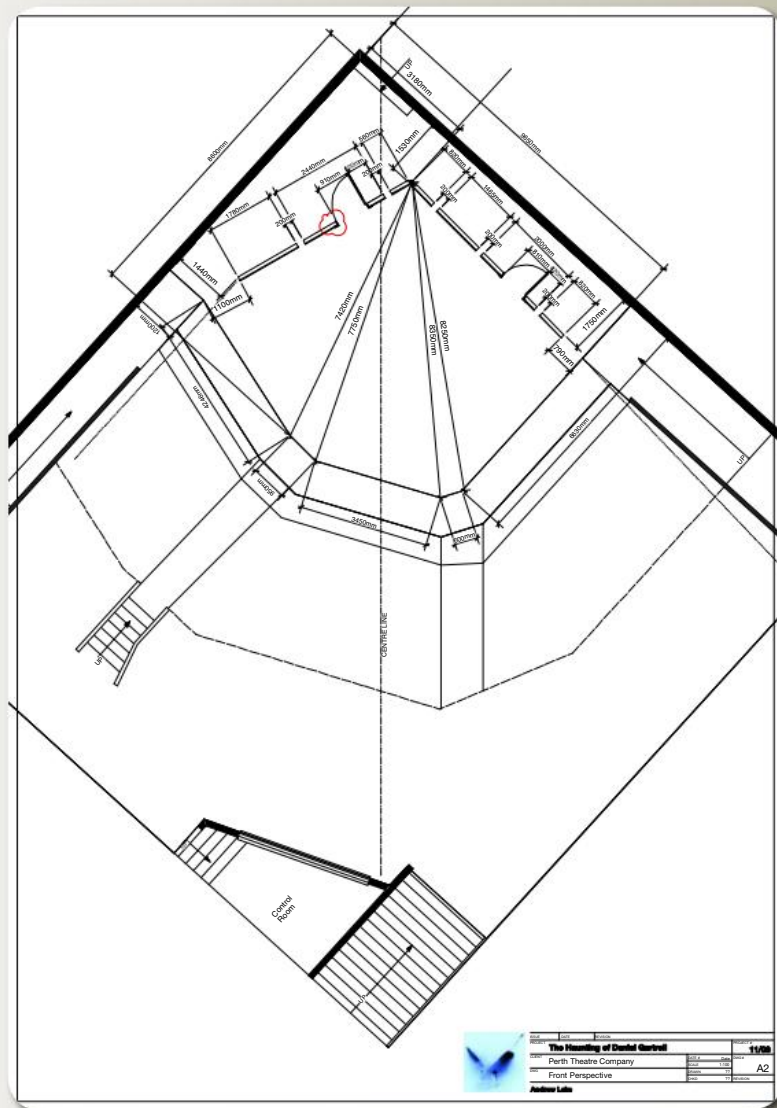
Cue Number	Time	Description
1x37	10	Change curve. Build Middle cracks brighter.
1x38	10	Build out cracks in with window & underlying Room state
1x39	20	Where are you? - Bottom cracks start to build
1x40	40	Build in top with window still on James
1x41	10	Take air lines loose cracks over voice over
1x42	10	Santa where 42 was called. Two in the morning with knock shadowy 62-63 dark corners
1x43	10	My father made me promise start to rotate Panel from Craig (look of the landscape 2/5 Sp Craig in the house. Atwood

Activity 6.7: Advanced lighting exploration and scenographic design

1. Analyse the lighting and scenographic design documentation for a production of *The Haunting of Daniel Gartrell*. This is presented on the following page.
2. Write a report that explores the way the lighting and the set work together harmoniously. You should give specific examples from the plans and also offer some personal interpretations from an audience member's perspective
3. If you need more information on the scenography, go to pages 117 and 125.

LIGHTING DESIGN





CHAPTER 7

Costume Design

Key Concepts

- ☛ Costume design
- ☛ Principles of design
 - Elements of design
- ☛ Costume design options
 - Fabric
 - Haberdashery
 - Footwear and accessories
- ☛ The costume design process
 - Creative team discussion
 - Script clues
 - Initial thoughts
 - Research and investigation
 - Experimentation and drafting
 - Final design
- ☛ Construction
- ☛ Make-up
 - The design process

COSTUME DESIGN

Every item of clothing, accessory, hair style and facial make-up that roles and characters appear with on stage has been meticulously designed by a costume designer. Even the most simple or sparse costume has been carefully and artistically created, and is the result of many hours (often weeks and months) of painstaking attention and hard work.

A costume designer is responsible for everything that adorns the actors in the playing space. The costumes need to reflect the time and space that the play is set in, to work well with characters' external (physical) and internal

Aesthetics

In general:

The engagement generated and appeal invoked by data about an object or creature that is collected by the human senses.

In philosophy:

A critical reflection on visual and performing arts, culture and nature.

(psychological, emotional, intellectual and spiritual) states, to aesthetically communicate insights about the play and to help realise the overall creative vision of the production, all whilst functioning effectively during performance.

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

It's easy to focus on the 'costume' part of 'costume designer' and forget about the 'design' part. Those people that create the clothing, accessories and anything else worn by actors during a production utilise the principles of design, in the same way that architects do when designing buildings and landscape gardeners do when creating a new environment. Whilst the materials these creatives work with are different, the design principles that they use are not.

Principles of design

Guidelines used by members of the creative team in the generation of artistic ideas.

Although utilised for centuries, architect Walter Gropius streamlined them and arts students first formally studied them at Bauhaus School in Germany in 1919.

The eleven principles of design used by costume designers are:

Balance

Is where the elements are arranged in a symmetrical way, with one part appearing to the viewer to be even in relation to another part. Interestingly, the layout can still be asymmetrical, yet the audience will experience a sense of equilibrium psychologically because of how the designer manipulates the overall design.

Contrast

One element, or a group of elements, is juxtaposed with or against another. The two objects, or groups of objects, in the design are seen to be in opposition to each other by the audience member.

Emphasis

When an element is used at a specific point within the design in such a way so as to attract the audience member's eye to it. Most usually this focal point is being accented because of its importance in the design/production. In visual arts emphasis is often called dominance.

Harmony

All the design elements being used relate in some way to each other. Usually this will mean they share a common trait or are being used in a similar way.

Movement

The designer is using the elements to make their design appear to be active, when in reality it is not. The use of diagonals, changes in light/dark and the overlapping of similar shapes are common ways to suggest movement in a static design.

Pattern

A repeated and consistent use of one element in an easily recognisable way. These sequences can be made through both regular and irregular repetitions. The more regular the series the more a sense of connection is suggested and, conversely, the less regular the series the less a sense of connection is experienced by the audience.

Repetition

Duplicating one element in the same, or a similar, way throughout all or some part of the design. This type of reuse helps to create a sense of cohesiveness and unity in the design for the audience. A designer often, but not always, uses repetition when patterning.

Rhythm

The elements are used so that not only movement within the design is suggested, but that the movement is ongoing beyond the borders of the actual costume. In some extreme cases, the audience member may keep subconsciously experiencing a sense of the rhythm suggested by the costume, even after the actor (and the costume) has exited the playing space.

Scale/Proportion

Where the same or related elements, most often shapes and lines, are used multiple times in different sizes to suggest a three-dimensionality about the design. For example the size of one shape within the costume is relative to its different-sized twin, and therefore depth of field or distance is suggested.

Unity

The relationship between a group of one element or several different elements brings them together in a particular way. As one collective the whole is greater than the sum of each individual part.

Variety

One element is used differently in one section, when compared to how it is used in other parts of the design. This could be easily recognisable or it may be subtle, connecting with an audience member's subconscious.

Elements of design

The design elements are those basic components that designers use when designing costumes. They are the tools in the designer's tool-kit that they will organise in specific ways according to the principles of design.

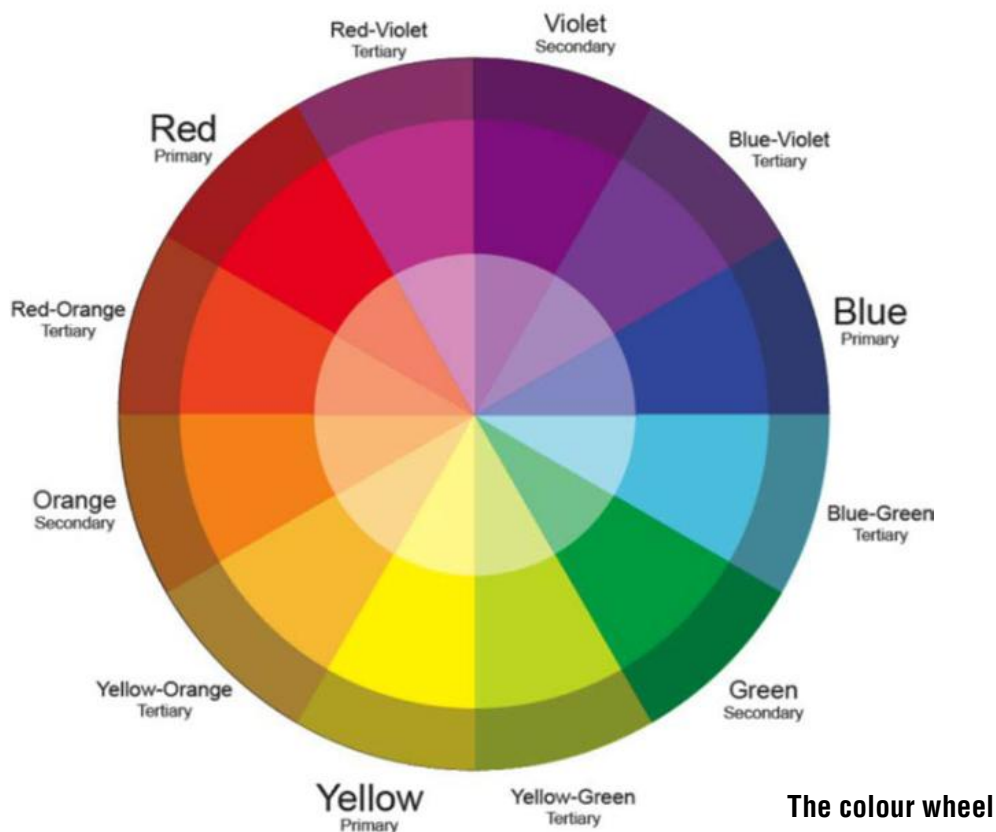
Elements of design

Characteristics essential to artistic works. They are the individual components that can be defined in isolation and yet are treated in various ways and sequences to create a design.

There are six design elements that costume designers use:

Colour

Although light appears to the naked eye as white it is made up of all the colours, individual colours that people can only see when they're reflected by objects or when the light is bent (such as through a prism). Three primary colours can be used together in different combinations to form other colours. In costume design, as in most areas of design and visual arts, these primary colours are red, yellow and blue. It is by mixing these colours together in different combinations that the other colours, called secondary colours, are formed. Complimentary colours are found opposite one another on the colour wheel. They are often used in working with the design principles of contrast, balance and emphasis. Colours that are side-by-side on the colour wheel are called analogous colours. These are popular when working with the movement, scale and rhythm principles.



Internet exploration

To explore mixing colours investigate this site:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v= BHHf1-dmco](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHHf1-dmco)

Line

A series of consecutive points along a single straight course that appear to be linked. Although a line on a piece of fabric may seem finite, it's possible to imagine it continuing beyond the costume edge following the same straight course.

Shape

When a line or series of lines surrounds or encloses space then it creates a shape, which is also known as a form. It's possible to differentiate one shape from other shapes or the space around it typically by its boundaries (lines) or colour.

Space (including 3D form)

Sometime space refers to the area inside the enclosing lines that a form occupies, and at other times space is the area in-between two separate forms. It's important to remember that space in costume design is not two-dimensional, but that space has width, breadth and depth. For example, a design is not merely a flat piece of printed fabric, but a printed fabric configured (ie. folded, stitched or stuck together) in such a way that it occupies multiple space planes.

Plane

A flat surface that's without thickness.

Texture

The quality of the exterior and edges of the costume design. This can be the physical surface properties or the appearance of the surface properties.

Value (including tone)

The shading that's added to the design to suggest volume, weight and three-dimensionality. Value's often achieved by varying the lightness or darkness of elements, such as through colour shading, or by putting one thing alongside another, suggesting a contrast between the two in the audience member's interpretation. Value is one of the design elements that designers often use to evoke emotions and feelings.

Internet exploration

Explore some of the principles of design used in production design, including costume at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=DERf5aGfDFI

Activity 7.1: Principles and elements of design analysis

1. Examine the costume design for the character Cherie in *The Bus Stop* by designer Catherine Schultz presented on the following page. Don't forget to consider the design notes on the right and the fabric samples on the top left.
2. Write a report that outlines the way Catherine has utilised the elements and principles of design in Cherie's costume.



Internet exploration

Take a tour through a fabric shop with a seamstress at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=gExz-ysX9Ec

COSTUME DESIGN OPTIONS

The most basic and common materials that designers can use when designing costumes are fabric and haberdashery. These traditionally belong to the millinery industry where they have been used to create clothing for people across cultures across the world for thousands of years.

Fabric

Costumes, like clothing, are made from fabric and there are thousands of fabric options that designers can use. In fact with the recent advances in technology making fabric readily available, such as the ability to purchase fabric online via the internet, there are probably millions of possibilities that designers can take advantage of. Even with this seemingly endless range of fabric possibilities, there are different fibre categories that designers typically consider. These include:

Natural fibres

- Cotton
- Flax (linen)
- Hemp
- Silk
- Wool

Synthetic fibres

- Acrylic
- Lycra (spandex)
- Nylon
- Polyester
- Rayon

Synthetic, rather than natural fabric is quite popular in the theatre industry because it is usually cheaper, more versatile and, in some cases, more durable than natural fibres. Natural fibres do have advantages, however, if the budget will allow for them; they tend to be more breathable and therefore minimise actor perspiration, and they hang (on the actor's frame) and travel (when the actor moves on stage) very freely and fluidly.



Haberdashery

Ornamenting a costume with fine details and unique features is a convention used by designers to ensure their design appropriately reflects the character that wears it. It is also a way to make sure that the costumes are indicative of historical periods and geographical locations. Often costume designers will use haberdashery to create these important features.

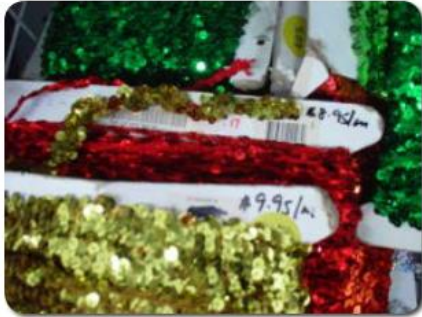
In a similar way to there being many different fabric options available to designers, there are also many types of haberdashery. The design elements are almost always important components of any type of haberdashery, hence being an ideal vehicle for designers to use.

Hint

In some countries, haberdashery refers to the store that sells men's clothing and accessories.

Trimming

For ease of application many trimmings are made in long lengths that can be sold by the metre (or part metre) and easily sewn or glued onto a costume. Sewing trimmings onto the main costume piece is almost always preferable to gluing them on, because they are attached more securely and thus create a more durable costume.



Sequins



Braiding



Diamantes



Ribbon and synthetic lace



Cord, ric rac (upper right) and pom pom



Tassels and beading

Activity 7.2: Design elements and haberdashery

1. Examine the photo of the purple tassels in the image right.
2. Write a mini-report describing (in detail) the way each of the six elements of design have been used to create the tassel.



Thread

Thread is a form of haberdashery that can be used to decorate fabric by stitching a motif, such as a line, shape or pattern onto the fabric in a contrasting colour. It also has a functional role of holding two pieces of fabric (or some trimmings and a piece of fabric) together. Stitching with the thread can be done on an electric or a manual (foot peddle) sewing machine, or it can be sewn by hand.



Fasteners

Costumes, just like their clothing cousins, need to stay securely on the actor during the performance. There are, once again, multiple options available to a costume designer to ensure costume pieces stay fastened at the appropriate times.



Hooks and eyes



Velcro



Buttons



Zips



Press-studs

Footwear and accessories

Creating the clothing worn by the roles and characters is only part of the costume designer's job. They need to design everything worn by anyone on stage. This includes the footwear, accessories, jewellery, handbags and sometimes even the underwear.

Footwear

Creative decisions about shoes, slippers, socks, stockings and even nail polish must be made for each and every character. Whilst these items can be 100% custom made, to do so is very costly and time-consuming. Usually designers will design footwear knowing that it will be sourced, rather than custom-made. Costume constructionists may adapt a shoe by altering the colour with shoe paint, adding an adhesive layer of fabric or decorative trimmings.

Custom-made

An original piece created following exact specifications for a particular production.

Accessories

Any gloves, hairpieces, hats and handkerchiefs worn by an actor in the playing space are the responsibility of the costume designer. As are necklaces, bracelets, earrings, pendants, rings, watches and any other kind of adornments. Although these items can be used to help the character function physically. It is these finishing touches to a costume that help locate it within the time and space of the inner world of the play.

For example the chains of pearls, long gloves, sequins head bands and large feathers in the photo (right) suggest the time period of the roaring 20s. The image is from a production of *Not Quite the Moulin Rouge* set in Paris in 1929, a time and space that is clearly reflected in the accessories.

In representational drama accessories are highly realistic and can be the parts of the costumes that reveal great psychological, emotional, spiritual or intellectual qualities of the characters. The way the character then uses them when interacting with others or more subtly in their stage business, can offer the audience insights into a character's values and beliefs. In presentational drama, accessories may once again be functional or reveal insights about the inner life of the roles and characters. Sometimes, however, designers use non-realistic or highly stylised accessories, highlighting the symbolism of the piece or using the item as a meaningful metaphor. Accessories might not reveal great insights about the inner life of the character wearing them, but instead reveal insights about the theme, conflict or focus of the work.

Hint

Handbags, brief cases and glasses are considered as costume accessories if the role or character using them keeps them about their person for most, if not all, of the play. If they only use them occasionally they could be considered a prop. and then the director and designers will need to decide together who will design the piece.

Source

To search for and obtain an item.



Photo courtesy of Bellepoque

Inner world of the play

The imagined setting, including the time and space of a drama work, reflective of real cultural, socio-economic, political, historical and environmental landscapes.

Stage business

The behaviour, small activities and incidental actions of a character during performance, often involving props or interacting with the set in some way.

Activity 7.3: Footwear design

1. Imagine you are the costume designer for a production of a play you're working on in class. Your current focus is on the footwear and accessories.
2. Design the shoes (as well as the socks and stockings if appropriate) for one of the characters in one of the scenes.
3. Note: Your design should reflect the aim to adapt an existing pair of shoes by painting them a new colour, adding fabric or haberdashery.
4. Draw the shoes in colour, with labels for each of the components. Don't forget to outline how you would adapt the shoes to create the new look on your design.
5. At the bottom or on the back of your design, add a paragraph describing why you've chosen to design the shoes in the way you have.

THE COSTUME DESIGN PROCESS

The costume designer has a very similar process for developing their designs as a scenographer. The typical stages of this process are:

1. Creative team discussion
2. Script clues
3. Initial thoughts
4. Research and investigation
5. Experimentation and drafting
6. Final design

Creative team discussion

Once contracted, the costume designer will meet with the director as well as, if they're available, the dramaturg, scenographer, and the sound and lighting designers. This creative team will come together as one collective as early as possible to discuss the play. If they're going to get the most out of these early discussions, the costume designer needs to have read the play at least once before the creative team meets.

Creative team

The director, designers, dramaturg and other theatre practitioners involved in conceptualising and realising imaginative, artistic and meaningful ideas for performance.

When they do meet, whilst they will of course talk about the production logistics, such as the venue, schedule and budget they will spend a great deal of time exploring the artistic nature of the piece, as well as the inner world of the play. The director will share their vision with the creatives, including how they see the overall piece shaping up by opening night. The designers will also share their ideas, make suggestions and identify potential design challenges. At the end of this first stage, during which the team will hopefully meet several times, they need to agree on one creative vision for the whole production. By coming up with one collective vision they're then able to work independently on their own area, while also moving towards a common goal.

Creative vision

The shared clear and defined conceptualisation of the creative team, typically initiated by the directorial vision, of the way a dramatic work will be realised in performance in order to communicate identified meaning to a particular audience, in a specific location at a point in time.

Script clues

Sometimes a costume designer might begin this stage when they first pick up the script, even before any of the creative team discussions. During their first read they might have already highlighted clues in the script that are relevant to the costumes. Whether they start this sleuthing stage before or post-creative team discussion, it's vital that it happens early in the design process.

Costume designers will read the script, several times, with the aim of identifying script clues. These could be in the stage directions with the playwright suggesting something a character wears or does with an item of costume, or it could be what they say about their own, or another's, costume. The designer should also look through the script for reference to any actions or activities undertaken by the roles and characters which will influence (or be influenced by) what they are wearing. They could make notes in the script margins or in a separate notebook.

By reading the script multiple times and identifying clues about the costumes, they give themselves a strong base upon which to design. They will get to know the play quite intimately and have useful knowledge about the performance and historical style, setting (time and space), the characters' needs and their characteristics, and the events of the dramatic action.

Initial thoughts

Continuing with annotating the margins or adding information to a notebook, the designer will capture their initial design thoughts in some way. They may have begun to do this whilst they were gathering script clues. Designers will write words, make sketches, even scribble or doodle to record their initial thoughts, instincts and feelings about the play and the costumes. Designers may work in lead pencil or pen, but they may also use a variety of coloured pencils to more accurately reflect their different reactions to and thoughts about the production.

It's important that the designer does not get fixated on the ideas generated during this early stage. Best practice is that these initial thoughts are the beginning of the creative process and not the end point. Thoughts generated during this stage should serve as ideas needing further exploration later and triggers for other possibilities to be uncovered during the experimentation stage.

Research and investigation

If a costume designer wants to create costumes that reflect a particular time and space, they need to thoroughly research relevant contextual information. This could be to find out more about the historical, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental landscape of the inner world of the play, or it might be to find out more information about the playwright or the audience who will watch the production. This could be with the aim in a representational drama to accurately and realistically reflect the time and space in every detail of the costumes, or it might be in order to more symbolically locate the play in history in a presentational work.

Research could be by reading books and articles either at the library or via the internet. Designers might conduct face-to-face telephone or online interviews. They could visit the performance venue to get an experiential understanding of the performing space and the audience sightlines. Although usually the costumes for a production are designed before rehearsals begin, if they have not been, the designer will almost certainly attend some early rehearsals to get a feel for the way the characters move, speak and interact with each other.

Experimentation and drafting

The next stage is where the initial thoughts and ideas are explored in depth, whilst keeping the knowledge gathered from the research stage top of mind. By exploring one idea or possibility, hopefully a range of other new options will come to light. In the same way the designer needed to capture their thoughts earlier in the design process, they need to do so again during this stage. Every idea and possibility is worthy of capturing, even if it seems impossible to realise or if it's never used again. Getting ideas from the imagination out onto the page can help designers gain clarity and more knowledge about the idea.

During this stage designers will no longer be working in the script, but sketching and drawing instead on separate sketchbooks or single page sheets. Ideally as they draft, and redraft, they are sharing some ideas with the director and key members of the creative team. This is to both keep the others informed of the direction the costumes are taking and, where appropriate, to get their feedback. It's better to know a long time before the final design presentation that one of the team has an issue with the costumes. Then there is time to talk through the costumes effectively, make adaptations where appropriate or, in other cases, adhere to the proposed concept, to solve problems or even abandon certain ideas.

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

Caitanya Tan – Actor and costume designer

Caitanya Tan is a freelance actress and performing arts practitioner, with her theatre work taking her across Asia. Caitanya graduated with a Bachelor (Hons.) in Musical Theatre from LASALLE College of the Arts and has garnered a standard of Grade 8 Piano (Practical) from The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM).

She began working professionally before attending drama school including acting in *Agamemnon* (2007), *A midsummer night's dream* (2007) and *Believe – The Musical* (2007) with the Singapore Repertory Theatre. Caitanya also has worked as a costume designer for various productions over the years, including *Agamemnon* below. In 2010, she moved to Hong Kong to play the lead role of *Bebe in Hong Kong*, Disneyland's high-energy Broadway-styled production, singing in English and hosting in Cantonese.

Caitanya is constantly pushing boundaries in spearheading performing arts education and is currently focusing on a charity performing arts program, First Flights.



Agamemnon costume designs



Caitanya's early draft sketches

The final realised costumes



Final design

Once the designer has finished a thorough experimentation process, where they have developed lots of ideas and worked through multiple drafts, they are ready to finalise their designs. They then create design documentation to capture their costumes and then present them to the director, creative team, costume constructionists and performers.

The equivalent to the white card model in scenography (or coloured card model if there is one) is the final drawings, sometimes called the final sketches, in costume design. Although termed a sketch, typically designs are painted, not drawn, by the designer. Each final sketch is usually presented on an A3 or A2 page showing a full-length view of the character wearing the costume. Designers might include two views of each costume; one back and one front, so that people can get a sense of the three-dimensional nature of the pieces.

The Boys from Syracuse
Designed by Catherine Schultz



The final design will include samples of the fabrics to be used in the construction of the costume. These are typically only one to two centimetres wide and several long. They are pinned to one of the top corners of the design.



Fabric samples (actual size)

Activity 7.4: Design analysis

1. Analyse the photos of the completed costume for the Luciana character from *The Boys from Syracuse*, designed by Catherine Schultz.
2. Compare the realised design with the final design drawing (previous page).
3. Write a report:
 - discussing the consistencies and inconsistencies between the final design drawing and the actual realised costume
 - suggesting reasons as to why the changes might have been made.



Costume designers include special information on the final design drawing to enable the director, rest of the creative team and actors to understand the way the costume will look, feel and move as much as is possible. In addition to fabric samples and multiple views, other typical extra information that's provided includes:

- labels of specific items and features
- notes on some of the key design components
- close-ups of intricate details
- information about the fabric, haberdashery, accessories and so on.

This extra information is also helpful for the tailor who will bring the design to life by constructing the costume.

Costume designed by Catherine Schultz



Activity 7.5: Costume design

1. Imagine you are a costume designer for a production of a script you're working on in class. Select one character (or role) and design one costume for them.
You should:
 - Follow each of the design stages. Your teacher will act as the director and will provide you with a directorial vision.
 - Create a final sketch in colour, with labels, fabric samples, a front view and a back view.
2. Write a report:
 - outlining the activities you took at each of the design stages
 - Justifying the creative and functional design choices you made.

Internet exploration

If you're worried about being able to draw the human body when designing costumes, check out this tutorial:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=baVtHn0p5PM

In addition to creating a final design drawing for each costume that each character wears during the production, the designer may create extra documentation to help manage the preproduction construction, dress rehearsal and performance processes. One of these documents is a Costume Checklist. If the designer does not provide a checklist, the production manager, or even sometimes the stage manager, may create one. An example is presented on the next page.



Activity 7.5: Costume checklist

1. You have been tasked with creating part of a costume checklist for a script you're working on in class.

Create a list that includes two columns:

- Character – identify every role or character in the play
 - Description – identify every costume that each role or character needs
3. For each costume listed in the Description column you should include the act, scene and page number in a third column, which references the character and their need for a new costume (that is, find the script clues).

Internet exploration

For comprehensive information about the role of the costume designer, watch this TedX talk at:

<http://vimeo.com/59392573>

CONSTRUCTION

Costume constructionists, or costume-makers as they are sometimes known, will use the designer's sketch presentations as the basis for making the design. As they do not work from patterns or blueprints, constructionists have a great deal of millinery, needlework and craft knowledge. They will draw on this know-how to create costumes that not only look like the final designs in reality, but also fit and work with actors' bodies perfectly.

The range of technologies used in constructing the costumes includes:

- sewing and over-locker machinery
- dress-makers' mannequins and busts
- glue guns and other devices for adhesive processes
- scissors, utility knives and other fabric-cutting instruments
- tools such as wire cutters, bolt cutters, pliers and hammers
- laundering equipment such as washing machines, irons, steamers, dryers and drycleaners.

COSTUME CHECKLIST
for a production of *The Masrayana*

	Actor	Character	Description	Color / Photo	Procurement Details			Status
					Source	Who	Cost	
F	All Female Actors	All Female	Base Costume • Tights • Kurti	• Maroon • Moss / Light Green • Blue	• Kolkata • Kolkata	• C/O Swati • C/O Swati		
1	Tania	Navi Masra	• Printed Synthetic Saree					• In hand
2	Rokha	Darvati	• Printed Synthetic Saree	• Pink				
3	Moupiya	Bank Officer	• Base Costume • Dopatta – cotton (to be worn in a formal way – M shape)	• As above • Red	• As above • Self / S'pore	• As above • Moupiya		• As above • In hand
		Villager # 2	• Base costume • Dopatta	• As above • Any color	• As above • TFA	• As above • C/O Swati		
		Fruit seller	• Base costume • Ghagra • Dopatta	• As above • Any color • Multi-colored	• As above • TFA • Self / S'pore	• As above • C/O Swati • Moupiya		
		President	• Cotton printed Saree (ready made – tailor made?)	• Bright Yellow	• Kolkata	• C/O Swati		
4	Ananya	Lawyer # 1	• Base costume • Coat / Blazer / Jacket / Traditional Cloak • Spectacles – old style	• As above • Black / Dark Purple • Self	• As above • Graduation Robe • Self	• As above • Sharmistha Aranya		
		Reepa Baladur	• Base costume • Ghagra	• As above • Different colored (?)	• As above • TFA	• As above • C/O Swati		
		Landowner	• Base costume • Shawl (to be wrapped around)	• As above • Light color with mirror work	• As above • Self / S'pore	• As above • Aranya		• In hand
5	Mithu	Lama Pal	• Base costume • Dopatta (to be wrapped around covering the head)	• As above • Dark Maroon	• As above • TFA	• As above • C/O Swati		
		Villager # 1	• Base costume • Dopatta	• As above • Any color	• As above • TFA	• As above • C/O Swati		
		Policeman 2	• Calcutta traffic police uniform • Brown belt & Hawaldar cap • A police stick in hand	• White •	• India	• ? • Nishant / Swati • ?		
		Election Official	• Base costume • Cotton Dopatta – hanging from left shoulder • Carry a file / folder / pen	• As above • Bright off-white	• As above • TFA	• As above • C/O Swati		

Earlier this chapter mentioned that costume shoes can be painted or covered in cloth to change the way they appear whilst keeping their original shape. Similarly jewellery and other accessories don't need to be real, they merely need to look real. There is plenty of costume jewellery, made from plastics and other synthetics, that's available relatively cheaply in general-goods stores, novelty stores and op shops. Alternatively, transforming non-jewellery material with careful assembling, gluing and spray-painting processes is a cheap, although labour-intensive, convention also available to constructionists.

Alternatives to creating the costumes from scratch exist for theatre companies that have low budgets, short pre-production schedules or large casts (with chorus members or walk-on roles). Often a costume piece for a new production can be adapted from one used in an old production, if the company has the ability to keep their costumes long term in a storeroom.

Hint

Some of the most famous theatre companies in the world with prolific bodies of work, who stage large-scale or big-budget productions have their own costume store. Designers and constructionists are very adept at transforming something old into something seemingly new by removing or changing components, adding new details and accessories, lengthening (or shortening) sections and so on. It would be tragic to think that every costume is discarded after the show closes simply because there's nowhere to store them.

Once the making of the costumes has been completed and any necessary adjustments have been added, a wardrobe mistress or master will take over the maintenance, cleaning and general upkeep of the costumes for the entirety of the production run.

MAKE-UP

Make-up can fall under the brief of the costume designer, particularly if there is special makeup required such as wounds, aging or non-realistic makeup. If there are a lot of special requirements in this area, then a specialist make-up artist may join the creative team and design the makeup. If regular makeup, sometimes called street makeup is required, then it's typically left to the actor themselves to create a look which suits their natural features, the setting of the play and, of course, their character. Hair design, including the use of wigs, is always under the brief of the costume designer, or a specialist wig and hair designer.



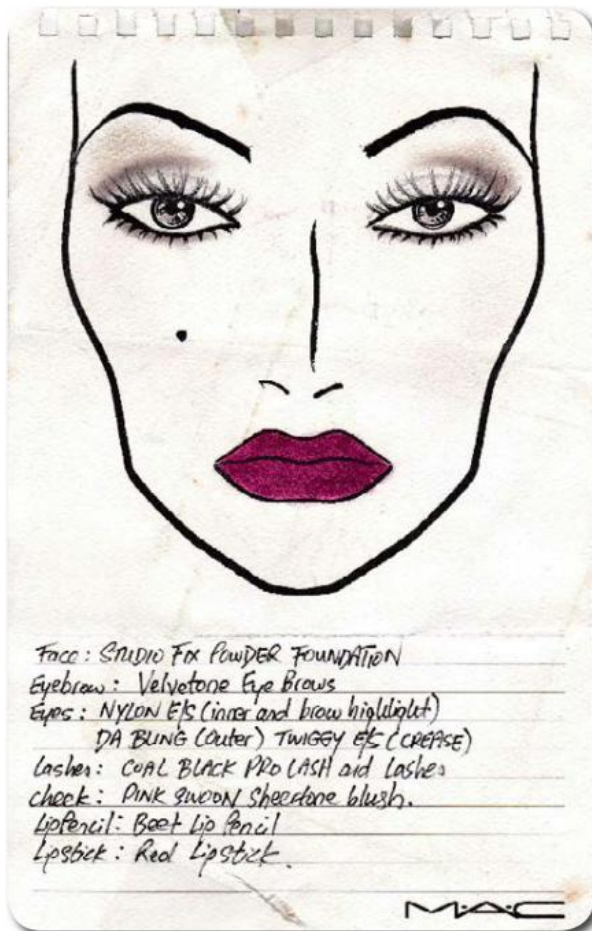
The make-up design process

The process for designing the hair and make-up for a character uses the same stages as general costume design. When tasked with creating the hair and make-up as part of the

overall costume design, the designer will undoubtedly work on integrating these areas within the costumes, presenting everything together in one design sketch at the design presentation to the director and the rest of the creative team. If, however, a specialist is brought in for the hair and make-up, they will need to work very closely with the costume designer to make sure there's harmony between what the character wears on their head, with what they wear on the rest of their body.

Makeup design for a presentational play

The make-up designer applies the makeup directly to the paper design, whilst also adding the names of the products underneath to ensure accuracy.



Application step 1:
The base and eyes



Application step 2:
The cheeks, lips,
wig and jewellery

Internet exploration

To find out how the RSC make scabs and wounds with makeup go to:
www.rsc.org.uk/explore/60-seconds/blood.aspx

Activity 7.6: Makeup checklist

1. Imagine you are a specialist hair and makeup designer working on a production of a script that you're studying in class.

Select one character in one scene of the play and design the makeup for that character. You should:
 - Capture the design by either applying real makeup straight onto the page or by drawing with colour pencils (or paints) to imitate makeup.
 - At the bottom of the design explain in words each of your makeup choices for each area of the face. If you're applying real makeup to the page, you can add the names of each of your selected products. If you're using coloured pencils, you can either verbally describe the colours, or you can go online and select real products from one of the makeup brands.
2. Write a mini-report that justifies your makeup choices in terms of:
 - The character
 - The setting (time and space)
 - The style of the play

There is a range of technologies used in hair and make-up design including:

- hairdressing tools such as combs, brushes, hair dryers, hair clips and bands, wigs and hair pieces, protective bibs and smocks
- visual arts tools such as sponges, brushes, pallets and spatulas
- makeup tools including sponges and brushes, as well as airbrushes and chisels
- toiletries such as tweezers, mirrors, cotton buds, towelettes, towels, tissues, cleansers, toners, moisturisers and protective creams
- cosmetics such as concealers, foundation, powders, eyeshadows, blushes, mascara, lipstick, lip-gloss and pencils.



CHAPTER 8

Dramaturgy

Key Concepts

- ☛ Dramaturgy
- ☛ Dramaturgy for existing scripts
 - Creative team discussion
 - Script clues
 - Research and investigation
 - Rehearsals
 - Sharing information
- ☛ The birth of dramaturgy
- ☛ Dramaturgy for new scripts
 - Perspective
 - Redrafting
 - Research
 - Process
- ☛ Dramaturgy for performing arts companies

DRAMATURGY

Dramaturgy is an extremely helpful and important practice in the creation of new works or in the staging of any type of existing dramatic work. The scope of a dramaturg is very wide and will vary from production to production and script to script. Typically dramaturgy focuses on one of three main processes:

1. Assisting the director and other creation team members to stage a script with contextual accuracy, artistic harmony and effective performance choices
2. Assisting a writer, or an ensemble if it is a group-devised piece, in the development of a new play
3. Assisting a performing arts company, such as an opera company or a theatre repertory company, to better understand the body of work available to them to produce from historical, cultural, stylistic and audience perspectives, so that they can make more effective short- and long-term production choices

Dramaturgy

The process of researching, investigating, analysing and interpreting the contextual components of a dramatic work, including the historical, socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental landscapes, in order to share information with and make recommendations to the other creative team members.

Because dramaturgy can mean different things to different people, when coming on board a project it's important that the dramaturg, the creatives they're working with and the producing company define and agree on the dramaturg's purpose in being involved in the production, how they will work together and their scope of work. This way each person knows why they're working together, what to expect from and what to deliver to the others. Because of this shared understanding they are more likely to have smooth and fruitful working relationships, resulting ultimately in a better production.

Context

Specific and general circumstances that provide the landscape for an event, relationship or individual behaviour to occur, whilst both influencing it and being influenced by it.

In English the name given to a person who practices dramaturgy can be spelt in two ways; dramaturge or dramaturg. Dramaturge derives from the French spelling and when spoken uses a soft 'g'. It sounds the same as the 'g' in 'urge' or 'general'. By contrast dramaturg derives from the German spelling and when spoken the 'g' is hard. It sounds like the 'g' in 'regular' or 'gap'.

Hint

For the purposes of studying drama, using either **dramaturg** or **dramaturge** is appropriate, as long as you are consistent. So if you write dramaturg at the beginning of an essay, continue writing it throughout the document.

So what exactly is dramaturgy?

The most simple, fundamental and consistent practice that a dramaturg will carry out, whether working with a new script, an old script or a collection of scripts, is to question. For new drama works they will question what makes sense and what doesn't, what works and what doesn't, how something might be interpreted by a director/designer/actor and how it might be understood by the audience. They ask how the dramatic elements are being used and whether they could be used more effectively in other ways. They question the flow, the rhythm and the continuity of the script. They question the connections of events and characters, the unfolding of the dramatic action. They ask how the speech patterns, vocabulary choices and dialoguing flow of the characters are working.

For existing drama works they will question why certain things are done, how they are done, by whom they are done and how often they are done. They will ask about the different movement of the characters and the ways they talk to each other (or the audience). They ask what the setting and inner world might be like realistically, what clothing should be worn, how it is best worn, what sounds would be heard (and what wouldn't be heard), what technologies were being used in the world of the play, how these might have an impact on lighting design choices and so on. They ask how the art form, performance style and historical style work within the script and how they might work best in production. They would question their answers to their own questions by investigating why these things are so, how they reflect society, what they say about society, how the audience might interpret them and so on. One of the primary tools a dramaturg uses is questioning.

Once they get to the bottom of the questions, they then consider how these will work in performance (more questions) and what are the best options available to the creative team and the actors when using the dramaturgical information in such a way that the audience will understand, accept and be influenced effectively by it.

Then they share the answers to their questions and make recommendations based on their answers to the creative team.

Internet exploration

To see the wide range of focus areas that a dramaturg might do, go to:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTu0yw1Ab68

Dramaturgy for existing scripts

When a dramaturg works on an existing script they are part information designer where they research and investigate, and part dramatic engineer where they consider the impact their research has on production choices and implementation. Typically their insight is needed early in preproduction before rehearsals begin, as well as during the rehearsal period. Not only do they share information and debate ideas with the director and the designers, they are often the liaison and even at times the peacekeeper between the creative team members when tough production decisions are being made.

It is up to the dramaturg to assist the other creative team members to balance historical accuracy with artistic interpretation. They will help them problem solve, realise an acting or design component, and recommend how something might work best on stage during performance.

Much of their work will be in investigating the contextual information of both the inner and outer worlds of the play. This means finding out as much as they can about the historical, political, environmental, socio-economic and cultural landscapes of the play's setting (that is the inner world of the play), as well as the landscapes of when and where the production will be staged (that is the outer world). The creative team and actors who craft the work, as well as the audience who will experience the work, will bring their own contemporary understanding of the script, which will undoubtedly differ from that of the characters inside the play. The only exception to this is if the script is new, written by a local playwright and set in the same location as where it will be performed. In this situation the inner and the outer worlds of the play will be the same, and thus only one set of contexts needs to be researched.

Creative team

The director, designers, dramaturg and other theatre practitioners involved in conceptualising and realising imaginative, artistic and meaningful ideas for performance.

Inner world of the play

The imagined setting, including the time and space of a drama work, reflective of real cultural, socio-economic, political, historical and environmental landscapes.

Outer world of the play

The actual time and space that the production will occur in, reflective of the current cultural, socio-economic, political, historical and environmental landscapes of the playwright, the dramatic practitioners and the audience.

Hint

If the playwright has chosen to set the play in a time period and location that is different to their own, the dramaturg will also research as much as they can about the playwright's landscape. This is because the script will undoubtedly reflect the society that the playwright lives in as much as, if not more than, the society he or she has chosen to set it in.

Not only does the dramaturg research and investigate contextual information, they go one step further and consider how this information will have an impact on the acting and design choices, plus make suggestions on what would best suit the script, the venue, the budget, the audience and the director's vision. For example, if an obscure, foreign, old-fashioned object is used by characters in a play set in a remote village of Eastern Europe several centuries ago, a dramaturg would not only investigate what the object looked like and how it should be accurately used, but also where the stage management team might get one for performance, and how a prop version could be made instead if a real one was unattainable (or too precious) to use in the show.

The dramaturg might also make recommendations as to what the actors could do with their movement, voice, characterisation, interactions and so on to help the audience understand what the object is, and its purpose and importance at the time of play's setting. They would then report back their findings and suggestions to the creative team.

Directorial vision

The clear and defined conceptualisation by the director of the way a dramatic work will be realised in performance in order to communicate identified meaning to a particular audience, in a specific location at a point in time.

Activity 8.1: Dramaturgical solution for props

1. Imagine you are a dramaturg working on a production of a script you are studying in class, and have been tasked to assist the scenographer and the stage manager.
2. Identify a prop in the script that is in reality either one or all of the following:
 - very fragile
 - very old
 - very dangerous
 - impossible to source.
 - very expensive
3. Investigate how a fake version of your selected item could be constructed for the production that looks identical to the original and can be used effectively by the actors.
4. Create a report, using sketches and written sections that recommends how:
 - it would be made
 - it will appear to be historically/contextually correct
 - it will be used by the actors in performance.

Dramaturgical process

In the same way the rest of the creative team have a process they follow to realise their work, a dramaturg too has an investigative process that they undertake when working on an existing work. This is very similar to the early stages that design members carry out and typically includes:

- Creative team discussion
- Script clues
- Research and investigation
- Rehearsals
- Sharing information

Creative team discussion

Before commencing research or investigative work, a dramaturg needs to find out as much as they can about the project they're working on. They need to talk at length with the director to find out about the directorial vision and their planned production and rehearsal approach. They also, if they can, should speak with the entire creative team to understand the bigger picture and the overall creative vision for the piece. The more a dramaturg can dialogue with their colleagues the more they can understand not only the vision, but also the subtleties of the creative team members' interpretation of the script and their understanding of dynamics between the inner and outer worlds of the play.

Script clues

A script will always provide lots of useful contextual and other relevant information for a dramaturg and thus it needs to be very carefully scrutinised. Although all the creative team will look for clues in the script, it is the dramaturg who is most like a crime scene investigator; it is their job to identify each and every clue in the script. This includes both explicit and obvious clues and, even more importantly, implicit and hidden clues which may be overlooked or undervalued by the rest of the creative team. It is the dramaturg's job to find and then value each and every clue. They need to consider what these clues reveal contextually about the historical, political, social, economic and environmental landscapes of the play's setting, the playwright and the time it was written in. They also need to look for things in the script that might be misleading or misunderstood by the audience who are likely to watch the production. In the same way a CSI will gather as much data as they can from a crime scene, a dramaturg should gather as much information as they can from a script.

This process starts with reading the script many times, including the dramaturg trying to examine the script from multiple viewpoints. With each read and with each clue identified, a dramaturg then captures their responses, including questions, emotions, instincts and thoughts. They might do this through making annotations in the script, by drawing sketches, and by making notes in a workbook or computer file.

Research and investigation

Every clue sourced from the script, together with every response generated, is then thoroughly researched and investigated. This will almost always include at least some formal study via internet databases and other informative websites, and hard copy books and journals. They might spend time observing events, interactions and human behaviour, as well as conducting interviews with people. This investigative period is not only about carrying out research activities, but also thinking about and reflecting on that research. They will innovatively experiment with solutions to challenges and problems, often looking for more than one solution to the same issue.

Activity 8.2: Script clues

1. Imagine you are a dramaturg working on a production of a script you are studying in class, and you're in the clue-hunting stage. The play will be produced in a venue selected by your teacher (preferably one on site).
2. Choose one page of script and identify at least twenty clues in the script that need further analysis, research, experimentation or consideration. You might look for clues that reveal:
 - information about the historical, social, economic, political, cultural and environmental contexts of the inner world of the play
 - information about character (or role) and relationships, mood and atmosphere, situation and dramatic tension
 - symbols and metaphors
 - physical needs in blocking the excerpt
 - voice needs in realising the dialogue
 - design needs in staging the excerpt
 - potential problems with realising the script in the selected venue
 - areas where a specialist theatre practitioner may be needed (such as a dance or fight choreographer, make-up or AV designer)
 - anything else that's relevant.

Your job, at this stage, is only to identify clues in the script, not to try and solve them.

Rehearsals

Many dramaturgs attend key rehearsals, both to identify new areas that need investigating and to assess how their earlier research and recommendations are being realised in the playing space. They can give to and receive immediate feedback from the director and, if appropriate, discuss information with the actors and stage manager. This also provides everyone else involved in the production a chance to ask the dramaturg contextual questions.

Sharing information

Other than dialoguing directly with people during rehearsals, dramaturgs need to share in great detail the information they uncover through their investigations and to make recommendations on how to incorporate that information in performance. They're likely to discuss this information by meeting either one-to-one with the director, or with the collective creative team. The dramaturg is also likely to disseminate the information in some kind of written form such as through a written report, a collection of annotated images and/or an artistic collage combining both words and pictures.

Internet exploration

Hear from a professional dramaturg about his work in staging a play from the 1950s this century at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRWZuo_MhHc

Activity 8.3: Existing script dramaturgy

1. Imagine you are a dramaturg working on a production of a script you are studying in class.
2. You've been asked by the director to come to the first day of rehearsals with a report for the actors that includes:
 - information about the historical, social, economic, political, cultural and environmental contexts of the inner world of the play
 - recommendations for each actor (and therefore each character) on how to translate some of this research into their characterisation and performance
 - a series of ten questions that each actor should ask themselves, not about their acting process but about the production holistically.

The birth of dramaturgy

Whilst dramaturgical practices might have been going on for many years, the first recorded dramaturg is Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in the 18th century. He was a German playwright, theatre critic and philosopher who, between 1767 and 1769, wrote the first work on dramaturgy, a two-book series called *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. At the time Lessing was working for the German National Theatre in Hamburg as a theatre critic and literary advisor.

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing – Dramaturg

The first known professional dramaturg was Gotthold Lessing, who was born in 1729 and died in 1781. Whilst working for the German National Theatre in Hamburg he wrote the now-famous work *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. Below are two excerpts from this text where Lessing discusses aspects of *Olint and Sophronia* by Johann Friedrich von Cronegk from a dramaturgical perspective.



Excerpt A

If we can look past Lessing's rather old-fashioned writing style, we can see here he discusses the ability of the playwright to have an impact on the audience, giving specific examples in the script. By highlighting these he is highlighting a potential challenge in the script that the director may, or may not, want to address when working with the actors and designers.

'The poet [playwright] possesses the art of being able to deceive through the beauty of detail, by incongruities of this kind; but he can fool us [the audience] only once and when we are sensible again, we take the acclaim that he has robbed from us back. When this is applied to the fourth scene of the third act, you will find that the words and conduct of Sophronia can move Clorinde to compassion, but they are too impotent to cause action especially when said to someone who has no facility for enthusiasm.'

When Tasso finally takes Clorinde he also takes Christianity. But he does so only in her last hour; only after they learn that their parents have been devoted to believing in the substantial circumstances effected by a higher power evident in the weaving of a series of natural events. No one has better understood how far that the party should go in this way in the theater, as Voltaire.'

Excerpt B

Another type of dramaturgical notes that Lessing gives is acting and performance delivery recommendations. For example:

"Do not trust, my son, hope in the conditions operated!"

His son is a fiery youth, and being a youth is excellently inclined to promise only the best in the future ...

'The age of torturing yourself because it hopes too little.'

Accompanying these sentences with nothing but beautiful movement of the arms would be far worse than reciting them without action ...

The line, however,

'The age of torturing yourself because it hopes too little'

requires a tonal quality and gestural shrug, indicating that we have to admit our own weaknesses. It's necessary to pull the hands into the chest to indicate that this sentence is being spoken from the character's own experience."

Whilst not every dramaturg today would offer such specific acting suggestions (unless that is what they were brought on the project to focus on), they might give some general or stylistic performance recommendations.

Voltaire

A French philosopher (1694-1778) well known for his advocacy of freedom of expression, religion and a separation between the Church and the State (ie. he was in favour of a political governance of France independent from the Catholic Church).

Dramaturgy for new scripts

In addition to working with existing drama works and helping the creative team bring them to production, dramaturgs will often be involved in the development of new scripts. When writing a new play a playwright can be so close to the script that they're not able to see the work as clearly as others, such as an audience, might see it. They may become so caught up in and personally attached to the work, that they might not be able to think as rationally or logically about it as they'd like to. This could then prevent them from cutting sections or editing scenes, when amendments really need to be made. They might not notice inconsistencies about the characters, confusions in the plot development or ambiguities in the language. They could even be closed to new ideas or better ways of doing something, because they're so attached to what they've generated already. To help avoid this from happening, they might work with a dramaturg.

Perspective

The dramaturg is then likely to be either an objective voice, an editing partner or both. As the playwright works on the script and creates a draft (or a new draft), the dramaturg will read, examine and reflect upon the work to assist the playwright in improving it in some way. Typically they offer opinions and ideas as an outside observer, by considering the points of view of those who are likely to experience the play. This could be from the perspective of the audience, the actors, stage management and creative teams, potential producing theatre companies, the local community and the wider national community. They might even explore the play through the eyes of particular ethnic, religious, political and socio-economic groups. The idea is that the dramaturg looks for things that the playwright may not have noticed or may have undervalued.

Activity 8.4: Different perspective

1. Imagine you are the dramaturg working on a group-devised drama or a playwright's (such as another student's) new script
2. Analyse one scene or episode from the new work and:
 - circle/highlight anything in the script that doesn't make sense to you or might benefit from a redraft
 - write a mini-report outlining at least five amendment recommendations you would suggest to improve the script. You should write objectively and justify each recommendation.

Redrafting

When acting as an editing partner, a dramaturg assists the playwright in the creative writing process. They identify where the script from a narrative, character or some other literary perspective could be amended or adapted. They might make suggestions and offer advice, and they certainly will determine points in the script that would be well

served by a redraft. The dramaturg's main aim is to help the playwright make the script better in some way. This could be to make it clearer, more engaging, more interesting, more dynamic, shorter, longer, more emotional, less emotional, more character-driven, more dramatic-action focused or more historically-accurate, et.

Research

Finally a dramaturg working with a playwright on a new script is likely to carry out research that will have an impact on the situation, characters and setting of the play. The dramaturg will use a range of investigative processes to find information that's relevant and then bring this back to the playwright, with recommendations for the script. If, for example, a playwright wants the characters to speak in a way that reflects real life, the dramaturg might investigate the speech rhythms, grammatical patterns and vocabulary choices of a particular city at a particular point in time. They might be even more specific than this and also find out how different people of the same culture communicate. For example, they could compare the way a wealthy, educated, older person speaks to the way a working class high school student within that city and time period speaks. The dramaturg then shares their findings with the playwright so the writer can redraft the relevant sections of the script and make them sound more authentic. In some cases the dramaturg might even be the one to make the changes and edits directly to the script.

Process

In terms of a process in working on a new script, each playwright-dramaturg pairing is likely to develop a unique method that works for them;, one that differs slightly when compared with other partnerships. Sometimes a dramaturg will work independently of the playwright and then later share their findings. At other times the two might work through a scene together at the same time. Sometimes this will be a long partnership over several months (or years) and at other times it might be more ad hoc, with the dramaturg only reviewing one draft of a script or researching a single particular area. In some cases the dramaturg will only work on the script prior to rehearsals beginning, and at others times they will continue analysing the script, making suggestions and researching through the rehearsal period.

Because people have different working style preferences and expertise areas, the dramaturg, together with the playwright, must make purpose and process decisions before they start working together. They need to ask themselves:

1. What will the dramaturg focus on?

They need to agree whether the dramaturg will be concentrating on exploring different perspectives, the re-drafting of the script, research to support the script, or a combination of all three.

2. How will the dramaturg and playwright work together?

They need to work out what's the duration of the partnership, in what way will the dramaturg share their work and findings, how often will they share this information and so on.

When passing on research to a playwright, as well as dialoguing, a dramaturg might:

- write a report
- collate some images
- create a collage of words, images, colours, objects and so on.

If they include some of the raw data from their research, they will be likely to accompany it with an interpretive summary.

When concentrating on the creative writing drafting process, a dramaturg could highlight issues or make recommendations by:

- writing a report
- making annotations on the script
- rewriting lines or stage directions of the script (preferably through a software tool such as Microsoft Word's Track Changes, so that these amendments can be clearly identified).

They're most likely to do some kind of combination of all of these things.

Internet exploration

To hear from a dramaturg about working on a new play script go to:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdT85LrkVTE

Activity 8.5: Dramaturgical collage

1. Imagine you are the dramaturg working on a group-devised drama or a production of an existing script you're studying in class.
2. Create a collage using found images, symbols and other non-verbal material that captures the essence of the drama work and can be used by the creative team and the actors as they prepare for production.

Dramaturgy for performing arts companies

The third type of practice a dramaturg might undertake is to work on an ongoing basis with a large performing arts company, such as an opera or national theatre company. This type of dramaturg might help the company to build up a library of dramatic works. They will be likely to catalogue not only the works, but also research files differentiating stylistically and historically between the scripts and, if appropriate, scores. They might compare scripts across styles, as well as within a particular historical style. They could compare both playwright to playwright and, from a single playwright, work to work.

Score

Musical composition that's been written down using notation to indicate what a musician should play or sing, and the way they should play or sing it.

This dramaturg makes recommendations to their hiring company about which works to stage and when to stage them. They could even make suggestions about which actors, singers and other performers to hire for a particular project. They could identify what problems to anticipate with a season of work (or several seasons across several years). They're likely to be involved in the planning of each season. This type of dramaturg could work with the marketing department giving advice on the selling of a show from a contextual standpoint. If there's an education department the dramaturg will almost certainly assist in the planning and realisation of support materials and experiences for students. They're likely to explore what stylistic conventions need to be utilised in production and what conventions could be ignored or changed, all working within the guise of the company's mission, their body of working and their changing (or stagnant) audiences.

Hint

In studying drama at this level, you need to focus on the first two ways a dramaturg might practice their craft by working:

- with existing scripts
- on the development of new scripts (or group-devised productions).

CHAPTER 9

Management

Key Concepts

- ☛ Management
- ☛ Preproduction
- ☛ Intellectual property and performance rights
- ☛ Safe working practices
 - Mandatory work safety practices
 - First-aid readiness
 - Risk assessment
 - Safety induction
- ☛ Rehearsals
 - Rehearsal schedule
 - Blocking
- ☛ Production
- ☛ Production week
 - Scenography
 - Lighting realisation
 - Sound realisation
 - Costumes
 - Final dress rehearsals
 - Performance
 - Post-production

MANAGEMENT

Although many different performing arts practitioners, if not all of them, will need to use management skills at some point when working on a production to be able to do their job successfully, this chapter will explore some of the key activities in this area. These fundamental activities are utilised by two theatre industry disciplines:

- arts management
- production management.

Arts management

The process and practice of dealing with and controlling people, materials and events in the arts industries.

Arts managers and administrators, as well as production and stage managers, must undertake a range of activities if a play is going to be successfully brought from the two-dimensional script to the three-dimensional stage. On the realisation of any drama piece, managers will work across three periods of production:

- Preproduction
- Production
- Post-production

Production management

The process and practice of managing and coordinating the creative vision realisation by working with the production's producer, creative team and constructionists, within technical and budgetary constraints.

I. PREPRODUCTION

Preproduction is the formative period in the staging of a drama work. The preproduction period is from when the theatre company secures the right to perform the script, through to the moving into the actual venue where the performances will occur. Early in preproduction is the time where ideas and the vision are conceptualised, possibilities of design are explored and research is carried out by the creative team and the actors. Later in preproduction is when the scenography and costumes are being constructed, the lighting and sound design finalised and rehearsals are occurring.

Nothing can be done in planning or managing the preproduction processes and tasks until after the theatre company secures the intellectual property and performance rights for the drama work they want to produce.

Creative team

The director, designers, dramaturg and other theatre practitioners involved in conceptualising and realising imaginative, artistic and meaningful ideas for performance.

Intellectual property and performance rights

When a playwright has created a work of art, such as a script, they own that creation in a similar way to Apple owning the i-phone, Coca Cola owning Coke and Holden owning the Astra. If a person wants to use an i-phone they must purchase it. Apple deserves payment for the product that they have spent time and money to create. A playwright is no different. They too deserve payment from someone who wants to use their product, and thus that person or company must purchase it. They have the *right* to receive payments for their script because they wrote it in the first place.

A script is an *intellectual* type of right because it's a creation of the playwright's mind. Whilst the playwright can write down the words, they're only doing so in the hope of enabling the speech of those words to occur elsewhere during a live performance. Live speech and vocalisation are *intangible* because they don't have a physical substance and cannot, therefore, be touched. A script, therefore, is subject to intangible intellectual rights.

Intellectual right

Intangible assets that are a creation of the mind.

Asset

A valuable item of property belonging to a particular individual, collective or company.

In drama there are two types of intangible intellectual rights that are important for theatre practitioners:

- Property
- Performance

A producing company needs to obtain these rights when staging a script for performance. The securing of these rights, and the organisation of any related payments, is undertaken either by the producer or by the arts management department.

Property rights are those that are to do with ownership of a product. In theatre property rights, called copyright, refer to the ownership of a copy of a published script. Theatre companies need to purchase, or rent, the script to use in rehearsals and other preproduction processes. More than this, they usually need to purchase the appropriate number of script copies so that each actor, creative team and crewmember, can use their own copy. Similarly students need to purchase, or rent, a script to be able to study it in class. Photocopying more than 10% of any script, for any purpose, is illegal. Using any percentage of a pirated online version, whether printing it or not, is illegal.

Copyright

Assignable rights of one thing to an individual, collective or company.

The photocopying laws are even more strict for a music score. Sheet music and scores for theatre, such as a song in a musical, are *never* allowed to be photocopied. There is not a '10% or less' rule that applies to music. It is possible, however, in Australia to pay a special fee to a body called AMCOS so that copies can be made of music scores in specific situations. For example, many educational bodies, including schools, pay an annual fee to AMCOS so that they can make photocopies of music. But there are strict rules on how many copies can be made, as well as how often. These copies are also generally for classroom teaching and not for paid performance.

Score

A musical composition, usually written, using notation to indicate what a musician should play or sing, and the way they should play or sing it.

Internet exploration

For more information about copying music go to the AMCOS website:
www.apra-amcos.com.au/

Performance rights are those that are to do with the enactment of an asset for the public. In drama, performance rights refer to the permission granted to a theatre company from a playwright (or playwright's agent) to stage a production of their script. Theatre companies need to pay a royalty fee to the playwright to be allowed to perform the script for an audience. There are different fee rates depending on the type of production. For example, a professional company will usually pay more than an amateur company or education institution to produce a script.

Royalty

A sum of money paid to the owner of a text, creative work or patent in order to be able to use it.

Hint

A school is not exempt from paying performance rights. If they are going to charge people to watch the performance, then they need to pay performance rights. If they are not going to charge, sometimes they may be able to stage a work without paying for the performance rights. It's advisable to check with the playwright and get written permission from them (or their agent) well before entering the pre-production period.

Not all scripts are protected under copyright and some are in the public domain. This means if a script is not copyrighted, then it's free to perform. The general rule is a script is no longer protected by copyright if the playwright who wrote it has been deceased for over seventy years. This is, however, a general rule only, thus theatre companies and education institutions do need to check whether a script is copyright free before they begin working on a production of it.

Public domain

The state of belonging to and therefore being accessible to the general public without being protected by copyright ownership.

Internet exploration

Explore the Australian Copyright Council's website at:

www.copyright.org.au/information/cit030/wp0014

Find out about intellectual property crime at:

www.aic.gov.au/documents/B/D/O/%7BBDD0BC4E6-0599-467A-8F64-38D13B5C0EEB%7Drpp94.pdf

Activity 9.1: Performance rights

Imagine you're wanting to stage a production of the script that you're working on in class at the moment, which will be open to the general public free of charge. Draft a letter to the appropriate authorities as if you were seeking permission to stage the play without having to pay for performance rights because you're not charging for the event.

1. Firstly you will need to find out which management company you need to (pretend to) contact.
2. Even though you're requesting the rights for free, based on not charging for admission, you will still need to gather some venue information and do some basic budgeting in your preparation. This is because most royalty managers require not only information on ticket costs, but also the number of performances and total number of the house (seating) size, from an applicant. You could consider including:
 - the correct managing company name, the appropriate contact person and their title



- language and a writing style that is appropriate to approach a professional company
- dates and times of the planned performances
- the total number of seats you would be selling per performance
- what type of production it is (eg. professional, amateur, high school student)
- who the audience are likely to be (eg. general public, family, friends, student)
- any other information that you feel is important.

Remember you're *not* going to send the letter. You're simply preparing a letter that *could* be sent if the imagined production was a real one.

Safe working practices

Safety should be a top priority at all times when staging a dramatic work, from pre- through to post-production. It is the responsibility of any person working in management, whether in arts management in the office or production management in workshops, rehearsal rooms or the performance venue, to ensure that all personnel involved in the show are working safely. Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) is critical to the safe operation of a show.

The Australian Entertainment Industry Association (AEIA) and the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) have developed guidelines for safe working practices that are extremely helpful practitioners of the performing arts. In their *Safety Guidelines for the Entertainment Industry* they state that:

Good management and risk planning will reduce incidents in the workplace.

Ensuring the health and safety of persons at work is a shared responsibility between the producing company, the venue and all their workers and contractors.

Sourced from <http://liveperformance.com.au>, 4 October 2014

These guidelines were developed in collaboration with some of the leading performing arts companies in Australia and while they are not part of a legal document, they are an excellent guide to producing a drama work safely.

When producing a show, and ensuring the practice of safe working and that occupational health and safety specifications are followed, a theatre company must focus on many different areas. Workshops, rehearsal rooms and theatres can be dangerous environments in which to work. For example there are a lot of tools and electrical equipment in set and costume workshops that could cause major physical injuries if they're not used properly by trained professionals. In rehearsal rooms there are often props, costumes, rostra and moveable set pieces being shifted from one location to another, and these need to be managed well or they could become hazards and induce harmful tripping, slipping, dropping or falling accidents.

Prop

An abbreviation in drama commonly used instead of the full term 'property'. A property is an object that is used by a character on stage.

Similarly in a performance venue these same threats exist, plus there is also likely to be a range of new dangers including installation equipment (such as ladders, scaffolding and electric lifts), set-related dangers (such as trucks, sandbags and fly-tower ropes), electrics and other cabling (such as talk-back cables, microphone leads, three-phase power and patch-bay cables). Intensifying this danger in a theatre venue is the added element of darkness, which increases the risk factor of these already precarious hazards.

Below is a list of some of the areas that should be considered whilst staging a production. This list is not exhaustive, but does offer a starting point to think about the type of areas that need to be managed safely when working on a show.

- Working at heights
- Working in awkward environments
- Working in the acting area (playing space)
- Operating electrical and lighting equipment
- Working with changes of sound
- Working with changes of lighting
- Working in the natural (external) environment
- Operating set construction equipment
- Undertaking manual labour
- Working in a changing environment
- Working when fatigued, vocally strained or ill
- Having exposure to biological hazards
- Having exposure to other hazards
- Working with children in performance
- Working with animals in performance
- Working with audience responses

Whilst each of the venues being used to prepare and then stage a performance will bring with them their own safety issues and potential hazards, found (non-purpose built) drama spaces typically pose more problems than purpose-built spaces. This is because spaces that have been specifically designed and then constructed to house theatrical and other performance events eliminate many of the typical dangers involved in staging a performance. For example, in a theatre, multiple sound, electric and AV cables are run through the walls with outlets next to the stage and also in the technical box to connect the equipment on stage with the operating boards. Blue light systems in the wings and backstage areas are frequently part of a theatre's design to enable actors and crew to negotiate their way safely around each other as well as props, set pieces and other equipment during a performance.

In a found or adapted space that has not been custom-built to house performances, none of these safety measures are built in. Found spaces have been designed to house activities that are almost always completed in full, regular, non-adaptable light (available

Wing

An offstage area that is part of the stage deck, unseen by the audience, for the storage of set pieces and props when they're not used on stage, actors waiting to go on stage and crew members managing the performance and the backstage environments.

Adapted space

A non-purpose built space used as a performance space.

light). Their power support, if they offer it at all, is designed for regular appliances, those to be plugged in to general-purpose outlets (sockets) low down in a wall. Found spaces don't tend to have pre-made big open areas for performing (stages) with adjacent hidden areas for storage of people and objects (wings). Because they have not been customised for the performing arts, in order to prepare them to house a theatrical production massive amounts of extra equipment must usually be installed. With extra equipment, comes extra hazards that need to be safely managed.

Mandatory work safety practices

In drama clearly there are many safety issues to manage, potential hazards to overcome and preventative measures that need implementation. Because of this there are three practices that must be carried out in each and every venue:

- First-aid readiness
- Risk assessment
- Safety induction

First aid readiness

Whilst no-one wants people to have a need for first aid, whether for accident or health reasons, it's imperative that effective first-aid can be administered should the requirement arise. This means that each venue where practitioners are working on a dramatic production must be first-aid ready. Two main parts to ensure readiness include:

People

There needs to be someone who is trained to deliver first-aid on site. If no-one has been trained then people need to know the process for dealing with an accident or health issue. This includes removing harmful items away from the victim if it's safe to do so and phoning triple zero (000) to seek medical assistance.

Products

A first-aid kit that is fully stocked with in-date items must be available at the venue. This kit should be in an easily accessible place, yet also one that is out of reach of small children. Along with the kit, there needs to be a standard safety action plan displayed that people can easily follow. An evacuation plan should also be clearly displayed so that it, once again, can be easily followed in a state of emergency. Best practice, however, is for every person working on site to know the first-aid and evacuation plans in case there is no time to consult the documents during an emergency.

In-date kit

A fully stocked first-aid box or bag, where the contents are new and have not yet passed their use-by date.

Internet exploration

Investigate some great action plans for first aid at:

www.stjohnnsw.com.au/publications/w1/i1004646/

Hint

First-aid readiness needs to not only be done at the theatre company's office during preproduction, but it will need to be conducted for each workshop and rehearsal venue during this period. Once entering the production phase, more first-aid readiness will need to occur at the performance venue.

Risk assessment

One of the key tools in creating a safe, accident-free production is risk assessment. Every aspect of a production, no matter how small in size or how few people it may involve, should be assessed for risk. It includes safe working practices in the construction workshops, rehearsal rooms, onstage, backstage, front- and back-of-house, auditorium and all facilities relating to the general public inside and outside of a venue.

Hint

Some risk assessments may be done in the preproduction period, such as investigating the company's office, rehearsal space or construction workshops. A risk assessment will also need to occur during production at the performance venue.

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

David Cotgreave – Production manager

BA (Theatre) Curtin University

Dip (Acting) Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

David has had a successful career as a theatrical production manager over twenty years. His credits include; Production Manager of the Sydney Theatre Company; senior Production Manager for the Sport Presentation Department of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games; and Production Manager of the Festival of Perth. He has also worked on many large sporting events such as the Goodwill Games (Brisbane), Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games, Asian Games 2006 (Doha) and most of the world's football codes. He was also the Technical Operations Manager and Lecturer in Computer Aided Design at the WA Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) for several years.



He currently works as the Production and Technical Manager for the WA Symphony Orchestra (WASO).

Risk assessment

'Each risk or hazard that is identified should be entered in the risk assessment document, this can be in a table form or some companies prefer one risk to be dealt with per page. While this document is usually produced by the Production Manager or Technical Manager it is very important that **everyone working on a production** is involved in the risk assessment process.

➔ The producing company and the venue manager are responsible to ensure that the risk assessment is carried out and to schedule enough time for it to be undertaken and control measures implemented.

Note: It is the right of any employee to view any risk assessment/s associated with the work they are performing.

Risk assessments must identify hazards and detail procedures to eliminate or reduce the risk. You should begin by asking:

- Can the risk be eliminated?

If a risk cannot be eliminated, then the following steps should be taken in order:

- Firstly, by substituting a less hazardous activity/substance;
- Secondly, by mitigating the hazards through re-design or isolation of the hazard;
- Thirdly, by rearranging work organisation and training to reduce exposure; and
- As a last resort, using personal protective equipment.

This process will be documented against every identified hazard.

Often a great deal of a risk assessment can focus on the most dangerous areas of the production; the workshops, the set and the stage. But don't forget there are also hazards in the rehearsal room. For example, if an actor is asked to perform a movement which they have not been trained to accomplish, then a typical risk assessment would be:

Identify the risk	Actors required to perform in a knife fight on stage.
Can the risk be removed?	No. It is critical to the script. Eg. The fight in between Mercutio and Romeo in Romeo and Juliet.
If no, how can the risk be managed?	A fight choreographer is brought in to choreograph the fight and ensure actor safety.
Maintaining controls.	Fight choreography is run through before every performance and is monitored by stage management to ensure all choreography remains as set and safe.'

Safety induction

The third practice mandatory to ensure people can work safely is to conduct safety inductions. When there are new people working in a venue for the first time, or if a venue has dramatically changed (such as it's been refurbished or extended), people must be taken on a safety induction of the space. This job will usually fall to the production or the stage manager, or in a construction workshop to that venue's manager.

In an induction the aim is for people to observe first-hand any potential hazards so that they can better manage them as they work. It is also important for them to understand the layout of the venue, including the regular and emergency exits and entrances. If there are any areas of the space that are off-limits except to certified personnel, these need to be pointed out in the induction. Similarly if there is any equipment that can not be operated except by those who are qualified to do so, these should also be identified. Finally it's important for people to know where the first aid-kit, and action and evacuation plans are kept.

Hint

In any venue that is utilised by a theatre company, whether administrative, construction, rehearsal or performance, safety inductions should occur.

This means that some risk assessments will be done in the preproduction period, such as onboarding new staff at the company office, inducting contractors at the workshops, and cast and crew at the rehearsal venue. One again, during production all personnel entering the performance venue should be taken through a safety induction.

Activity 9.2: Risk management assessment

1. Go to the Live Performance Australia[®] website and read their page on 'safety guidelines for live entertainment and events'.
2. Select one of their hazard guides, download it and study the document. You can choose from:
 - electrical safety
 - general operational
 - event rigging
 - working at height.
3. Create your own Risk Management Assessment document for that area.
4. Use your newly created Assessment tool to investigate that area of your rehearsal or performance venue for a production that you're currently working on in class.
5. Finally, you should write a report of your findings, including recommendations, to decrease the risk factors in your venue and better manage those that can not be minimised.

Rehearsals

The stage manager is a member of the production team who reports to the production manager. It is the job-scope of the stage manager to focus on managing the physical environment of the stage and its related areas both in rehearsal and performance. This includes to manage the utilisation of every object and every person that goes into, moves within and comes out of the playing space. It's also their role to coordinate the changes of lighting, sound and other effects (such as audiovisual, smoke from smoke machines) during performance. They need to ensure that what occurs in the playing space, and in the areas that affect the playing space (such as the wings, backstage and technical box) runs accurately, efficiently and safely.

Crew

The technical and backstage personnel who supervise, coordinate and operate the technical components of a dramatic performance.

During the production period this means overseeing the duties of the crew, often after assigning their responsibilities in the first place. They also manage the logistics of the cast and director, as well as the dramaturg and musical director if they're onboard the project.

Sometimes, in small ensemble or student theatre, there isn't anyone designated to stage manage. If that's the case the duties of the stage manager need to be undertaken by the actors or the director. If stage management tasks are neglected or not properly assigned, the ensemble is far more likely to experience time management and unnecessary conflict issues. Thus it's advisable to delegate responsibility of specific tasks normally conducted by a stage manager to members of the ensemble.

Ensemble theatre

Drama works that are created and performed by a group of theatrical practitioners.

To ensure the accuracy, efficiency and safety of the playing space, the related areas and the people involved in those areas, the stage manager relies heavily on planning tasks, creating schedules and documenting information.

Rehearsal schedule

Apart from initial reads and full run-throughs, not all actors will necessarily be required for all rehearsals. This could be because the character an actor plays is only in certain scenes or it might be because although their character *is* in a particular scene, the director wants to focus on rehearsing only some of the characters in that scene. To coordinate who needs to be at a rehearsal, when they need to be at that rehearsal and what they're going to do during the session, the stage manager will create a rehearsal schedule. Usually the director will first discuss with the stage manager what order they want to rehearse the scenes or episodes of the play in, as well as what focuses they want for particular rehearsals. The stage manager will then create a schedule document that encapsulates these preferences and ensures that the entire play is well-rehearsed before the show opens.

For each session a rehearsal schedule will include information that outlines the:

- date
- venue
- who is leading the rehearsal (for example the director, musical director, choreographer)
- time
- characters (or actors) needed
- scene, episode, unit or beat to be rehearsed
- any additional notes.

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE EXAMPLE with annotated amendments from the stage manager

Date	Venue	Director(s)	Time	Required	Activity	Notes
1st May SAT	Casa Esperanza	Swati	1400 - 1600	ALL (except Gupta)	Pilgrims dance	Indranil not needed
2nd May SUN	Casa Esperanza	Nicole	1200 - 1230 1230 - 1300 1300 - 1400 1400 - 1500 1500 - 1630 1630 - 1830	Lada, Gopal Darvati, Gopal, Lada Lada, Enraged Motorist Gopal, Reepa, Darvati ALL Gopal, Gupta, Darvati, Magistrate	Unit 40 Unit 38 Unit 41 Units 42, 43 Units 38 - 43 Units 44 - 47	34 36 Sandip, Steve, Nishant, Xiangling Mithu, Moupiya needed Anand + Sudip + Saurav needed
8th May SAT	The Anchorage	Nicole	1330 - 1430	Lada, Police 2, Police Chief	Unit 37	Soumyesh, Tania, Nishant, Ben, Moupiya, Ananya, Sarmistha needed
		Swati	1430 - 1530 1530 - 1830	Police 2, Police Chief ALL	Unit 39 Pilgrims Dance	-- Same as above -- Costume
9th May SUN	Casa Esperanza	Nicole	1330 - 1430 1430 - 1530 1530 - 1600	Gopal, Gupta, Magistrate Gopal, Gupta, Darvati Gopal, Gupta, Darvati, Merchant selling goat's milk	Units 48, 49 Units 50, 51 Unit 52	
		Swati	1600 - 1800	ALL	Renewed dance	
15th May SAT	TBD	Nicole	1400 - 1830	ALL	Act II	
16th May SUN	Casa Esperanza	Swati	1300 - 1430	ALL	Renewed dance	
		Nicole	1430 - 1900	ALL	Run	
2nd May SAT	TBA	Nicole	1300 - 1830	ALL	Scene work as needed	Nishant not available
23rd May SUN	Casa Esperanza	Nicole	1300 - 1830	ALL	Scene work as needed	Musa, Nishant not available
		Swati				
29th May SAT	TBA	Nicole + Swati	1300 - 1800	ALL	Dance work as needed	Musa, Nishant not available
30th May SUN	Casa Esperanza	Nicole + Swati	1800 - 2230	ALL	Run	Nishant not available

Blocking

One of the tasks that the director and the actors will undertake during rehearsals is to decide where they will move to in the playing space and when they will do so. A role or character might move on a particular line or a specific word within a line that they or another person says. Or they could move to a new area of the stage when they, or once again someone else, are to be part of something or a particular action. Lastly they might move in order to experience something or carry out an action.

Sometimes this movement across the space is highly prescribed with the number of steps, the angle of the body, the direction of the face, and so on, being predetermined. At other times a character's movement is more generalised with the approximate new location decided upon and nothing more. How specific these choices are will depend on the style of the play, the director's approach, the actor's needs and the demands of the scenography, sound, costume or the lighting.



Whether specific or general, this process of determining movement within the playing space is called *blocking*. The reason blocking is being explored under stage management is because whilst an actor needs to be able to record their own character's blocking to help them remember it for the next rehearsal, a stage manager needs to record the blocking for *every* character in the play. This is to assist the actors should they forget their blocking when they're in the playing space running a scene and don't have their script with their notes in hand. It's also to assist the director when putting a scene or characters together that have been rehearsed separately. For example, if there are two couples in a scene but each couple is being rehearsed separately, to make sure the interaction of the couples, use of the playing space and unfolding of the dramatic action works from a holistic body placement perspective, the stage manager will be able to quickly and easily reference everyone's blocking at any point in time. If there are any clashes or discrepancies they can immediately bring these to the director's attention.

ROUGH BLOCKING NOTES EXAMPLE
 from a script excerpt from *The Masrayana*
 by William C Kovacsik

THE MASRAYANA -- 5

That's more difficult. *small laugh* BHAGWAN

Since we were children, Kanall, myself -- we've never been at ease with each other. *moving away* GOPAL

Do you know why? BHAGWAN

I was always my father's favorite. GOPAL

You are the eldest. It is natural. BHAGWAN

Kanall never seemed to understand that. He was always jealous. GOPAL

Only time makes souls grow. BHAGWAN

Time may be against me. GOPAL

In what way? *moving towards him - looking at him* BHAGWAN

Bhagwan, I shouldn't say anything. If my own spirit were not in such distress, I would keep this to myself. As it is, even mentioning it -- I may not sleep tonight. But the truth -- I fear him. GOPAL

Your brother? BHAGWAN

Yes. He has desperation in his eyes. It's terrible to see. I can't tell what he means to do. GOPAL

You think he means to harm you? BHAGWAN

(Silence) → *TURN ON HIM*
 This is shameful. GOPAL

But I can't be certain! GOPAL

↓

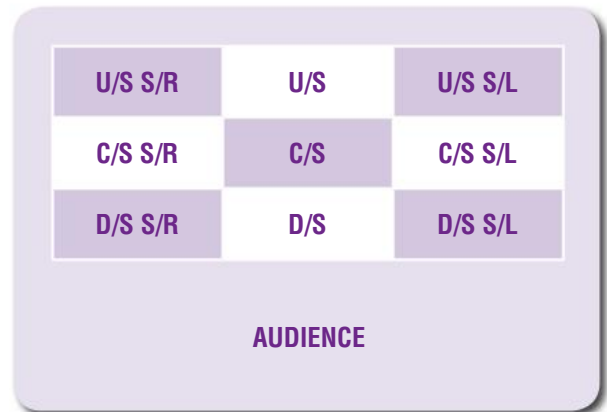
To assist in being able to communicate with each other about where to move to in the space during a rehearsal, and then to help write down those movements afterwards, specific geographical terminology is used:

- Centre stage
- Down stage
- Up stage
- Right of stage
- Left of stage

To be able to quickly make blocking notes a type of shorthand is usually adopted:

- **C/S** = centre stage
- **D/S** = down stage
- **U/S** = up stage
- **R/S** = right of stage or stage-right
- **L/S** = left of stage or stage-left

These areas are named from the actor's, and not the audience's perspective:



When the stage manager (or the actor) wants to make a record of the blocking they will use symbols, abbreviations and stage geography shorthand to record this movement in the playing space. Whilst there is no definitive or correct way to notate the blocking, popular annotations include:

- Arrows to indicate the direction of the movement
- (K) The first letter of characters' names to indicate characters
- @ At
- & or + And
- X Cross or crossing

For example:

Cleopatra ©→C/S
 So it should be, that none but Antony
 ^

Should conquer Antony; but woe 'tis so!

©→D/S C/R & kneels @ door

It's easy to get the 'left's and 'right's mixed up so stage managers need to remember the areas on the stage are from the actor's viewpoint and not the audience's. This means if the stage manager is sitting at a desk in front of the playing space during rehearsals and is making blocking notes, they will need to reverse their terminology compared to what they see. For example, actor's right is the same as the audience's left.

Hint

Stage managers, and actors, should always use lead pencil to make blocking annotations in their scripts. This is because the blocking will undoubtedly change across the rehearsal process. For example, the director or the actors might change their minds, the wearing of a new costume might restrict movement or the addition of working on set might change the movement.

Lead pencil for blocking is mandatory and 2B lead is best. This is because it's darker (and so easier to see) and is quickly erased (which makes changes easier).

Alternatively a stage manager (or an actor) might to draw rather than write their annotations. In addition to symbols and abbreviations, shapes are used to represent the stage and the set within it. For example:



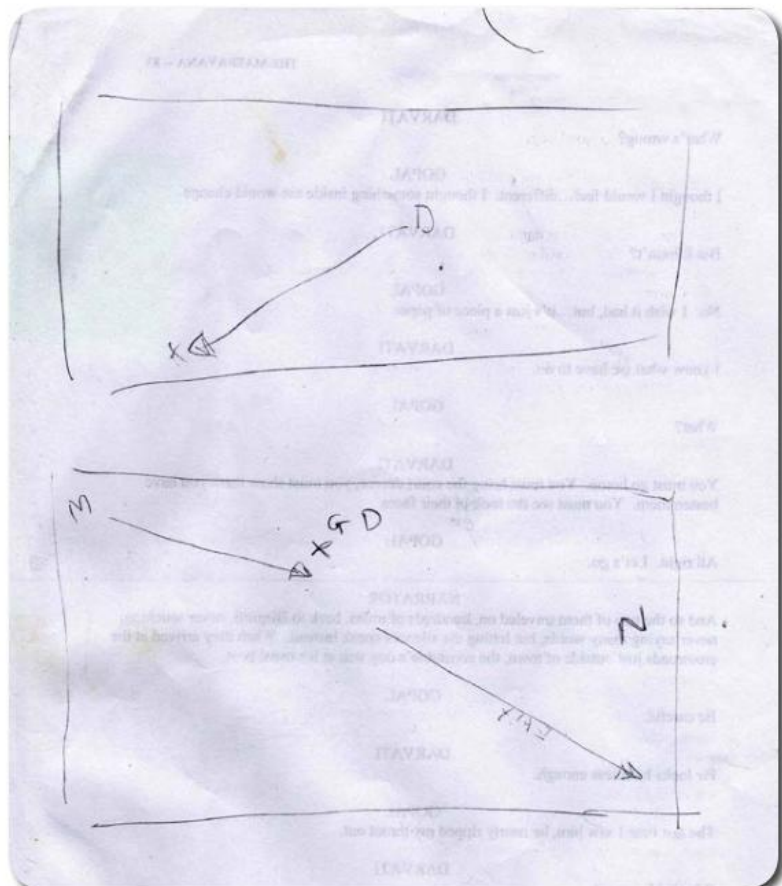
Shape of the stage



Appropriate shapes of set pieces

These annotations are drawn directly into the script right next to the word, line or stage direction together with which the movement occurs. The viewpoint is a bird's eye (aerial) view, from above the stage.

Enlarged example of blocking annotation drawings



Activity 7.3: Blocking

1. Firstly capture the blocking for a scene that you're working on in class by writing the stage geography notations in your script. You should:
 - use the first letter of the character's name, arrows, geography and notes about any other relevant information
 - notate every character's blocking in the scene (and not just your own)
 - use lead pencil in case you change the blocking during your next rehearsal.
2. Secondly provide an alternate blocking notation for the same scene drawing a bird's eye (aerial) view. You should:
 - use the first letter of the character's name, arrows, set symbols and any other relevant information
 - notate every character's blocking in the scene (and not just your own)
 - use lead pencil in case you change the blocking during your next rehearsal.

2. PRODUCTION

At the end of the pre-production phase the theatre company will move into the venue that will house their dramatic work, called the production period. The production period is divided into two:

- Production week
- Performance(s)

Production week

It is during this phase that the set, props, lighting, sound, costumes, actors and full crew will come together for the first time inside the performance space. For small-scale, low-budget and touring shows production week may be less than a week, where-as for large-scale and big-budget shows, this period might more than a week. The installation of each production area (scenography, lighting, sound and costume) will occur sequentially, usually starting with the lighting and then the set. The reason that production week does not begin with the installation of the set is because typically set pieces are large, not easily moveable or obstructive to the lighting bars. So pre-rigging of the lights is likely to occur before the set moves in, with final lighting adjustments made only after the set install is complete.

Scenography

Design of the theatrical space including, but not limited to the set, incorporating the elements of drama in order to create a place for performance whilst engaging the audience.

Hint

Final adjustments to lighting fixtures can not be made until after the set is in position, because the lighting needs to light the entire physical space, including each component of the scenography, in order for it to be effective.

The first part of production week, when the purpose is to install and prepare the production elements, is the only period when the stage manager is not in control of the playing space. The venue's management team, including the head mechanist, head electrician and head of sound, will manage the space during different sessions depending on the design realisation needs. In addition to readying the scenography, lighting and sound for performance, there are other activities that might need to occur in the playing space and wings during production week. These include:

- safety induction for all personnel
- spacing calls on set for dancers
- fight choreography adjustments on set for actors.

The stage manager and production manager will liaise with venue management to make sure time is set aside during production week for any of these types of activities.

Given that a lot of materials are likely to be moved into and around with-in the venue during this period, and that there will be an array of manual and machine tools that will be utilised in these processes, the venue manager must ensure safe working practices are utilised at all times. As a basic rule, even when there are time constraints, they must:

- repair or replace faulty equipment immediately
- replace or not use unreliable, old equipment.

In addition, it's important that the designers, stage manager and rest of the crew do not undertake any processes that are dangerous. For example, crew members should not stand on anything unstable, nor do a task from up high if the same job could be carried out on the ground. They also must resist carrying out activities in semi-darkness unless during a performance.

Backstage blacks

As soon as the stage manager and the crew move into the theatre venue they need to wear *backstage blacks*. This is clothing that is black in colour made up typically of a black long-sleeved shirt, black long pants, black socks and black covered shoes. The convention of wearing blacks is necessary to minimise the crew being seen by the audience during performance when changing set pieces or prop items.

Pre-rigging

The installation of the lighting fixtures on the grid before the production moves into the venue.

Fixture

A theatrical light.

Hint

Many theatre venues in Australia have imposed a rule that all personnel who step on stage during the bump-in and bump-out processes must not only wear covered shoes, but that these must be steel-capped. A steel-capped shoe has a piece of metal inside the shoe that covers the toes and front of the foot. This is a safety measure to protect people's feet from injury should something heavy, such as a set or piece of mechanical equipment, fall on them.

Many crew members continue this safe working practice and wear their steel-capped shoes for the entire production week and performance periods.

Scenography

During production week the scenographer will work with the head mechanist or head flyperson, together with the stage manager and crew to complete the realisation process of the scenographic design. The set will be bumped-in to the venue where it will first be assembled and then moved into the correct position on stage. If there are multiple set pieces for different settings to be moved on and off stage at certain points during the performance, then sections in the wings or backstage area will be allocated for their storage when not in use.

Set and strike

The placement of moveable set pieces and prop items on-stage before or during a performance needs careful coordination and practice. The stage manager will allocate what will be moved into the space, when and where it will be moved to and who of the crew will move it. These assistant stage managers (ASMs) will each be responsible for setting (carrying and placing on stage) specific new set pieces and striking (taking off stage) old ones. The stage manager will create a Scene Change Plot that outlines these details. This documentation is usually displayed on each side of the stage in the wings.

Bump-in

Moving and setting up production equipment and materials into a performance venue for show-run.

Set

Moving items onto and placing them within the playing space for use in performance.

Strike

Removing items from the playing space once they have been used during performance.

SCENE CHANGE PLOT - GALA

NO.2	Item (Qty)	IN		OUT		Blocking
		by Who	EN from	by Who	EX to	
	TABLE(2)	CREW 1	USR	CREW 1	USR	
		CREW 2		CREW 2		
	CHAIRS(2)	CREW 3		CREW 3		
	CONE(2)	ASM	USL	ASM	USL	
	PROPS	ACTORS	USL	ACTORS	USL	

Internet exploration

Hear from a professional stage manager about stage management, including blocking and technical cues at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMPvrc0OSJ8

Activity 9.4: Creating a scene change plot

1. Imagine you are a stage manager for a production of a script that you're working on in class.
2. Create a scene change plot for the set and props pieces for the scene. Be sure to outline:
 - who will be setting which set/prop piece
 - who will be striking which set/prop piece
 - a floor plan of the space with the set/prop pieces in their correct areas
 - any other information that is important.

Spiking the floor

To ensure that the moveable set pieces are placed in exactly the same place during every performance, a position correct for the lighting and the dramatic action of the characters, the stage floor needs to be *spiked*.

To spike the floor the stage manager will use small pieces of electrical or glow tape, usually in the shape of an 'L' to mark the two up-stage corners of the set piece. Sometimes 'X' or 'T' shapes are used because they better suit the physicality of the set pieces. Spiking the floor enables the crew to accurately place the items during the semi-darkness of a scene change. If there are many pieces to be set and struck during a performance, spikes of different colours will be used so that placement mix-ups are avoided.

Hint

There's nothing worse, particularly in a representational drama work, for an audience member than looking down at a stage before the performance starts and seeing the floor covered in large spike marks. Even if they know nothing about theatre, it won't be visually very appealing for them. Try making your spike marks small and only using them if it's absolutely necessary.

Spike

A mark on the playing space floor with tape to indicate where a set piece, prop or actor needs to move to at a particular point in the performance.



The line of sight of the audience will often reach beyond the playing space and into the wing areas. This means the crew members who are working back stage and actors waiting to go on stage are exposed. In some presentational drama forms, such as didactic theatre, this might be the aim of the director to help remind the audience they are watching a play, and not real life. In many productions, however, seeing into the wings is distracting for the audience and can make them lose focus of what's going on in the

Sightlines

The line of sight between the audience member and the outer edges of the playing space.

inner world of the play. If this is the case action needs to be taken by the stage manager to minimise backstage exposure.

Additional masking might be rigged to block the wing areas from the audience's view. Often this is not completely possible or not appropriate for the scenography and so the stage manager must mark the sightlines on the floor in the wings. To do this they will adhere a line of electrical tape to the floor that indicates the precise edge of the audience's line of sight. If anyone steps over the line, they will be seen by the audience.

Stage managers also may need to add markings to the backstage floor for reasons other than sightlines. For example, they are likely to tape the floor designating where a set piece should be stored when it's not on stage. Similarly they will tape the floor to mark the boundaries of equipment that's to be used backstage during the performance. By taping the floor in these ways the stage manager is helping to minimise the risk of accidents and injury backstage, and is creating an environment that is safe to work in.

The props that the actors will use onstage during performance need to be bumped-in to the venue. The stage manager is responsible for installing and setting up the props in an organised way so that they're quickly accessible during performance and easy to manage in-between shows.

To ensure props don't get broken or lost, the stage manager will set up a props table on each side of the stage in the wings to house the props. Each prop will be allocated a place on one of these tables. The boundary of each prop's place will be marked with masking tape and the name of the prop written clearly on the boundary in a thick dark pen.

Hint

The general rule is if an actor or crew member offstage can see an audience member, then they too can be seen by that person and they're standing in the wrong position.



The area designated backstage for live backing-vocals is marked on the floor with electrical tape.

Activity 9.5: Managing props

1. Imagine you are a stage manager preparing a backstage props table for the prop items you can see in the photo.
2. Draw the bird's eye view of the way you would lay out the props table. Be sure to have:
 - an allocated space for each of the seven props on the table
 - just enough space for each prop within its designated area
 - the large props at the back and the small ones at the front for ease of access.



Lighting realisation

During production week the lighting designer will work with the venue's head electrician, as well as the stage manager and the crew, to realise the design. There are several processes that occur specifically for lighting:

- bump-in
- focusing
- plotting
- technical rehearsal.

During bump-in the lighting, including the fixtures, accessories and electrical equipment are installed. The venue's head electrician takes the lead at this point, whilst the stage manager continues with other non-lighting production tasks. If lighting bars need to be moved or added, this will be done during the bump-in. Any accessories that need to be added to the fixtures will also be added at this point.

Next it is the lighting designer who takes the lead during the focusing of the lights. This is where the direction and angle of each fixture is moved so that the beam points where it needs to within the playing space. If there are any adjustments to be made to the parts of a fixture such as a lens or an accessory such as a barn door, these will be made when focusing.

When plotting the lights the designer works with the lighting board operator, stage manager and the crew to finalise the fixtures which will be used in each lighting state of the production. The approximate levels of the lights within each state are determined, as are the transitions between the lighting states. This includes setting the timing, such as which character line or action to start the transition on, and the duration of the changes.

The stage manager and the lighting board operator will make annotations in their scripts to record when each cue is to start. The operator will program the lighting levels and transitions directly into the lighting board. If technology doesn't enable them to do this then they will make manual notes, either by hand on paper or in a chart or spreadsheet on the computer. This way when running the show they will have all the information they need to prepare each upcoming lighting state accurately.



Focusing

The process of adjusting the fixtures to ensure the right direction, size, shape and quality of lighting is achieved.

Plotting

The process of hanging each fixture in its correct location with the correct accessories.

Teching

The process of integrating the lighting, sound, AV and scenographic components with the acting.

Hint

During the teching stage the sound designer and sound operator will also work concurrently with the stage manager to finalise the sound cues.

Finally, during technical rehearsals of the lighting states, the levels of the lights within the states and the transitions are finalised. The stage manager, designer and operator will do this by having the actors run the show, in costume, whilst also running the lighting cues at the same time. The designer will make any adjustments to lighting levels during this time and the operator will amend their notation to reflect the changes. They will also check the lighting state transitions, often several times, to make sure they start the new cue in the correct place, and that the time-in of the new cue and time-out of the old cue (ie. the durations) are correct.



Sound realisation

The sound designer will work with venue's head of sound or, if there isn't one, the sound desk operator, as well as the stage manager and the crew to realise the sound design. The processes specific for sound are:

- bump-in
- plotting
- technical rehearsal.

Hint

The sound desk operator is sometimes called the sound board operator.

Sound bump-in will occur at some point after the set has gone in, but before the plotting of lights begins.

One of the reasons for this is that many sound effects are part of the dramatic action and thus lighting state changes will need to match with them in timing and duration.

During bump-in the sound system layout will be installed and the designer and head of sound will need to:

- identify preferred rigging and positioning points for audio equipment according to the system layout documentation
- correctly identify cables used to connect different audio components
- correctly position and connect (or disconnect) audio system cables, including microphones, speakers, multicore and power feeds, all in accordance with safety requirements
- set start-up and operating settings of the audio desk in sequence and effectively use its features
- identify any problems with equipment promptly and take the necessary action to overcome the issues
- use positioning and equalising techniques and equipment to create optimum sound quality
- check that all sounds can be played back or played live and, if appropriate, amplified effectively

- check parts of the systems for potential feedback frequency problems and make adjustments as required.

Next the sound designer, sound desk operator and the stage manager will plot the sound for the show. Approximate volume levels of each sound are set, as are any transitions between sounds. Similar to lighting, the timing of when to start each sound cue, such as a character's line or an action, and the duration of the sound will be in notes. Once again, just like lighting, the stage manager and the sound desk operator will make annotations in their scripts to identify when each sound cue is to start.

In the technical rehearsals, concurrent to teching the lighting, the stage manager and the sound desk operator will work together to rehearse the sound with the dramatic action by having the actors run the show in the playing space. Adjustments might be made to the sound quality and timing if necessary. The actors may need to rerun the sections that include cue lines for sound several times, to enable the operator and stage manager to perfect their timing.

Internet exploration

Hear from a stage manager about teching rehearsals at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxxblrZroYY&list=PLOCtYL8z7wuHYKrigLJiQYsLwYVJnAXIJ

Costumes

Whilst the set, lighting and sound are being bumped-in, prepared and plotted, the costumes will also be moved into the performance venue. Each item of each costume will be labelled with the name of the character that it is for. Unless the production has a long performance run, these labels are typically made from a piece of masking tape that is stuck on the inside of a costume where it can't be seen when the actor wears it. Masking tape is used because it's easy to write the character's name on it in permanent pen, and it's also easy to peel off and remove the label once the show has closed.



Closing show
The last of several performances.

Costumes need to be hung neatly on costume racks with corresponding shoes underneath and hats above. If there are undergarments, accessories or jewelry that are part of the costume, these will usually be put in a large, clear, ziplock bag, that is labelled with the character's name. Although best practice is to attach the bags to coat-hangers and hang them on the rack with the other costume items, sometimes they will be kept with the shoes on the bottom of the racks if there's not enough hanging room. Hanging the costume pieces together in an orderly fashion helps the actor to find the pieces easily. Storing the costumes neatly together in this way, with nothing left on the floor, and having the racks configured out of the way of human traffic, reduces the risk of tripping accidents and ensures that cast and crew can work safely and efficiently in and around the costumes.

During teching rehearsals there are two main reasons that actors will wear each and every costume piece, no matter how small:

1. To make sure they can move, in-character and in the performance space, safely
2. For the lighting designer to check that the lighting states work as effectively with the costumes, as they do with the scenography and the dramatic action

As appropriate the costume or lighting designer will make any adjustments they need so that the design elements work together effectively and functionally within the playing space.

Hint

If the costume designer is not available for any touch-ups or adjustments to the costumes the wardrobe mistress/master will carry these out.

Wardrobe mistress/master

The person responsible for managing, maintaining and fixing the costumes during a production.

Final dress rehearsals

After bringing all the production elements together with the actors and the dramatic action in the technical rehearsal period it's time to run the show as if it was a real performance for a real audience. These runs are called final dress rehearsals and provide the opportunity for the stage manager, actors and crew to experience the production completely as it will be during a real performance, with the exception of there being no public audience. It's the last opportunity for the stage manager, designers and director to make any adjustments, and it's the last time the actors will be able to practise quick costume changes, standing in the right place on stage for the lighting, working seamlessly with the set and the sound, all whilst acting effectively.

From this point on, the stage manager is responsible for not only the playing space, backstage area and technical areas, but also for the performance itself.

3. PERFORMANCE

In order to ensure a smooth show run from opening to closing night, the stage manager will sequence events carefully and create documents that outline those sequences, such as in a performance production schedule. This document is detailed and often lengthy, as it outlines for the cast and crew where they need to be, when they need to be there and what they need to do once they are there.

Opening night
The first of several performances.

PERFORMANCE PRODUCTION SCHEDULE EXAMPLE

Date	Time	Description	People required	Details
Thursday 2 August	Preview 1			
	18.00	Crew call time	SM, LXBO, SNBO, 2xASM	
	18.00 – 18.30	Preshow checks	SM, LXBO, SNBO, 2xASM	Set trap door effect
	18.30	Actors call time	All cast	
	18.30 – 19.25	Actors warm-up	SM, All cast	
	19.25	Half hour call	SM, All cast	
	19.45	House open	SM, FOHM, 4xFOH, LXBO, SNBO, 2xASM	
	19.55	Beginners call Act I	SM, FOHM, 4xFOH, LXBO, SNBO, 2xASM, all cast	
	20.00	Play begins	SM, LXBO, SNBO, 2xASM, FOHM, all cast	Liaise with FOHM to start
	20.55	Interval	SM, FOHM, 4xFOH, LXBO, SNBO, 2xASM, all cast	Liaise with FOHM to open doors
	21.10	Beginners Call Act II	SM, FOHM, 4xFOH, LXBO, SNBO, 2xASM, all cast	
	21.15	Act II begins	SM, LXBO, SNBO, 2xASM, FOHM, all cast	Liaise with FOHM to start
	22.10	Close show	SM, LXBO, SNBO, 2xASM, FOHM, all cast	
	22.20	Notes	SM, LXBO, SNBO, 2xASM, FOHM, all cast	Liaise with FOHM when house is clear
	23.00	Exit venue	SM, LXBO, SNBO, 2xASM, FOHM, all cast	

Key:

SM = Stage manager
LXBO = Lighting board operator
SNBO = Sound board operator
FOHM = Front-of-house manager

ASM = Assistant stage manager
FOH = Front-of-house usher
All cast = All actors

The stage manager will also create a sign-in and sign-out sheet with each cast and crew members' name on it. This is pinned up near the stage door so that when people arrive (or leave) they can easily sign their name and write their time of arrival (or departure). This way the stage manager can track who is there, who is running late and what needs to be taken care of if someone is running late.

Stage door

The entrance and exit area of a theatre venue for cast, crew and creative team members during production.

Activity 9.6: Creating a performance production schedule

Imagine you are a stage manager running a production of a script that you're working on in class.

Create a performance schedule for an 8 pm evening performance. Be sure to outline information about:

- personnel arrivals/exits
- technical setup
- acting preparation (warm-up)
- stand-by calls
- performance and interval starts/finishes
- a key
- any other information that is important.

4. POST-PRODUCTION

After the show closes, the stage manager will work closely with the venue managers to bump-out the show. Typically starting immediately after the final audience leaves the auditorium, the producing theatre company will move everything out of the venue that they brought into it during bump-in. This will include dismantling and moving the set out, de-rigging the lights and packing up and removing the sound equipment. The stage manager and the crew will also need to convert the backstage area to its original state before they moved in. This will mean removing the props, costumes, make-up, storage racks and so on.

Bump-out

Removing production equipment and materials from a performance venue after a show-run has finished.

Internet exploration

See behind the scenes of the musical *Jersey Boys* at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4mNw138m8c

CHAPTER 10

Performance Space

Key Concepts

- Performance space
- Performance spaces for representational drama
 - The box set
- Performance spaces for presentational drama
 - Thrust stage
 - Traverse
 - In-the-round stage
 - Amphitheatre
 - Promenade
 - Shifts in space and time

PERFORMANCE SPACE

When referring to *space* in drama, the speaker might be talking about several different things, such as the:

- **Stage space:** the area designated within a venue for performance works to be performed upon.
- **Playing space:** the area utilised by actors, designers and directors to create within, in the realisation of a dramatic work. Whilst sometimes this is exactly the same as the stage space, at other times the scenographer adapts the stage (or the whole venue) to create an amended or an entirely new playing space.
- **Off-stage space:** the area backstage beyond the playing space.
- **Imaginary space:** the inner world of the play.
- **Space substance:** space within the playing space that is made tangible and meaningful by the way the actor utilises and engages with it.

Scenographer

The designer of the three-dimensional theatrical space including, but not limited to, the set.

When exploring spaces of performance this chapter is primarily concerned with stage space, and how it is configured to have an impact on the playing space and the audience.

There are some spaces of performance that are more suited to representational drama, whilst others to presentational drama. In both styles of drama the actor-audience (and performance-audience) relationship is crucial to the interpretation of and engagement with the drama work. Therefore the size and arrangement of the physical stage and seating environments are important. When producing a work and deciding on a venue to stage it, theatre practitioners must consider what will best suit the play's style, the directorial and creative visions, the creation of the inner world of the play and the audience who will experience it. In doing so they will typically consider:

- the two- and three-dimensional size of the playing space
- the placement of entrances and exits for the roles and characters
- the linear distance between the playing space and the audience seating
- the raised or lowered height of the stage compared to the audience seating
- having a barrier (or not) between the playing space and the audience
- positioning the audience on one, two, three or all sides of the playing space
- the sightlines of the audience.

Performance space

The three-dimensional area, crafted by the scenographer and the lighting designer, in which the actors will perform a dramatic piece.

Sightlines

Theatrical black curtains that are hung behind and at the sides of the playing space to frame the on stage and conceal the off stage areas.

Representational drama

Drama that imitates life as it explores human psychology by placing characters in life-like situations and relationships on stage. Because it's an imitation of life the characters don't know the audience is there.

Presentational drama

Drama that shows itself as a theatrical experience to the audience whilst the dramatic action unfolds. Because it focuses on the communication of ideas or the offering of a theatrical experience it often makes contact with the audience during performance.

Performance spaces for representational drama

One of the key conventions in representational drama is that the characters believe their world (their experiences, relationships, conflicts, desires) is real and therefore that the audience does not exist. Whilst the actor will have an awareness of the audience, the character they play will not. When representational drama was first evolving at the end of the 19th century, the playing spaces were often the same as those that housed opera, ballet, melodrama, Shakespeare, Moliere and other presentational drama forms; a proscenium arch theatre. The practitioners of the new realistic and naturalistic styles of theatre used the existing venue architecture in a new way to their advantage.

Proscenium arch

A proscenium arch theatre is one that has a large archway bordering the front of the stage. The playing space behind the arch is typically raised about a metre above the front row of the audience. The proscenium arch itself makes a picture frame around the acting area, through which the audience members watch the performance. It provides a physical divide separating the inner world of the play from the audience. This divide allows viewers to almost secretly look in on the play through an imaginary transparent fourth wall, without disturbing the action or distracting the actors. This imaginary wall was traditionally called the plaster line because of the ornamental plastering that adorned the archway in the 17th to 19th centuries.

The proscenium arch encourages the suspension of disbelief and helps the audience to forget they are watching a play and to imagine that the dramatic experience is a real one. Actors can break the fourth transparent wall by physical turning-out towards the audience and speaking explicitly to them. This direct address shatters the illusion of the fourth wall. It interrupts the performance's reality, and bridges the gap between the audience and the players. It is not a convention usually used in representational drama.

Proscenium arch

The architectural vertical frame that surrounds the front of the stage, separating the playing space from the audience.

Suspension of disbelief

The acceptance of something unreal being real for a period of time.

Break the fourth wall

When an actor, most usually in representational drama, working in a proscenium arch or end-on stage turns out to the audience and communicates directly with them for a finite period of time.

Hint

Other historical drama styles that typically use a proscenium arch theatre are presentational genres: opera, ballet, melodrama and other styles with music. Although these forms evolved in theatres with proscenium arches, the performers continually break the fourth wall and seek to develop a relationship with the audience.

This relationship is often in-character, with the actor turning-out and facing the auditorium, to communicate directly to the audience 'in-role'.

In other styles with music, such as music hall, burlesque and vaudeville, when the performers turn-out to the front and interact directly with the audience, they might do so in-character or they might break character allowing the actor to personally communicate with the viewers. These historical styles often go one step further and use a Compère or an MC. This person will, throughout the performance, chat with the audience, introduce the coming song, scene or act, comment on the performers, or even perhaps discuss news, current affairs and gossip.

Activity 10.1: Acting in a proscenium arch venue

1. As actors, working in small groups with an excerpt from a play you're studying in class, experiment with the imaginary fourth wall. Try staging the same scene or excerpt from the script in two different ways. Make sure you consider the:
 - stage space
 - space between the performance area and the audience
 - off-stage space
 - imaginary space
 - audience's contextual spaces (Who they are from a demographic perspective?).2. Firstly stage the excerpt as if you were in a proscenium arch theatre. Do not interact or formally acknowledge the audience. Behave as if you have an imaginary wall between yourself and them. Use the space as realistically as you possibly can, interact with the other characters, props and set pieces as if you were in a real-life situation in a real environment.
3. Secondly restage the same excerpt in the same proscenium arch venue, but this time break the fourth wall. You might do this by:
 - turning out to the audience
 - communicating verbally or through your body language with them
 - being aware of the audience as you interact with the other characters (and potentially showing them this awareness).
4. Perform both versions one after the other to another group.
5. Reflect on which version worked best for the script. As well as self-reflection and group discussion, you could also ask your audience for their feedback.
6. Write a mini-report which firstly compares the two versions and secondly discusses which you think works best for the script. Be sure to justify your response.

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE

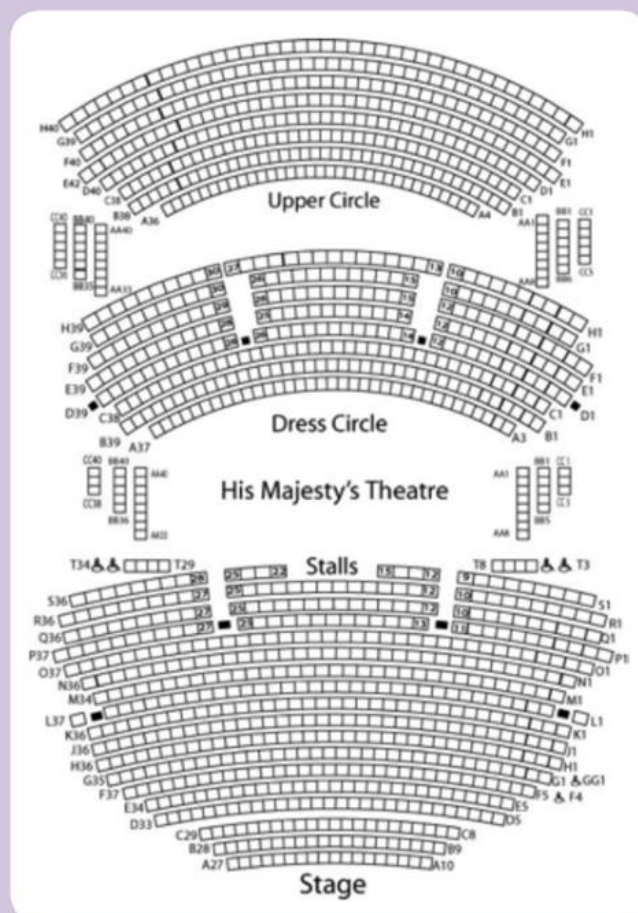
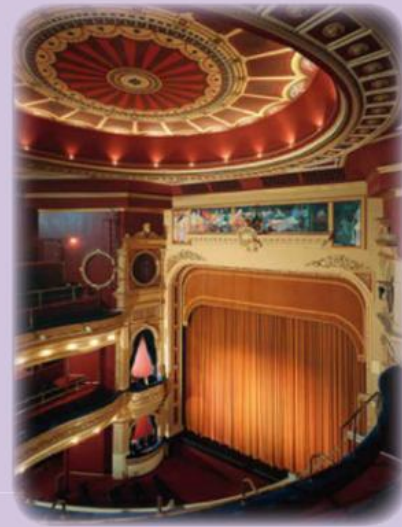
Western Australia's oldest performance venue is His Majesty's Theatre in Hay Street Perth, which opened in 1904. It is a typically Edwardian 19th century proscenium arch theatre and took over two years to build.

Raked seating

Chairs that are set in rows, with each row being higher than the one in front.

In the main theatre the front row of seating, although close to the stage, is lower than it. The horseshoe-shaped seating auditorium has three levels of raked seating; the Stalls (588 seats on the ground floor), Dress

Circle (327 seats on the first floor up) and Upper Dress Circle (348 seats on the second floor up). Architecturally the venue follows traditional Italian design with a bell-shaped dome ceiling (that once used to open up to the external sky), columns, pillars, highly ornamental plastering on the balconies, boxes and marbled front-of-house staircases. Most importantly it has a large two-storey proscenium arch.



Although at the time of its construction audience sightlines were considered to be very good, because the typical playing space has changed today and now more areas of the stage are utilised than merely the down- and centre-stage areas (as was the case at the turn of the 20th century), many of the seats have restrictive views. When staging a work for this venue today, the director, designers and actors need to take into consideration the restricted viewing of many of the seats. They need to either ensure they block most of the action down stage, take care that important events and interactions do not take place in the up stage areas, and/or the producer needs to sell the restricted viewing seats at a discounted rate.

His Majesty's has two resident performing arts groups; The WA Ballet Company and the WA Opera Company. Both companies have rehearsal studios and administration offices upstairs in an area that once housed guest rooms of an old hotel. These two companies regularly produce works at His Majesty's Theatre as part of their annual seasons.

For more information see the website: www.hismajestystheatre.com.au

Activity 10.2: Investigating proscenium arch theatres

1. Go on line and find five proscenium arch theatre venues that are not in Western Australia. You should find:
 - images of the stage and seating area
 - venue plans or sectional drawings
 - seating plans.
2. Consider a representational play that you're studying in class. Select one of the five venues you've found that you believe best suits a production of the play.
3. Write a report justifying your choice. You should include your reasoning about the:
 - proscenium arch
 - audience being on one side of the stage only
 - single or multiple levels of audience seating
 - whether the stage is raised above the audience or not
 - raking (or not) of the seating
 - distance between the stage and the audience
 - stage size (width, depth and height)
 - available entrances/exits for the actors.



Box set design from a 1956 production of *The Matchmaker* for The Gaiety Theatre's proscenium arch stage by the late Irish visual artist and designer Reginald Gray

The box set

When staging representational drama in a proscenium arch theatre, a scenographer may choose to use a box set. This is a design convention that uses a set with three connected walls, one stage-right, one up stage and one stage-left. There are doors for entrances and exits in at least some of the three walls. Windows may be included and, if they are, allow for dramatic action to occur behind the box set visible to the characters and the audience through the opening.

The stage-right and -left walls connect to the proscenium arch. This reinforces the architectural arch framing the inner world of the play and suggests an imaginary fourth wall through which the audience just happen to be able to see. The box set is extremely well suited to realistic and naturalistic plays that are set indoors in the room of a house or office, because it imitates the architecture of a life-like building.

Activity 10.3: Working with a box set

1. Imagine you are the producer working on a production of a representational play that you're studying in class, to be staged at His Majesty's Theatre in Perth. For more information on the venue, go to:
www.hismajestystheatre.com.au
2. Create a chart that outlines the strengths and weaknesses of using a box set for the production. You should consider multiple perspectives including those of the:
 - director
 - scenographer
 - actors
 - stage manager
 - audience members
 - anyone else you think appropriate.
3. Be sure to justify your reasoning with quotes from the script dialogue or the stage directions.

Performance spaces for presentational drama

In contrast to representational drama, in presentational performances the audience is encouraged to remember that they *are* watching a theatrical production and not a slice of real life. Suspension of disbelief is often, if not always in styles such as Brecht's epic theatre or Grotowski's poor theatre, discouraged.

The **Hint** earlier in this chapter discussed how a proscenium arch venue might be used by actors to break the imaginary fourth wall and develop a direct relationship with the audience. When working on presentational drama in such a venue designers could create scenography and lighting that exposes or highlights the architectural arch, emphasising the non-realistic nature of the theatrical experience. They might include an extra section of stage that juts out in front of the arch, called an apron, to encourage the dramatic action to unfold down stage of, rather than behind, the architectural picture frame.

Apron

The section of stage that protrudes out in front of the proscenium arch.

Hint

Typically in proscenium arch venues that are built to house opera and ballet, whilst the area directly in front of the stage can be raised to allow for an extended apron, it can more importantly be lowered to create an orchestra pit and thus cater for live music during the performance.

Should a non-musical production be performed at such a venue, the creative team may choose not to install an apron, but rather to use the regular stage and keep the arch as the front boundary of the playing space. This often results in a gap of several metres between the stage front and the first audience row, which is perfect for representational drama. It's perfect because the space configuration emphasises the separation between the inner world of the play and the audience, encouraging them to be observers. It's not as effective for presentational theatre if the actors have been tasked with communicating directly with the audience. In this situation the performers will need to work harder to break the barrier of the imaginary fourth wall, than if they had been able to physically step through the border.

In addition to grand proscenium arch venues of the 17-19th centuries, today there are many other types of playing spaces that are well suited to staging presentational drama. These include venues with a:

- Thrust stage
- Traverse stage
- In-the-round stage
- Amphitheatre stage

Found space

Also called an adapted space, a non-purpose built venue used as a performance space.

Some drama productions might use multiple areas to stage the play and require the audience to move from one playing space to another during the performance. This type of staging is called promenade.

Thrust stage

The designated performance area surrounded on three sides by audience members.

Thrust stage



A view of the Pasant Theatre's thrust stage at the Wharton Centre in Michigan

A theatre with a thrust stage is one where the designated playing space literally thrusts or protrudes out into the seating so that the audience are on three sides of the stage. Because the audience surround the stage and the play that's being performed on it, it is not possible to have an imaginary fourth wall. Suspension of disbelief is much more difficult than in a proscenium arch venue, because audience members will view other audience members' faces in their line of sight as they watch the performance.

Because the actors are surrounded by audience members at 180 to 270 degrees they not only can very easily communicate directly with them, they have to turn and move more to communicate with each other than they would in a proscenium arch venue. If they don't travel across the playing space or rotate their bodies often, they will have their backs to one or more sections of the audience for extended periods of time. This may prevent the audience hearing their voices or interpreting their facial expressions. It may also mean the actor-audience relationship diminishes rather than increases, which would be inappropriate for many presentational drama styles.

The late Renaissance period was the first time a modern thrust, with seating on three sides of the stage, was used in permanent theatre venues in the west. The corrales of the Spanish Golden Age of theatre and the playing houses of the Elizabethan period in London were among the first. These types of stages were a development from the raised courtyard platforms in European taverns upon which songs, sketches and dramas had been relatively haphazardly performed in the past. In Asia, thrust stages were being used at a similar time, such as for the kabuki theatre of Japan.

Fortunately people today can experience one of the early thrust stages by visiting the recreation of the Globe Theatre in London. This reconstruction stands close to its original location in the Bankside district of Southwark by the River Thames. Whilst not an identical replica, it is as close to the Elizabethan venue as modern engineering allows.

On the ground floor is the yard, which was, during Queen Elizabeth I's reign, purely for the peasants, is free of chairs and thus allows standing room only for the audience. This area can become an extremely crowded pit, in the same way as it does at a live band concert today. The audience are likely to lean on the sides of the stage, while looking up at the performers. They are so close they can reach out and touch the actors, and four hundred years ago they probably would have done so. They also would have commented to the actors or even thrown rotten apples at them, if they didn't like the play or the acting abilities. Behind the standing yard are the seating bays, of which there are three levels. These were reserved for the upper classes and were more expensive than the yard. The higher one sat, the more expensive the seat.

Corrales

Public theatre venues in Spain, first built in 1570 in response to the popularity of courtyard performances, were raised stages constructed at one end of a courtyard that was enclosed by buildings on three sides.

Playing house

Public theatre venues in England, first built in 1576 in response to the endorsement of drama by Queen Elizabeth I and the popularity of tavern drama sketches at the time. Venues were purpose-built round three-storey structures, with a raised covered stage in a circular courtyard that was without roofing.

Kabuki

A type of highly stylised traditional Japanese drama using story-telling, poetry, mime, song and dance, which originated in the early 17th century.



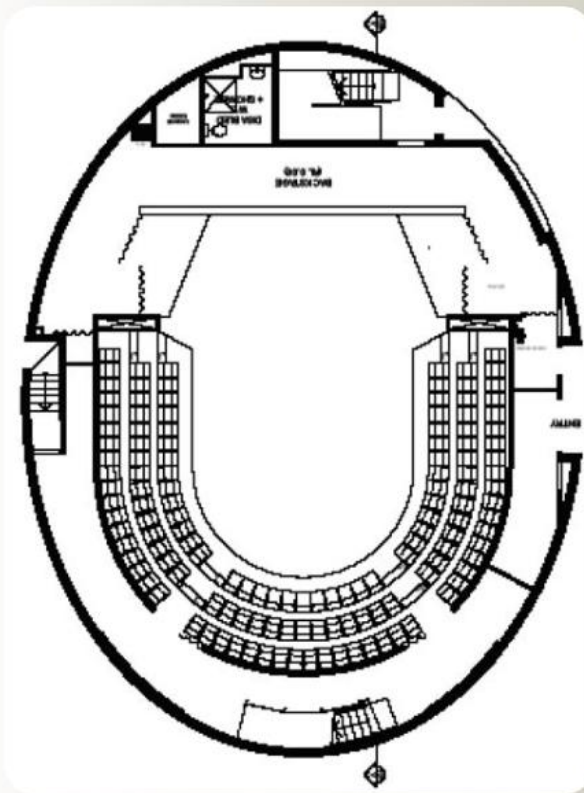
The Globe Theatre, Panorama Innenraum, London. Photograph by Maschinenjunge (Wikimedia Commons)

Internet exploration

For more information take a look at the Globe Theatre website at:
www.shakespeares-globe.org

Activity 10.4: Creative treatment of a thrust stage

The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts is very fortunate to have several international standard theatres. One of these is a venue with a thrust stage called the Round Theatre. It is so named because of the building's circular exterior shape.



When looking at the top view plan you can see that the acting space thrusts right out into the seating auditorium. Scenographers may have to be careful if they want to use large set pieces and consider potentially placing the larger set pieces up stage of the smaller ones. A director may need to consider how the actors could be aware of or interact with the audience, whilst developing relationships with each other and allowing the dramatic action to unfold. Actors would need to consider whether their blocking masked another actor from the audience for too long. Lighting designers may have a difficult time balancing lighting the three-dimensional space well, without blinding the audience members.

1. Using a scene from a play you are working on in class take on the role of director, lighting designer or scenographer.
2. Create a concept for how you would treat the scene in the round theatre venue.
3. Write a report that discusses how you would:
 - use the space
 - overcome the spatial challenges.

In discussing your creative decisions, make sure you use justifications from the script, together with detailed examples from the venue plan.

Activity 10.5: Choosing a thrust stage venue

1. Imagine your school is looking to stage a production of a script that you're studying in class and you're wanting to perform it at one of UWA's thrust stage venues:
 - Octagon Theatre : www.theatres.uwa.edu.au/venues/octagon
 - New Fortune Theatre: www.theatres.uwa.edu.au/venues/fortune
2. Examine the photographs and architectural plans (on the next pages) of both venues and decide which one would most suit your script.
3. Write a report explaining your choice. Be sure to use quotes from the script to justify your preference.

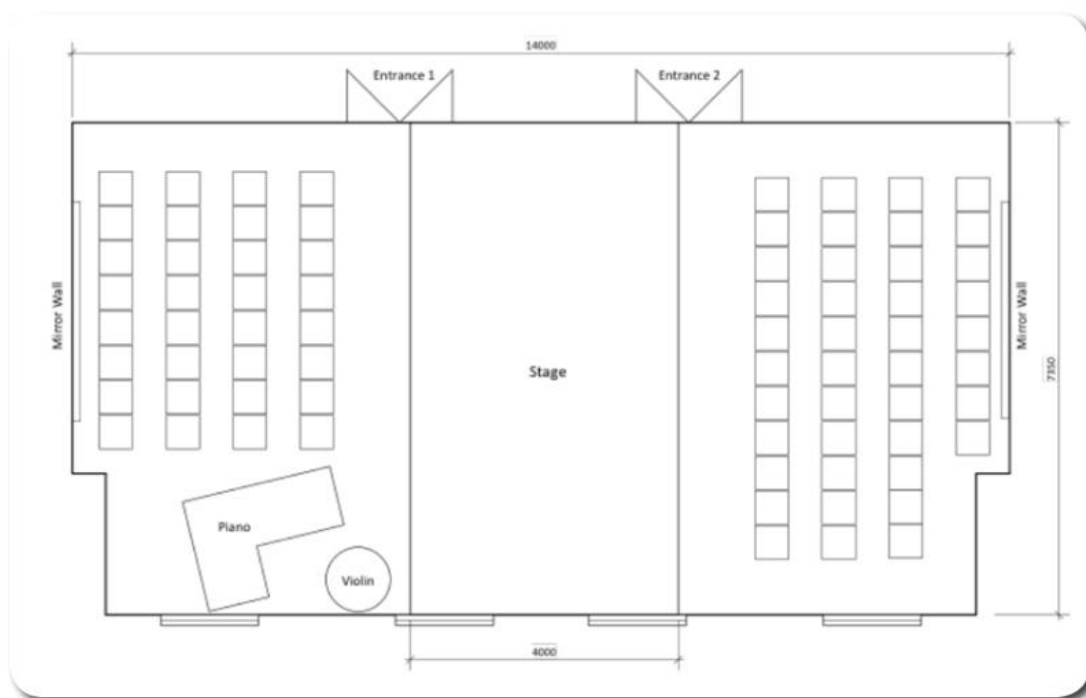
Traverse stage

A traverse stage has some audience seating similarities to a thrust stage, and therefore it has similar challenges and advantages. Where a thrust will have audience seating on three of four sides of the stage, a traverse will have the audience on only two. These two sides are directly facing each other, usually allowing for entrances and exits at the other two sides of the stage. A traverse is similar to a fashion catwalk that runs from one end of the room to the other and divides the audience in two.

Traverse stage

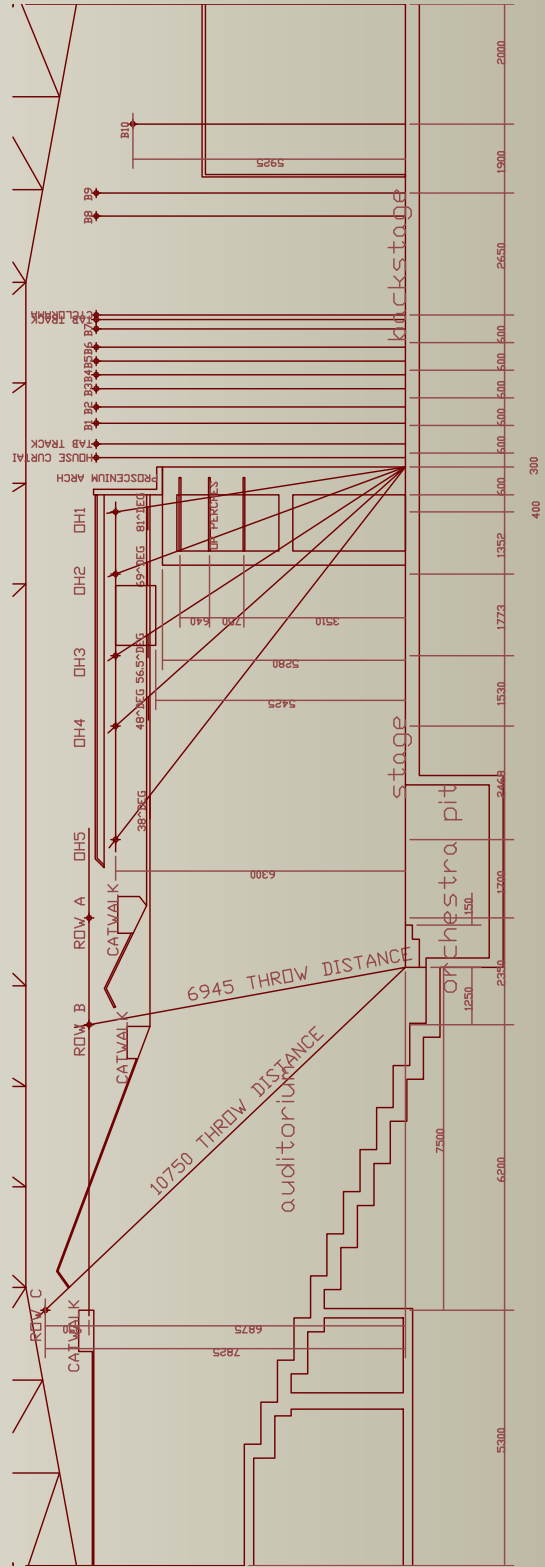
The designated performance area runs through the audience dividing it in half, so that one section watches the playing space from one side and the other from the opposite side.

EXAMPLE OF A TRAVERSE STAGE



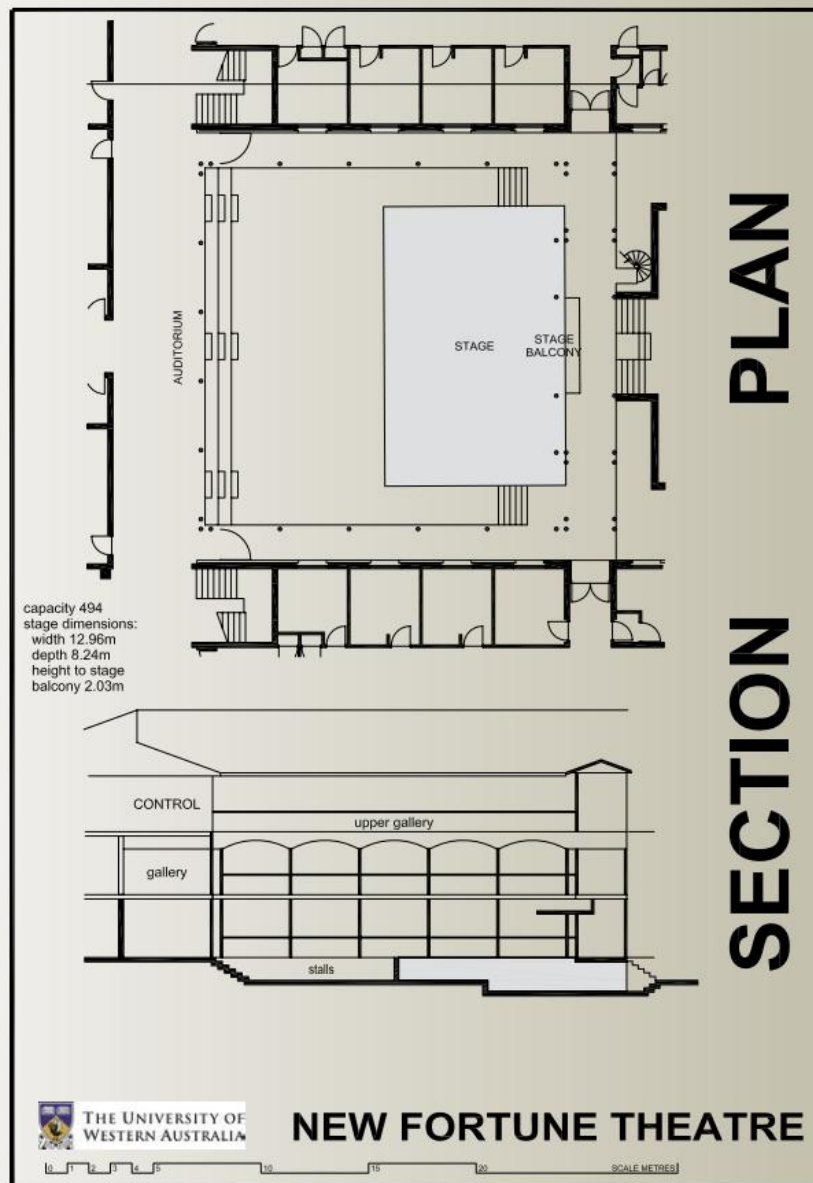


The Octagon Theatre
University of Western Australia
Photograph and plans courtesy of University Theatres





Photograph and plans courtesy of University Theatres



One half of the audience will watch the dramatic action on stage, with the remaining audience group in the opposite seating block forming a background to the playing space. This means the audience are an ever-present part of the play and makes it unlikely that they will forget that they're watching a performance. A traverse stage is an effective option for many presentational drama styles, particularly those that are didactic in nature with the aim to prompt the audience to understand more about themselves as human beings and community members of a particular society. By viewing the expression, emotions and reactions of other audience members, those watching might be more likely to compare these with their own and question how the play relates to them personally.



Ubu Roi produced in 2012
by the National School of Drama Delhi,
Direction and Scenography by Deepan Sivaraman

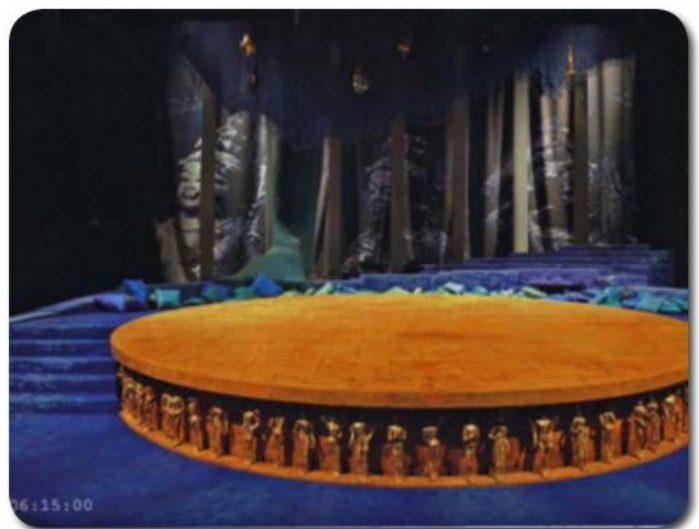
In-the-round stage

Often considered one of the most difficult playing spaces to work with, an in-the-round venue has a stage that is completely surrounded by audience members. Travelling circuses have used in-the-round staging in their large-scale big-top tents for generations. Similarly, outdoor stadiums typically surround an oval where football, athletics and other sports are played on the enclosed arena. The playing space is circular. It could be perfectly round or oval-shaped with a continuous curved edge, or it might have a series of hard edges in the shape of a pentagon, octagon or some other multi-sided form.

This type of space is judged to be extremely difficult because the actor, and the play they are part of, is always exposed. If the actor turns their back towards one audience group, then they will be revealing their front to another. The only respite from the continuous audience is in the aisles. The audience is likely to be broken by at least two, but usually three or more, aisles.

In-the-round stage

A playing space that is typically either circular or octagonal in shape, surrounded on all sides by audience members.



Set created for a 2012 performance in the Thomas Theatre
at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival
Photo shared by Media & Communications Manager Amy Richard

Logistically, aisles allow the audience members to get into their seats without having to climb over rows of benches or chairs. Practically they are a place for actors to remain still whilst their facial expressions can be easily seen by most of the audience. If the actor is on stage and stops in front of an aisle with their back to it, only the people in the back rows close to that aisle will have trouble seeing the actor's face. But if the actor stops at the top of the aisle, next to or behind the back row, every audience member will be able to see them by turning around. Often in this type of venue the director and designers will utilise the aisles for the playing out of dramatic action.

Internet exploration

Investigate four of the major venue types in drama:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=L99g_Wg5Gh8

Amphitheatre

More than two thousand years ago the Ancient Greeks and Romans were staging plays as part of religious and cultural festivals. They created theatre venues specifically for this purpose, which often housed thousands of people. It was the Greeks who developed a thriving theatre scene, including the venues to stage them, before the Romans. In creating their venues, the Romans borrowed many of the architectural conventions from the Ancient Greeks.

The Ancient Roman theatrical amphitheatres ranged in size, from small playing spaces that were six by thirty metres in size, to large stages of twelve to sixty metres. The seating, called the *cavea*, was tiered in a semi-circular shape surrounding a large rectangular platform stage that was raised about a metre and a half off the ground. The stage was covered with a roof and had an up stage *frons scenae*, which was a wall with three entrances. The centre one, reserved for the actor playing the lead character, was curtained, whilst the other two remained open. This wall was decorated lavishly and included columns, porticos, statues and other ornamentation.

Amphitheatre

An open venue, purpose-built to stage drama works where the stage is surrounded by sloped seating in a semi-circular layout.



The stage in the Roman theatre of Bet She'an, Israel
Photograph Bet She'an Roman theatre stage WV IL by Grauesel

Internet exploration

Look at an Ancient Roman theatre ruin in Spain at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=odmDkBF2G_E

Hint

Whilst the Ancient Roman theatre venues can be considered from a structural viewpoint as amphitheatres because they borrow from the conventions of the Ancient Greeks, a Roman venue is often simply called a Roman Theatre. This is because the Ancient Romans also built huge circular shaped colosseums for other non-theatrical entertainment, and they called these structures amphitheatres. The most well known of these is the Colosseum in the Piazza del Colosseo Roma, famous for housing gladiator battles where men and animals fought to the death.

Calling an Ancient Roman drama venue a Roman theatre avoids confusion and ensures other people know that you're talking about entertainment involving acting, rather than that involving blood sports.

Activity 10.6: Working with challenging venues

1. Imagine you are a director working on a production of a script that you're studying in class. You have three venue choices available to you for the production:
 - Traverse
 - Theatre-in-the-round
 - Amphitheatre
2. Select the venue type which you think will best suit the play.
3. Write a letter to the producing theatre company making your venue recommendation. Be sure to:
 - explain your venue preference
 - discuss why you don't want to use the other two venues
 - include a paragraph describing how you envisage overall the dramatic action to take place (from an acting perspective)
 - include a paragraph describing how the production components (scenography, lighting, sound and costume design) would be well-suited to your preferred venue.

Promenade

Any production that asks audience members to move from one place to another in order to watch and experience the performance is using promenade staging. Often these are found (adapted) or site-specific spaces; non-theatrical venues that can be adapted to stage dramatic works. Because each member of the audience moves to at least one new location during the performance they are likely to

Promenade

Multiple playing spaces that are separate to each other and require the audience to move between them during performance.

be standing close to the performers in one section and then be more distanced from them the next. This changing physical proximity has an impact on the way the audience interprets and engages with the work. The use of changing spaces often encourages more audience-actor interaction or, in some cases, even audience participation in the dramatic action.

Internet exploration

Hear what one American theatre company said to their audience when preparing them for a promenade performance at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=38x005NEWXo

Shifts in space and time

A venue can be used to help establish time and space when the play takes place across different points in time, as well as in multiple locations.



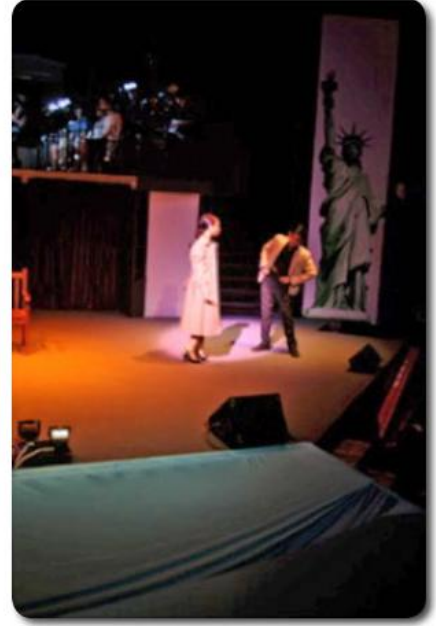
Different areas of the stage can be used for different locations and points in time within the inner world of the play.



Specific areas of the stage can be used that, together with lighting design isolations, can suggest new locations and new times.



The same playing space can be used for different locations and time periods through changes in the colour, texture and other design elements of the lighting.



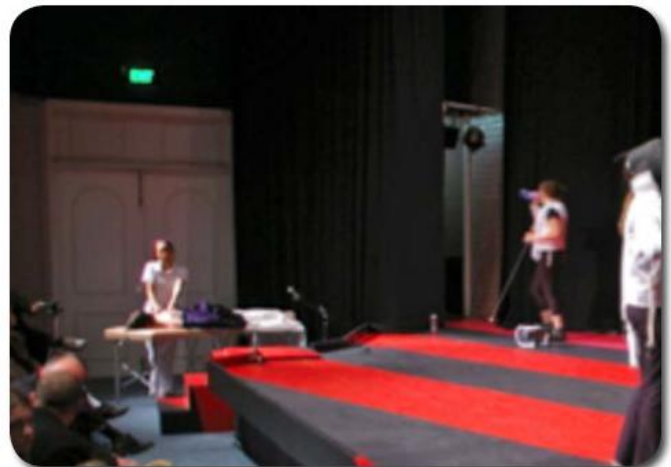
The actors can use their movement skills and form inanimate objects to suggest a new location.

Performance by the Canadian company
Ligue d'improvisation montréalaise

Photographer © Aude Vanlathem



The actors can use their own areas of the playing space simultaneously to carry out individual activities that are independent to the others, suggesting either different time periods, different locations or both of these things.



Finally, using a combination of regular stage space and non-regular stage space to suggest different locations.

CHAPTER II

Arts Marketing

Key Concepts

- ☛ Arts marketing
- ☛ Advertising
 - Posters
 - Images
- ☛ Program creation
- ☛ Performance style and marketing
 - Representational drama
 - Presentational drama
- ☛ Publicity
 - The media

ARTS MARKETING

In order to sell a dramatic production, or any performing arts event, a theatre company needs to market their show to the public to prompt them to purchase tickets and attend the performance. Effective arts marketing is crucial if the company is going to sell enough tickets to provide an audience for the cast and crew at each performance, as well as to cover production costs.

Marketing is a way for a company to share information about an upcoming or current production with the people it believes will make ideal audiences. Ideal audience members are those people who tend to, on average, be able to relate to, appreciate and/or enjoy the production. This suitability could be because the subject matter of the play is relevant to their particular demographic or because they usually like that particular style of the play. Or the suitability might not be because of the play itself, but that that group of people enjoy going to the theatre or live performance in the first place. It could, of course, be a combination of all of these things.

There are different types of marketing material that companies can create, as well as many marketing processes that they can use to reach their targeted audience members.

Marketing

A medium that allows buyers and sellers of a product, service or experience to interact in order to enable an exchange between the two to take place.

It's also a noun describing the business unit or profession of a person who works in this area.

Demographic

A section of the population that share certain characteristics.

This chapter will focus on three important areas of the work of arts marketers:

- advertising
- program creation
- publicity.

Internet exploration

Hear from a professional theatre marketing manager at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxda8vP82to

ADVERTISING

One main way to market a production to potential audience members is through advertising. The most common forms of advertising materials are:

- **Standalone print:** posters and flyers.
- **Other print:** newspaper, journal and periodical placements.
- **Broadcast:** TV and radio advertisements.
- **Social media:** Internet postings and mobile phone communication.
- **Internet:** digital moving clips and still image e-poster/e-flyer webpage placements.

Advertisement

An announcement or any kind of notice put into the public domain that promotes a product, service or experience to potential consumers.

Many of the design principles and practices are similar across the mediums. This chapter, however, will focus specifically on designing a poster in order to advertise a theatrical performance.

Posters

Because hard-copy posters are documents that will literally be posted (displayed) on billboards, noticeboards, walls, windows and the like, they need to be created specifically with the target audience in mind. Graphic designers are skilled in creating posters and other advertising material which provide the practical, logical details potential audience members need to inform them about the production, whilst also reflecting artistic and stylistic production components in order to appeal to them emotionally, psychologically and creatively.

Once printed, the location of where a poster is displayed is extremely important. Marketers identify public and private spaces that are frequented by the target audience. Private spaces are not, in this situation homes, but rather buildings or locations that are owned by a company to provide their own goods or services to the general public, such as a shopping mall or sporting complex. Usually in these privately-owned spaces there are advertising places available for theatre companies, and other arts providers, to market their productions. These could be free notice boards or formal available-for-hire advertising signboards.

Target audience

A specific demographic of people well matched to the production at whom the marketing material is aimed.

Graphic designer

Someone who takes on the artistic process of combining images and text to create marketing materials.

Because a poster is a way to market a production and is an avenue to inform the general public of an event and prompt them to purchase tickets, there are certain types of information that must be included on a poster. Production facts that almost always appear are the:

- play title
- producing company name and logo
- production dates and time
- production venue and address
- ticketing information.

Other information can also be included if it's known at the time of printing and if it's deemed helpful or attractive to the general public. Such additional information could include the:

- playwright's name
- funding bodies or sponsors
- director's name
- name(s) of well-known actors who will perform
- ratings (if they apply).

Of course a poster is not just a functional information document. Similar to the production design areas of scenographic, costume, lighting and sound design, a graphic designer needs to think from an artistic viewpoint when creating a poster. Ideally, marketing material should therefore artistically:

- reflect the production's creative vision
- suggest the setting (time and space) of the play
- indicate the themes and/or issues that the production will explore
- be appealing to the target audience.

When designing the materials a designer will communicate the production facts and the artistic information by making key choices about the use of:

- colour
- font
- graphic
- layout
- text to non-text ratio.

Short+Sweet
Poster design example



In examining the *Short+Sweet* poster on the previous page it's possible to observe the following choices made by the graphic designer:

Font choices

- **Sans-serif style:** easy and quick to read.
- **Sans-serif style:** suggests a night of contemporary (and not classical) plays.
- **Largest text:** the largest words are in the title (which is also the logo) to make them stand out and attract the viewer's attention.
- **Smallest text:** the smallest words describe the ticketing information, only available to be read once the viewer's attention has been caught by the larger text and they come closer to read where they can purchase tickets.
- **Variation in size:** 'Biggest' is larger than 'Little' which is indicative of the literal sizes of the meaning behind the words and, importantly, the festival (a large-scaled event) and the plays (ten minutes each in length).

Sans-serif

A style of lettering that doesn't use decorative adornments.

Colour choices

- **Orange:** matches with the Short+Sweet brand colour.
- **Orange:** the main colour in the actor's wig and the tonal colour of her skin and costume, as well as the background of the graphic match with the orange used in the text.
- **White:** the title, main information (caption, ticket prices and venue), image plus-signs, actor's face and her costume are matching, suggesting continuity, effective planning, high quality production and so on.
- **Text colours:** alternating colours between lines to make each as easy to read as possible.

Graphic choices

- **Image selection:** the white-faced, red-lipped, close-eyed, large-wigged, cake-eating character suggests the famous 'Let them eat cake' of Marie Antoinette, a misquote that is often used in popular culture to indicate frivolity, decadence and tongue-in-cheek wickedness; indicating therefore that the performance will also include these things.
- **Plus signs:** the plus in the logo is reused multiple times in the graphic background:
 - floating downwards towards actor's mouth: reiterating the 'Let them eat cake' association of the plays
 - small plus size: 'bite-sized' theatre (ten minutes per play)
 - blurred sign: moving pluses equals fast-paced production.

Marie Antoinette

The Dauphine of France in the late 18th century, associated with great beauty, lavish excess, exquisite fashion and unawareness of the plight and hardships of the common person. She has been misquoted as saying "let them eat cake" when told that her people were starving.

Layout choices

- **Gala finals:** the first text the viewer sees on the top left is the specific event within the festival.
- **Text left/image right:** when automatically reading left-to-right the viewer takes the information gained by the text to interpret the image on the right.
- **Title/Character:** the title is top left and balanced with the character bottom right, drawing on the primacy/recency theory.

Primacy/Recency

The tendency for people to remember the first and last things in a series, more than those in the middle. It is more accurately called the serial position effect.

Text to non-text ratio

- **Image/Non-image:** the image is far larger than the text; two-thirds image to one-third text, capitalising on the fact that people are more likely to remember a visual image than words.
- **Character percentage:** two-thirds of the image itself is the character, once again helping the viewer to remember the performance.

Text

Written material.

Hint

Posters come in all shapes and sizes, from A4 to bus-stop displays to highway billboards. They also can be portrait or landscape configured. The size and the configuration need to suit the location and the passing human traffic.

Activity 11.1: Poster design

1. Imagine you are the graphic designer creating the poster for a performance of a play that you are working on in class.
2. Create a poster advertisement with appropriate production information such as:
 - play title
 - producing company name and logo
 - production dates and time
 - production venue and address
 - ticketing information
 - playwright's name
 - funding bodies or sponsors
 - director's name
 - name(s) of well-known actors who will perform
 - ratings (if they apply).

- ➔ 3. It should reflect the production's creative vision, suggest the setting of the play, indicate the themes and/or issues will be explored and be appealing to the target audience.
5. Write a report summary that outlines some of these choices in regards to:
- font
 - colour
 - graphics
 - layout
 - text to non-text ratio.

Internet exploration

Find a simple tutorial on how to create a poster using Microsoft word at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJQnQ0JwEK4

Watch a different more creative approach to design posters by a team of professionals at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Tvd02JWaaS

Images

One of the most popular image types used by designers today whether in a poster, program or another type of publicity, is a photograph. The shift over the last decade away from analogue to digital photography has meant photographs can be shot, shared and then included in marketing material extremely easily. Other technology and software advances mean that images are easy to utilise, adapt and change, enabling graphic designers to be very creative when generating the materials to market a production.

Graphic

An illustration, picture, image or some other piece of two-dimensional visual arts.

Every photograph tells a story of the characters, objects and landscape included within the still frame. This is great news for designers as they can work with an image as more than merely a snapshot, but rather a snapshot-in-time where action before and after the photograph are inferred, relationship dynamics are suggested and themes, conflict and tension are revealed.

Activity 11.2: Image analysis

1. On the next page are four images taken at a promotional photo shoot for a production of *Not quite the Moulin Rouge*, a stylised musical set in a rundown Parisian cabaret in 1929, that tells the tale of four of the club's employees.
2. Analyse each of the photos and write a paragraph describing what they collectively tell the potential audience member about the time period and location setting of the production.
3. In addition, for **each** photo, write a paragraph that outlines what you can work out about the:
 - story each image tells
 - characters/roles and their relationships
 - relevant theme.



Photo A

Photo B



Photo C



Photo D



Photos courtesy of Bellepoque

Activity 11.3: Selecting an image

1. Imagine you are leading the Arts Marketing department of a theatre company and are about to stage a production of *Not Quite the Moulin Rouge*.
2. Read the blurb provided by the director for the production:

'An accountant who wants to be a producer...
A producer who wants to be a man...
A star exiled from the Paris of the East...
A Parisian stealing east for Hollywood...

What could they possibly have in common?
Murder!
They're all suspects in a homicide investigation...

It's New Years Eve in 1929 and the eve of a new decade of modern possibilities. But backstage at a small Parisian nightclub, (a club that's not quite the Moulin Rouge), four dreamers are being questioned for a murder they did not commit... Or did they?

With well known songs from Cole Porter, Offenbach and Kander & Ebb, as well as the very best that the 1920s and 30s French cabaret has to offer, **Not Quite the Moulin Rouge** promises to be thoroughly entertaining and intriguing evening.

So join us as these colorful characters try to sing and dance their way out of a prison term and into stardom.'

3. Select one of the four images from **Activity 11.2** to be the main image for all the marketing materials, including the poster and program.
4. Write a report that outlines why you have selected your chosen image. You should include information on:
 - plot
 - performance style
 - creative vision.

Creative vision

The shared clear and defined conceptualisation of the creative team, typically initiated by the directorial vision, of the way a dramatic work will be realised in performance in order to communicate identified meaning to a particular audience, in a specific location at a point in the future.

PROGRAM CREATION

Programs are documents that include important information about the production and the people who are involved in the production for the audience. For some theatregoers a program is a record of a performance to be treasured post-show evoking, hopefully, a positive emotional response towards the experience. For others it is an instrument to share factual information about the play, the production, the producing company and those people involved with their friends and family.

It's easy to see that posters, like programs, need to operate therefore on both a functional level, by providing information about the production to the audience, and an artistic level, by aesthetically reflecting the creative, atmospheric, thematic and contextual components of the production non-textually.

Typical information provided will be details about both the inner world of the play and the production itself. For the inner world of the play, there's likely to be a:

- summary about the setting (such as the time, space and other contextual information)
- plot synopsis or scene breakdown
- role/character list, sometimes inclusive of key biographical information.

In terms of production information, a program is likely to include:

- a welcome message or foreword from key practitioners such as the director and producing company
- information about the producing company, and biographies and headshots of the creatives
- logos of sponsors, donors and funding bodies
- advertisements from both external companies and the producing company's upcoming productions
- acknowledgements and special thanks.

In the same way a poster and other marketing material should artistically represent the production, so should a program. Once again graphic designers should create a program that:

- reflects the production's creative vision
- suggests the setting (time and space) of the play
- indicates the themes and/or issues that the production will explore
- is appealing to the attending audience.

Once again, the designer will provide the text about the inner world of the play and the production in an artistic way in the program by making choices about:

- colour
- font
- graphic
- layout
- text to non-text ratio.

Ideally the program, as another piece of marketing material, will incorporate similar design choices to any posters, flyers, e-flyers and so on that were created months in advance in order to advertise the production. In this way there is a continuity that the audience recognises, whether subconsciously or consciously, and this helps to enhance their sense of familiarity with the production and build a long-term relationship with the producing company.

Aesthetics

In general:

The engagement generated and appeal invoked by data about an object or creature that is collected by the human senses.

In philosophy:

A critical reflection on visual and performing arts, culture and nature.

Creatives

Members of the creative team, including the director, designers, dramaturg and other practitioners involved in conceptualising and realising imaginative, artistic and meaningful ideas for performance.

Hint

Many large-scale musicals and international touring productions create two programs for every show. The first is an A5 size program that is text-heavy because its main function is to provide information for audiences. The second is a larger program, often A4 or B4 in size, that is photograph-heavy because its main function is to entertain theatregoers even after the show has finished and help them to remember the production and, hopefully, the producing company.

Activity 11.4: Program design

1. Imagine you are the graphic designer creating the program for a performance of a play that you are working on in class.
2. Create a program with appropriate production information such as:
 - cover page
 - foreword from the theatre company (your school)
 - notes from the director
 - setting summary
 - scene breakdown
 - character list with key biographical information included
 - biographies and headshots of key personnel
 - names of other contributors
 - advertisements from external companies
 - advertisements from the theatre company (your school)
 - logos from sponsors, donors and funding bodies
 - back page.
3. It should reflect the production's creative vision, suggest the setting of the play, indicate the themes and/or issues that will be explored, and be appealing to the target audience.
4. Write a report summary that outlines some of these choices in regards to:
 - font
 - colour
 - graphics
 - layout
 - text to non-text ratio.

PERFORMANCE STYLE AND MARKETING

As explored earlier in this chapter, all marketing material needs to ideally aesthetically and artistically mirror aspects of the production itself. This is to give potential audience members clues about the style of the associated dramatic work and prompt them to buy tickets for the shows they think they will like. People have different preferences that are often based on their past experience with certain historical and performance styles. Some audience members prefer theatre that reflects real life, while others like to attend drama that is not life-like at all.

Performance style

Acting in a certain way that either focuses on imitating life or presenting ideas.

Historical style

The drama developed by a particular culture at a specific period in time that has a set of characteristics, conventions and, often, delivery techniques unique to that artistic type.

Representational drama

When marketing representational drama the graphic design style often imitates, at least to some degree, the inner world of the play. It could include graphics that are associated with the setting or that even appear human (rather than computer/machine) made. The images may be of real people dressed in clothes appropriate to the period with life-like, believable facial expressions and body language. The characters might be in environments that appear realistic or could have been shot on location (in non-photographic studios). The graphics colour choices may be eye-catching, yet could also be toned-down somewhat, with a degree of subtlety. The contrasts, shading and textures, whilst still visually appealing, could suggest a depth of character, with a complicated psychology and intricate relationships.

Typically the marketing material for a representational drama work will in some way suggest that the performance style is life-like, and the play will reveal the story of intertwined complex three-dimensional characters. This is to attract audience members who like to attend representational theatre and to increase the probability that they (after initially seeing the marketing material and then buying tickets for the performance) will have a positive reaction to the play when they eventually experience it.

Representational drama

Drama that imitates life as it explores human psychology by placing characters in life-like situations and relationships on stage. Because it's an imitation of life the characters don't know the audience is there.

Period clothing

The garments and attire that were worn and the way they were worn at a specific time in history, at a particular place.

Presentational drama

Conversely the marketing material for a presentational drama work will in some way suggest that the performance style is either larger-than-life and/or highly stylised.

Presentational drama

Drama that shows itself as a theatrical experience to the audience whilst the dramatic action unfolds. Because it focuses on the communication of ideas or the offering of a theatrical experience it often makes contact with the audience during performance.

It too will imitate the inner world of the play, but often with a focus on the historical style itself. For example, if the production is a musical then the image may include characters wearing dance shoes, musicians playing instruments or actors singing. If the work is a piece of Brechtian theatre the production values may be shown in the graphic design such as the inclusion of artificial lighting effects or set pieces, props and costumes that are clearly stylised objects. There's more likely to be an overt (rather than subtle) use of symbolism in the marketing of a presentational drama work. Actors' facial expressions and body language in the images used could be larger than life. The colour choices, shading and textures of the graphics might be brighter, bolder and more contrasting than those used in representational drama marketing. All of this is to attract audience members who will enjoy or appreciate presentational drama and to increase the probability that those attending (those who saw the marketing initially and then were prompted to buy tickets) will have a positive reaction to the production.

Activity 11.5: Image and performance style

1. Imagine you are in the marketing department and choosing an image for a production that has a representational performance style.

Write a paragraph outlining why the image below is **not** likely to be suitable:



2. The photo on the next page is of a highly stylised character by contemporary standards, yet it could be appropriate for the marketing material of some representational drama works. Write a paragraph outlining what type of representational drama it might be appropriate for.



PUBLICITY

Advertising is one type of publicity that's used to promote a dramatic performance, one where a theatre company shares information directly with potential audience members through a public notice in order to attract them to the production. There are, of course, other types of publicity, many of which use third parties to help promote production information. One of these third parties is the media.

Publicity

The communication of information about a particular production, person or event in order to promote it.

Third party

An individual, group or company who are linked in some way to, but not primarily involved in, a particular situation.

The media

The media is a term that refers to the collective group of mediums used to generate and facilitate mass communication. Traditional media has included television, radio and newspapers for over half a century. Today, however, popular methods of communicating to large groups of people include mobile phones and the internet (such as computers, tablets, watches and other electronic devices with web access). Whether through traditional or contemporary channels, one method that the media uses to collect information about a theatrical production, or any event, and then share it with the general public is through interviews.

Media

The plural form of medium and the means by which information is communicated to the general public.

Media interviews are a meeting between a journalist and an individual associated with an event, action or occurrence that will be of interest to the general public, which is recorded in some way. The recording could be visually via camera, aurally through a microphone and recording device, or through hand-written or digital note-taking. Although media interviews can be either pre-planned or improvised, when interviewing an artist or creative about a theatrical production, most usually the sessions are carefully organised in advance.

Interviews aired or published by the media are products that are consumed by viewers/listeners/internet surfers/etc. These consumers can choose to experience the interview (by reading or watching it), seek an alternative interview (by sourcing a competing media provider instead), or select not to consume any interview with any type of provider at all (by not reading or listening to any article). Therefore journalists are far more likely to interview people to whom the public are attracted. This is because the artist or creative:

- is well-known, for example a celebrity
- does something unusual in the performance, for example they have a rare performance talent
- is part of a unique production, for example the performance venue, staging or style itself is different in some way to other shows
- is part of a topical production, for example one that has challenging or contentious themes.

This then means that if arts marketing departments want to secure an interview with a journalist that will be aired or published, they need to pitch their proposed interviewee or the production itself in such a way that highlights one of these four things. Then the likelihood that a journalist or media group will pick up the story increases.



Journalist

An individual writing or talking about, or reporting on events, people, places or general interest stories via a media channel.

Pick-up

When a media channel agrees to use and broadcast a story, article, interview, column or other journalistic piece.

Internet exploration

Investigate performing arts publicity and marketing at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=1AgPtV9kG6w

 **Activity 11.6: Interview pitch**

1. Imagine you are the marketing manager for your upcoming school production.
2. Select a media company of your choice from one of these industries:
 - Television
 - Radio
 - Newspaper
3. Write a mock letter to the media company, pitching your school production, requesting an interview. In your letter you should:
 - highlight the unique features of your production AND/OR the unique talents of some of your artists or creative team
 - outline the features of your target audience and justify why the production will suit this audience
 - outline why you think your proposed story will suit the selected company AND the industry they're a part of
 - include a high resolution image that captures the uniqueness of your production OR propose one that could be taken.

NOTE: Do NOT send this letter to the media company as it's for study purposes only!

CHAPTER 12

Existing Drama Works

Key Concepts

- Existing drama works
- Reading a script
- The elements of drama
 - Role, character and relationships
 - Situation
 - Voice and movement
 - Time and space
 - Multiple spaces
 - Time flow
 - Symbol and metaphor
 - Mood and atmosphere
 - Language and text
 - Dramatic tension

EXISTING DRAMA WORKS

Many plays and drama works that theatre companies produce today have been written by another playwright or ensemble. A script could have been written last week or last century, it may have been crafted by an artist who lives down the street or one writing from the other side of the world. Sometimes a play has been officially published, has received multiple productions before and is very well-known, and at other times the script has never been made available to the general public. In working with existing plays, no matter when or from where they were written, or whether they've been published or not, actors, directors, dramaturgs, designers and managers need excellent interpretation skills to effectively realise someone else's script.

Script

The text of a play or some other dramatic work.



The starting place for successful script realisation is to know the script very well. This means all drama practitioners need to read, reread (and probably reread at least another time) the script before they begin actively working on it. So many answers to interpretation questions or understanding ambiguities can be found within the script, if the practitioner takes the time to hunt for them.

Activity 12.1: First read of a script

1. This exercise is to be completed whilst you are reading a script, or a scene from a script, for the first time.
2. Take a notebook, divide the page in half and on the left side, at the end of every script double page, note down what you think the text is, overall, saying. You can summarise, paraphrase, write in dot points or take down important quotations (carefully noting their place in the script).
3. On the right side of the page, after the script reading session has finished, write your own responses, interpretations, questions and observations to your left column notes.
4. Finally carry out some investigations to answer your questions, clarify meanings or overcome problems. This could include researching, workshoping, reflecting and dialoguing with others.

Hint

Don't forget to read through the introduction or preface if you're working with a published script. Sometimes this will have been written by the playwright themselves, and at other times by the editor or another drama practitioner. There are always helpful insights and points to consider in this section as well as things to look out for in the coming script. This is why an introduction is there in the first place, so use it to your advantage.

READING A SCRIPT

Scripts are literary works intended to be performed, not simply read. Unlike a novel or short story text, the contents of a play are more than a description of event occurrences, just as they are more than a record of character dialogue. A playwright uses certain scripting conventions to capture the three-dimensional nature and the tangible action of a play, as well as the communication exchanges shared by the roles and characters. These conventions provide the director, actors, designers, dramaturg and managers with practical, experiential and concrete information about the realisation of the script in performance. Playwrights are likely to use some, if not all, of the following scripting conventions:

Character list

At the beginning of the script the names of the characters or roles that appear in the play are provided. These tend to be ordered either alphabetically, in sequence of appearance or according to how often they're a part of the dramatic action (with the more participative characters listed first).

Setting information

Also at the beginning of the play the playwright usually provides details about the time and space of the setting. Throughout the play, every time there's a change in location or a leap of time, new setting information will be given. This typically is included at the beginning of a new act, scene or episode.

Staging notes

Once again at the start of the play, act, scene or episode a playwright may include some notes about the staging. This information helps actors and the creative team members to understand more about the way the writer envisions the environment of the inner world of the play; how this world will be realised on stage through the scenography and other production elements.

Stage directions

Throughout the play most playwrights include descriptive information about the events that occur and activities that are undertaken. A playwright is also likely to provide information about the characters as the script unfolds, not only in their voice and movement, but also about their internal states. For example, they might give directions for actors about their characters' thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, concerns and desires.

Scenes

A play is broken down into segments. Usually representational drama works are made up of acts and scenes. Presentational works can use this sectioning system, or the sections might be broken into episodes. Either way the divisions are usually listed in numerical order, with the number appearing at the beginning of each new section. The end of a section is often indicated through the inclusion of a note such as 'End of scene'.

Lines

The words the characters say aloud are scripted. The playwright will first state the speaker's name and then provide their speech either next to or underneath their name. When two or more characters are exchanging words, their lines are referred to as dialogue. When only one character speaks for quite a period of time, their lines are referred to as monologue.

Episode

Sections of some drama works in which a sequence of dramatic action unfolds and/or a communication interchange occurs.

Act

A section of a play that presents, explores and concludes a situation, made up of several scenes.

Scene

A sequence of actions that take place within a single setting in a play.

Dialogue

The speech interaction between two or more characters in performance.

Monologue

A speech delivered, without interruption by a single character, to other characters or the audience.

Hint

The term 'monologue' comes from 'mono' meaning one and 'logos' meaning logic or reasoning. Thus monologue literally refers to when one person shares their reasoning with others. Today, however, they could be sharing their reasoning, feelings, concerns, ideas, or questions. 'Dialogue' (two plus logic) refers to two people exchanging their ideas. 'Triologue', whilst theoretically accurate in referring to three people exchanging their ideas, is not a commonly used word. The term 'dialogue' is used for exchanges between two or more characters.

SCRIPTING CONVENTIONS EXAMPLE

Character name *A Not-So-Fabulous Wedding* **Play title**

The Characters **Character list**

Kate – late 20s
Mr Fabulous – Age unknown (potentially hidden from plastic surgery)
His Assistant – Extremely young or extremely old

Setting information **Setting** **Additional information about characters**

A bridal expo

Scene number **Scene One**

A young woman, carrying a green dress, enters and weaves through the crowd. She is obviously distressed.

Kate Excuse me.. Excuse me.. Oh – I'm sorry.. Excuse me..

She runs over to the nearest wedding dress and holds up the green dress she's been carrying. After comparing the two dresses, she bursts into tears and collapses to the ground crying.

From an entrance on the other side of the room, Mr Fabulous suddenly appears. He walks boldly over to the young woman, strikes what he believes is a dashing and commanding pose, and says (without looking at her) in a booming voice:

Mr Fabulous Another one!

She looks up at him both startled and amazed (without stopping her tears).

Kate Sorry?

Mr Fabulous I said – You are 'another one!'

Kate 'Another one - what??'

Mr Fabulous ignores her, but walks around her scrutinising her. As he does so, he talks to the audience about her and lifts up her arm, her hair, etc.

Mr Fabulous Hmm... Your carefully polished nails, that huge rock on your finger, that green garment you're clutching, the close proximity to one wedding gown in a display case, two very puffy eyes, the sprawling position on the ground and (of course), that endless sobbing. You are indeed – 'another one!'

Kate I am?

Mr Fabulous Yes. Another young woman in the middle of a crises over her impending nuptials --

Kate Nuptials?

Mr Fabulous *(aside to her)* -- wedding -- who can see no way to overcome the hurdles that face her and thus imagines she is doomed to a matrimony ceremony --

Kate Matrimony ceremony?

Mr Fabulous *(aside to her)* -- wedding -- that will be a great disaster!

Kate looks at him in awe and confusion. She sees him clearly for the first time.

Well? Am I right?

Kate Hey! You're... you're that wedding guy! On TV. In all the magazines. You're...!?! You're...!?!?!?

Mr Fabulous The man about town, town is all about the man, and the man is *(looking at one of the female audience members and winking at her)* a ladies man at that!

Kate Mr Fabulous!

Character name: indication for character to speak

Stage direction indicating an aside

Stage direction indicating dramatic action and expression

Character lines

Stage direction indicating gesture to the actor

Script by playwright Susana José

Activity 10.2: Identifying scripting conventions

1. Photocopy the first two pages of the first scene of a script that you're working on in class.
2. Identify as many scripting and layout conventions that the playwright has used by annotating the script in a similar way to the previous example.
3. Write a mini-report discussing how successful, or not, the playwright has been in using the scripting conventions. If they have not followed any of the conventions then make a list of changes outlining how you would recommend a better use of the conventions.

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

Chris Nolan: Voice coach and musical director

Trained as a classical singer, pianist and musical director, Chris has worked in Australia, Singapore and the United Kingdom. His professional performance credits include: *Oliver!* (Opera Hunter), *The Sound of Music* (GFO/SEL), *The Wind in the Willows*, *The Reluctant Dragon* (Singapore Lyric Opera). As a Musical Director: *Hairspray* (Boost), *Into the Woods* (Mtv.), *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris* (SingTheatre), *Scrooge!* (Singapore Repertory Theatre), *Half a Sixpence*, *The Secret Garden* (Mountview), *Mad About the Musicals* (UK Tour), *Honk!* (West End Live). As a pianist: *Urinetown*, *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (Boost), *Songs of Innocence & Experience* (LGMC), *What's it All About – the Songs of Burt Bacharach* (Pentastic Productions), *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (Michael Rose) and *The Concert They Never Gave* (Bill Kenwright).

Chris currently is the Head of Music and Singing at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts and a freelance Vocal Coach.



Chris' thoughts on interpreting musical text in musical theatre

Within a musical there are always one or more themes explored by the characters, either in a general or specific way. These themes are hugely diverse, and it takes a united effort from the writers, creative team and the actors to communicate these effectively to an audience. The writers must use musical conventions (time signatures, key signatures, phrasing, dynamics, chord structures, harmonies etc) to give an effective guide to production teams putting on these shows. Quite often the composers give these themes a musical equivalent, weaving two or more of these musical themes into the score, to signal to the performers what the subtext of the song is.

A musically aware actor can explore the score for these musical clues. These 'clues' can be used as a kind of blueprint for actors, hinting at how one might interpret songs, and also point to character traits and larger plot development. The most obvious example of a composer who uses musical themes to cleverly guide the show is Stephen Sondheim, quite rightly called the actor's composer. Every key change, every syncopated rhythm, every change in time signature means something – it is for the creative team and the performer to decide exactly what that something is.

As a musical director, I always tell my cast to ask the question – WHY? Why has the composer written a 2/4 bar there when the piece is in 4/4? Why do they change into a minor key halfway through the second verse? Why does that musical motif from the opening of the show appear in the accompaniment in that song in act 2? There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, but by asking them at all one becomes more informed making intelligent choices. Hopefully this will help the director and the performer alike to explore character, plot, and the larger themes within a musical, to create a satisfying theatrical experience for an audience.

THE ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

Working with an existing script will require different processes from actors, directors, designers, dramaturgs and anyone else involved in the production. Obviously actors will be looking from an acting perspective, designers from a design viewpoint and so on. Of everyone involved it is the director who takes the most holistic view in understanding and interpreting a script, but they are not the experts in design, nor in acting a particular role. So their focus and approach will be slightly different to each of the others involved. What is shared, however, by every person working on the production is that they understand how the playwright has used the dramatic elements to create their drama work. Once a practitioner understands this, they are ready to realise the script according to the skills and processes their theatrical specialisation demands.

Dramatic elements
Components essential to every drama work that create, communicate and increase dramatic meaning.

A dramatic element is an integral part of any and all drama works. They are the building blocks of drama and, as such, are needed to construct and shape a play, create the dramatic action and reveal dramatic meaning. The elements of drama important at this stage in studying drama are:

- role, character and relationships
- situation
- voice
- movement
- space and time
- language and texts
- symbol and metaphor
- mood and atmosphere
- dramatic tension.

For an actor to effectively act, a designer successfully design, a director to be truly holistic in their direction, they must first understand the dramatic elements, how they've been used by the playwright and in what way dramatic action and dramatic meaning are realised through them.

Role, character and relationships

A playwright will craft their play using the roles and characters as vocalising, physicalising, interacting and action-oriented beings. That is they will have the characters articulate words and/or sounds, move through space, make exchanges and connect with each other, and carry out actions and activities. The words that they speak, the lines recorded in a script, will be used to communicate as well as reveal insights about themselves, other people, their relationships and the inner world of the play. The movements they make, the stage directions recorded in a script, will do the same. Thus the script is the blueprint for the lines and actions of the characters. But it is during workshop and rehearsal that actors, directors and dramaturgs will add extra vocal (but *not* verbal), movement, behavioural and, if appropriate, internalisation layers to the script blueprint.

Role

Is a part in a theatrical piece that is either somewhat two-dimensional, highly stereotyped, represents an abstract concept, displays a specific human trait (such as an emotion, vocation, personality type or human quality) or functions to personalise a plot event (such as an act of nature).

Character**In general:**

A person or some other creature in a dramatic or literary work.

In representational drama:

A three-dimensional, complex character with an active inner-life.

In writing a presentational work a playwright has the choice to create simple, overt, two-dimensional roles or more complex, internally-layered three-dimensional characters. But in much contemporary drama it's not usually a case of either/or. That is, when creating a part a playwright doesn't necessarily choose for part A to be purely two-dimensional and part B to be extremely three-dimensional. The complexity of the roles and characters must serve the dramatic action, purpose and style of the play. For example the title character in Brecht's *Mother Courage* is not as psychologically-rich as Ibsen's Nora in *A Doll's House*, but that doesn't mean that Mother Courage is not in many ways three-dimensional. Her emotional, spiritual, psychological and intellectual complexities may not seem as layered as Nora's because the play's purpose, style and plot require the actor to *demonstrate* these things to the audience rather than to *feel* them intensely. Some roles will be down the two-dimensional end of the character-complexity continuum, and others may be nearer the centre. Similarly some characters will be down the three-dimensional end, whilst others less so.



A playwright writing a representational drama might also create some relatively simple roles for some of the minor characters. These could be those parts that don't have a lot to say or are not as integral to the plot as others. Most of the characters in realistic and naturalistic plays, whether simple or complex, are psychologically-driven, emotional, three-dimensional beings. This multi-dimensionality is one of the main character differences between representational and presentational drama works.

Three-dimensional character

A well-rounded, multi-layered part within a drama that has an active inner life and a detailed history.

For more information on roles and character see **Chapter 2: Acting**.

Hint

Just because a playwright has created a two-dimensional character in the script, doesn't mean that the actor and director can't take a three-dimensional approach to realising that role. In fact the maestros of creating realistic characters, Stanislavski, Meisner and Adler, would probably insist every actor, no matter how complex or simple their part on paper, create a believable, layered, internally-rich character in performance.

Stanislavski said, 'Remember: there are no small parts, only small actors'.

Relationships

As the roles and characters interact with each other during the course of the dramatic action they will form, develop, change or break relationships with each other. Three-dimensional characters, being more holistic, tend to be well suited to having rich, dynamic and often volatile relationships with each other. On the other hand two-dimensional roles may theoretically have complex relationships with each other, but these aren't necessarily apparent in the play itself. For example, two roles may have been married to each other for decades and are in the middle of a messy divorce when the play begins. The audience don't see their turbulent dynamics because their divorce is not relevant to the dramatic action which is focusing on other characters, events and situations.

Relationships

The connection (or absence of connection) between characters based on previous experience, association or awareness (or the lack thereof).

It's important to remember that not every relationship between two complex characters will in itself be complex. There are different types of relationships that exist between characters in a play, just as there are between people in real life:

- **Cooperative:** eg. positive, warm or caring
- **Adversarial:** eg. negative, cold or provoking
- **Neutral:** eg. unbiased, indifferent or detached
- **Non-existent:** eg. unknown or fictitious

The relationships between some roles and characters may not change over the course of the play. For others, because of the events they experience, how they're affected by people's behaviour and actions, or their own internal thought or emotional shifts, the dynamics of their relationships do change. Playwrights will include explicit and implicit information within the script that reflects or indicates changes to relationships, if they occur. The severity and impact of these changes (or stagnations) will also be suggested in the script.

Hint

In drama role can also refer to the job that a person does (eg. crew, design, front-of-house, etc). It might also be a description of their purpose in helping to realise the production (eg. keeping people on track, overseeing time management, making sure the team is motivated).

Internet exploration

Hear from an acting professional about script analysis at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbP2_Wnp7v4

Activity 12.3: Identifying relationships

1. Analyse the script and identify the connections, whether family, friend, colleague or acquaintance, between each and every role/character within a script you're working on in class. You also should note which characters have an absence of relationship.
2. Map these connections at the beginning of the play by drawing a family tree (you should include all the relationships on your family tree, not just those between relatives). Use solid lines and dotted lines to show the complexity of the connections.
3. Label the type of relationship that exists between the characters, either:
 - cooperative
 - adversarial
 - neutral
 - non-existent.
4. Write a report that answers the following questions:
 - What does this tree tell you about the relationships in the play?
 - How might this information help the actors, directors and designers in realising the play in production?
 - How does this tree change over the course of the play?

Situation

At the beginning of the script a playwright has created a set of circumstances for the characters in the play. Situations can be known or unknown by the characters. They can also be shared by all, or limited to some.

Sometimes the characters are aware of their predicaments and the predicaments of others. At other times they come to learn of these conditions as the dramatic action unfolds. For example in *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen, Nora's past loan and its dangerous implications is known only to her and Krogstad at the beginning of the play. Yet the promise of Torvald's (her husband's) new job is known by everyone. The balance between what is known and what is not known amongst the characters will have an impact on the dramatic tension of the play.

A set of circumstances can directly affect all the characters within a play. There's also likely to be other circumstances that have a high impact on only one or two of the characters. In these situations it could be the choices that these individuals make that then cause the impact of their own situation to be felt by all later in the play. Or they might make other choices that limit the implications of their situation to only a few characters. For example, once again in *A Doll's House* Act One opens on Christmas

Situation

The set of circumstances and states of being that characters or roles in a play experience, that typically change from the beginning to the end of the work.

Eve. The impending Christmas day will have an impact on every character in the play in some way, be it through gifts, holidays, church ceremonies or feasts. By contrast the social structure of Norway in the late 1800s when the play is set, doesn't allow for women of a certain class to be employed and working. Whilst this is something that is known by all the characters, it affects some more than others. It allows Mrs Linde to work as she's a widow, but prevents Nora from taking on employment because she's a married woman.

Of course at any point in the play the original situations can and do change. Changes can happen because of what the characters do, how they interact with each other or because of the occurrence of external events. For example, returning yet again to *A Doll's House*, Nora has been able to keep her past debt a secret from her family, including in the opening sections of the play. This changes when Krogstad arrives to speak with Torvald and later Nora herself. His threats change her situation and cause her to choose to react in a particular way that in turn changes more of the initial circumstances. This sequence of changes in situation affect Nora and, eventually, all the characters in the play.

Voice and movement

Clues about characters' voice and movement will be provided in the script. A playwright may indicate explicitly that a character moves or vocalises in a particular way. For example, in *A Not-So-Fabulous Wedding* by Susana José there are many voice and movement suggestions from the playwright, such as;

'She **runs** over to the nearest wedding dress'

He '**strikes** what he believes is a **dashing and commanding pose**'

'Well... (**Changing his tone**) Tell me about your wedding problems.'

Playwrights are likely to include such information through three methods in their scripts:

Voice

The utilisation of the vocalisation system and vocal techniques to audibly express meaning, create role or character, and have an impact on the other elements of drama.

Movement

The utilisation of the body to physically express meaning or take action, create role or character, and have an impact on the other elements of drama.

Character list

As playwrights already include information about the characters at the beginning of the script in the character lists, they occasionally might incorporate voice and movement details there. If they do, such summaries are typically extremely brief and thus this, out of the three possibilities, is the least likely place an actor will find such information.

Stage directions

At the beginning of a scene or episode, as well as throughout the script, playwrights will offer voice and movement suggestions in the stage directions.

Character lines

The characters themselves can reveal a lot about their own or others' voice and movement by the comments they make. Sometimes an actor is lucky enough to have their, or another, character describe the way they talk or how they physicalise.

For more information about voice, see **Chapter 1: Acting Fundamentals**.

Hint

Playwrights writing before the turn of the 20th century did not usually include voice and movement, or in fact any type of suggestions to actors in the stage directions other than asides, entrances and exits. (See later in this chapter for more information about asides.) Be wary of stage directions that are included in plays pre- 1900. They may have been added in by the script editor or publisher, rather than the playwright themselves.

Time and space

A playwright usually locates the inner world of the play at a point in time and a specific physical area. They might opt to set the play at a certain time, such as *on the morning of the 24th December 1974* or *on the day Queen Elizabeth I was born*. They might be ambiguous, such as setting the play *some time ago* or *in the future*, or they could generalise, such as *in the 1950s* or *later this century, one Spring day* or *in the dead of night*. The playwright might want the play to be a reflection of the latest audience by setting it *now* or *today*, or even *last week* or *tomorrow*.

The space the playwright chooses for their setting might be geographical, such as a particular country, city, suburb or village. Or it might be a place, such as a *living room*, *boat*, *hotel* or *river-bank*. Of course, a playwright might locate the play both in a particular geography *and* place. They could generalise, such as setting the play *in the countryside* or *downtown*, or they might be specific, such as *an expansive wheat field 50km from the nearest West Australian one-pub town* or *a narrow dead-end alley two blocks from New York Hospital in Queens*.

The inner world of a play reflects the space and time it's located in. To what level the reflection is historically accurate depends on the style of the piece, as well as the purpose behind it. If the play is naturalistic then every detail and nuance of the inner world of the play will almost certainly be accurate, including how the characters, their relationships, interactions and situation reflect the real world. If the work is realistic, then it's likely these details will imitate to some degree the real world. If, however, the play is presentational the level to which it's setting accurately suggests the real world will vary.

Time

The year, month, date, day and hour of the inner world of the play. It includes, whether actual or imagined, the environmental physical and contextual factors of that period.

Space

The geographical place, such as the room, building, suburb, town, city, state and country of the inner world of the play. It reflects, whether actual or imagined, the environmental physical and contextual factors of that place.

For example Brecht and Shakespeare often set their plays in the past and in geographical locations that were either mythical or remote from the audience who would watch them. Yet the themes, purpose and style of these plays reflected the playwright's own world. That is, they reflected where the playwrights were writing the play from and when they were writing their works. Sometimes playwrights choose a setting unknown to the audience in order to better explore current social and political issues known to them by providing distance and objective perspective.

From a functional level, although in reality people indigenous to these past or mythical settings speak in different languages with seemingly strange rhythms, such playwrights use their own everyday speech patterns in the script. Perhaps this is to make sure the local audience members who will watch the play can easily understand the dialogue. For example Georges Bizet, Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy wrote one of the world's most famous operas *Carmen*. Despite the opera being set in Spain, using Spanish performance conventions such as flamenco dance and reflecting Spanish culture, the trio wrote the opera in their own native French language. The drama work has been revered by the French, and indeed opera lovers across the world, ever since and is considered a quintessentially *French* art-work.

Hint

The opera *Carmen* is a dramatic story-telling of the original novella by Prosper Mérimée.

Another reason a playwright might write with the rhythmic patterns of their own language is because, as a general rule, human beings don't notice their own accent. For example, when two Australians talk together they don't notice their Australian accent, nor their Australian way of using grammar. Yet if an American is listening to the conversation, they most certainly would notice these things. So if a playwright knows it's highly likely that it will be a local audience who will hear their play, they might choose to use local language patterns. This is because the audience is less likely to aurally notice any difference, even though they are setting their play in another time and space.

Hint

The playwright's knowledge about a particular time and space will also have an impact on how accurate they can be in recreating it in their script.

Multiple spaces

In some drama works the playwright will change locations from scene to scene and episode to episode. The amount of new scene locations is likely to be more in a presentational drama work than in a representational one. This is because the latter strives to offer the audience a slice of life on stage. The first issue is that if the locations keep changing, it will be difficult to continually imitate each new reality on stage. The stage space and backstage storage areas are limited and thus it's difficult for a scenographer to reserve, change and install many sets that are true to life. The second reason multiple settings (with their multiple scene changes) aren't ideally suited to representational

Suspension of disbelief

The acceptance of something unreal being real for a period of time.

Non-linear time

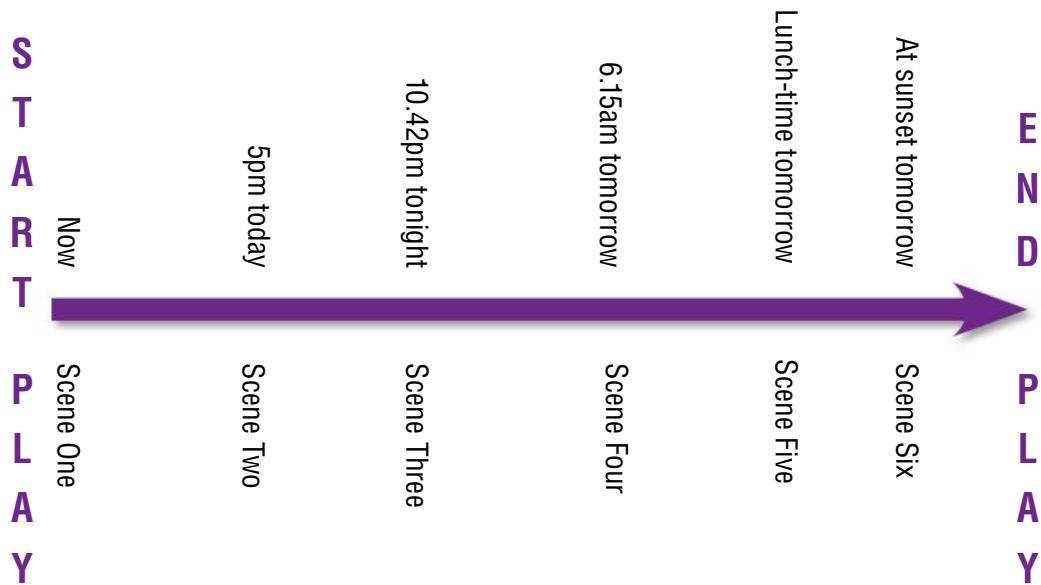
Time that doesn't move forward in a logical flow.

drama is because the audience is likely to notice the changes of setting. Such changes take time and, in that time, crew are likely to be seen on stage physically moving the set pieces, thus interrupting the audience's suspension of disbelief. In presentational drama, where the audience are often encouraged to remember they are indeed watching an artistic performance, multiple place setting and locations are frequently used by playwrights.

Time flow

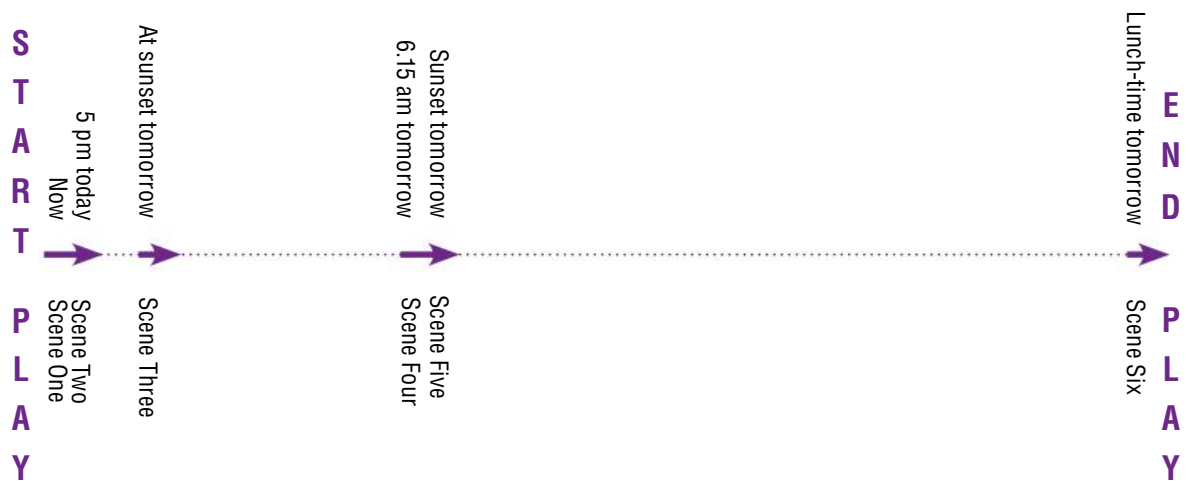
When using time in a play, a playwright has several options: Time can move forward in a regular, linear way or it can move non-realistically in a non-linear fashion. With linear time, there's a natural forward-moving flow that starts at the beginning and ends at the end. Time appears to be like a line:

Linear time
Time that moves forward in a logical flow.



Representational drama frequently uses linear time as the dramatic action unfolds.

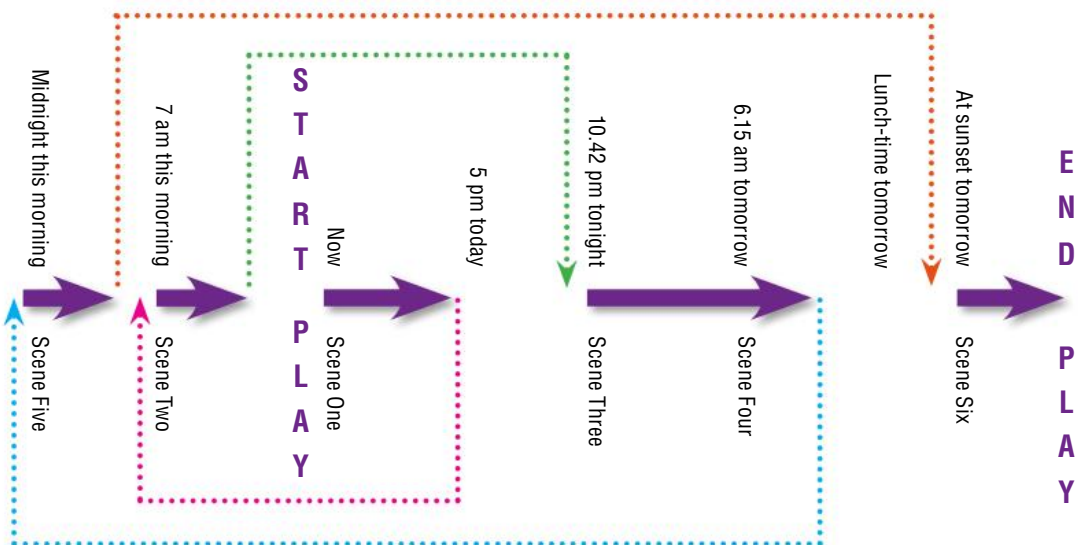
Leaps of time



Some representational drama may also skip periods of time, whilst usually remaining forward-moving. The leaps of time are often in-between scenes or acts. Whereas presentational drama often jumps forward in time. These might be between scenes or episodes, or they can even be within the one section. In either style events, actions and character interchanges that occur during a time-leap, are not scripted and therefore not seen by the audience. They are, however, usually alluded to in some way during the successive scene and they do have an impact on the situation the characters find themselves in at the beginning of the new section.

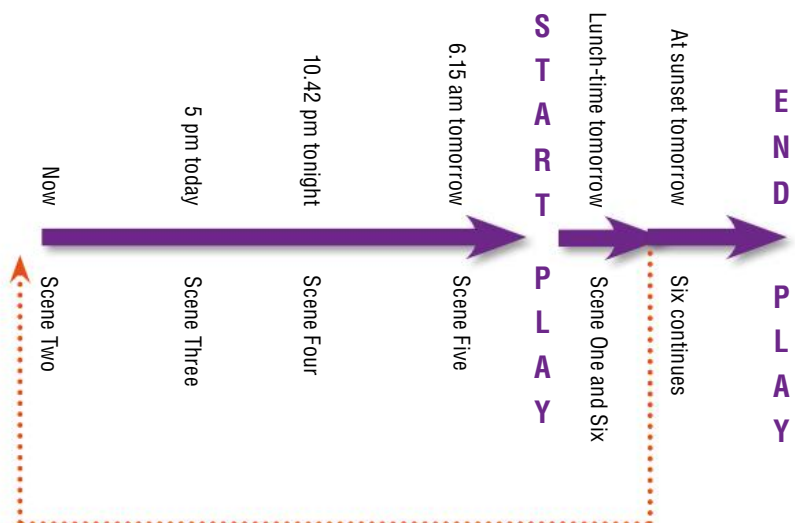
Flashback

In presentational works (and occasionally in heightened realism), playwrights might skip back in time to the past. In these scripts, the action will start in one particular time period and then transition to an earlier point in time. The leap to the past is often temporary with the dramatic action returning back to the point before the flashback at a later stage in the play.



Cyclical

This type of time moves in a circular fashion and often combines leaps of time and flashback. Playwrights might begin their script at one point in time, then leap back in time. The play will then slowly progress forward through time, following regular linear time, to end back at, or even continue past, the start point of the first scene.



Symbol and metaphor

When writing scripts playwrights include symbolic and metaphorical references. A symbol is an item, sound or word that suggests or references something other than itself. A metaphor is when one item, sound or word literally *is*, or is described as, another. The inclusion of symbolic and metaphoric references and objects allows playwrights to explore the themes of a play, reflect values and beliefs, and add layers of meaning to a script.

In a script symbols and metaphors are visual and aural references that the audience, and sometimes the roles and characters themselves, are able to observe within the inner world of the play. They could be objects or parts of objects that are seen, or they could be sounds or language that is heard. Metaphor is often written into the dialogue that the characters speak.

For example in *The Andrian* by Ancient Roman playwright Terence, there is much use of metaphorical language, such as when Pamphilus says:

‘To lose her
Is losing life.’

Symbol

An object, person, activity or event that represents something else.

Metaphor

The naming of or indication that one object, person, activity or event is another.

Hint

Be careful not to confuse a metaphor with a simile. A metaphor is when one thing is another. A simile is when one thing is likened to another. For example, in *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare, Shylock uses simile when he talks about Antonio, whom he does not like:

‘How like a fawning publican he looks!’

Presentational drama may include tangible metaphors, such as having an actor take on a role in an adult drama that is non-human in order to suggest human beings behave in the same way that the non-human does. This could be the role of an animal, animated object, personified virtue and so on. Playwrights often include symbolic items or sounds in the setting information, staging notes or stage directions. These will be realised in the props or set design of the scenography, or the costume, sound or lighting design. The characters may use these symbolic objects or they may be more implicit as a part of the overall design. In the same way that playwrights can be metaphorical with language, the characters can also use certain vocabulary or talk about things in a highly symbolic way.

In *Hamlet, Prince Of Denmark* by William Shakespeare, Hamlet’s girlfriend Ophelia says:

‘There’s a daisy. I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died.’

Ophelia’s daisy is a symbolic prop. Her language is also symbolic with her verbal reference to both daisies and violets. Daisies are associated with youth and innocence, whilst violets with delicate love and modesty.

By giving away daisies, mentioning the two flowers and their link to the death of her father, it can be seen that Ophelia is symbolically suggesting the loss of her own innocence, or perhaps that she is symbolically foreshadowing the suicidal adult behaviour that she will soon undertake.

How overt a symbol or metaphor is, will depend both on the way the playwright writes it into the script initially, as well as on what the creative team and actors do with it in performance. Some styles may demand more subtlety than others. Representational drama often, but not always, is more understated with its use of symbol and metaphor than presentational drama. After all, apart from the symbols that in real life people consciously embrace (such as the display of a fashion logo on a shirt or the wearing of a religious symbol on a neck chain), many other symbols and metaphors that people use or experience on a regular basis go unnoticed. Therefore it's logical that they also should be overlooked in a realistic or naturalistic play. It's only during the climatic point or the falling action section, or even post-performance in retrospect, that symbols that had been there unnoticed throughout the play, are suddenly glaringly recognisable.

Hint

Not all symbols in representational drama are subtle or go easily unnoticed. For example the symbolic dolls collected by Olive and Nancy in the naturalistic Australian piece *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* by Ray Lawler are so explicit that they even form part of the play's title.

Internet exploration

Hear from the National Theatre of England about symbol and metaphor in scripts at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzzZ3Wp2TEY

Mood and atmosphere

Although mood and atmosphere may be less tangible than some of the other dramatic elements, it doesn't mean they're any less important. In fact one could argue they are more important because they're so difficult to observe and measure.

Mood refers to the state of mind of each of the characters and roles. Throughout the play characters will be experiencing various feelings, instincts and attitudes, whether they are consciously aware of them or not. This internal life then affects the overall atmosphere of the play.

A play's atmosphere is the pervading tone of the theatrical environment. It is collectively influenced by the various moods of each of the characters, as well as the other elements of drama. An audience too will be affected by the permeating atmosphere of the inner world of the play. In many cases, if not all to some degree, the audience will actually also contribute to the atmosphere of the production through their feelings about and reactions to the dramatic action. In those presentational drama styles that require interactivity between the roles on stage and the audience in the auditorium, there's likely to be a higher influence from them upon the atmosphere.

Mood

The emotional states and attitudes of the characters and roles during performance as the dramatic action unfolds.

Atmosphere

The impact and interaction of the performance mood on the audience.




Whether the *right* atmosphere is being created can be challenging for directors and designers. Often it's a felt-sense association with creating, interpreting and experiencing atmosphere and thus it's difficult to notice exactly when, where and why it might have gone off track. This means there needs to be a lot of trial and error, particularly in the acting, lighting and sound areas, to address such a challenge.

Language and text

Playwrights will use language in a variety of ways to create their scripts. Most of what they write are original lines, stage directions and so on. These words are usually referred to as the script's language. Sometimes a playwright might include an article, poem or song that's been written by someone else. Whilst part of the script, these texts are also part of a work outside of the play. Novels, short-stories, film scripts, myths, fables and fair-tales that have been converted to a play or used to inspire the creation of a drama work are also referred to as **text**.

The two basic forms of language that most playwrights use to create drama works are **prose** and **verse**. Prose follows the patterns of everyday, natural speech and is therefore popular in representational drama styles. By contrast verse is more rhythmic in its flow, almost creating a pulse within the lines because of its use of combining stressed and unstressed syllables. Because of this, verse is typically suited to presentational drama styles, such as Ancient Roman drama, Elizabethan drama and theatre with music. The first two styles almost always use verse and are relatively strict with the metre, one that alternates stressed and unstressed feet (syllables). Various notation symbols can be used when breaking down a line of verse. Theatre with music uses verse for much of its sung sections, particularly the emotional or reflective arias, although the alternation of stressed and unstressed sounds is not always as strict as in the other styles.

In understanding the way rhythmic verse works, it's important to identify the stressed and non-stressed sounds. A stressed together with a non-stressed sound make up an iamb, sometimes called a foot. Symbols can be written onto a script, above and between the words, to indicate the type of sound:

 = unstressed
 = stressed
 = iamb division

Text

One of the elements of drama: Written material, other than the script, that add meaning to the dramatic work.

Verse

Writing arranged with metered rhythm.

Prose

Language in its ordinary form without metre.

Aria

A melodious, often emotional, song written typically for one to four persons in an opera or classically-based musical theatre work.

Metre

The flow of poetry and verse by alternating stressed and unstressed syllables.

Iamb

A unit of language in poetry or dramatic verse consisting of an unstressed and a stressed consonant.

For example, one of Lysander's lines from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare can be rhythmically mapped like this:

The course | of true | love ne- | -ver did | run smooth |

When Shakespeare wrote in verse in his plays he wrote almost always in blank verse. Blank verse has a series of five feet in a line, a rhythm called iambic pentameter. This relatively long length of each line (ten syllables) is said to imitate the long length of sentences used by the Elizabethans in everyday speech at the time.

In the verse sections of some historical styles of drama, such as the musical theatre of the first half of last century, rhyme may be used by the lyricist. Rhyme is made when each last word of two lines sound similar. This is usually achieved by choosing different words that have at least the same final vowel and consonant sounds.

Shakespeare, and the other Elizabethan poets, did not necessarily write every section of their scripts in verse. They also used prose. They might choose to use prose to make the language seem more realistic. For example, a character of the lower classes such as a servant or someone out of work such as a vagabond is likely to speak in prose. They might use prose because the topic of conversation is much less serious than those of other sections, or because the topic is more base and earthy; for example, when characters are joking or making fun of one another, or when a clown character is providing comic relief. These playwrights also tended to use prose to indicate some great mental change of a character, such as when a character becomes psychologically unstable or when they see visions that no-one else can see.

Blank verse

Non-rhyming poetic text written in iambic pentameter.

Rhyme

Where the sound of one word corresponds to the sound of another.

Lyricist

An artist who writes the words for a song.

Activity 10.4: Comparing language

1. Consider two speeches by Ophelia from Shakespeare's play *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*.

In the first scene, in Act II, Ophelia is speaking to her father Polonius about her boyfriend Hamlet. In the second scene, in Act IV, Ophelia is talking to members of the royal court. This scene takes place after Hamlet has falsely accused her of being unfaithful and rejected her, and after Hamlet has killed her father thinking he was someone else.

2. After reading the script excerpts and studying the language, write a report that outlines why Shakespeare chose to change from verse to prose for Ophelia. What does each type of language tell you about:
 - the character
 - her relationship with others
 - the topic of conversation
 - the dramatic action, meaning, tension and so on.

You should give multiple sets of comparative quotes to justify each your points.

**Act 2, Scene I**

Ophelia My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
 Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbrac'd,
 No hat upon his head, his stockings foul'd,
 Ungart'ed, and down-gyved to his ankle;
 Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
 And with a look so piteous in purport
 As if he had been loosed out of hell
 To speak of horrors - he comes before me. ...
 ...He took me by the wrist and held me hard;
 Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
 And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
 He falls to such perusal of my face
 As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so.
 At last, a little shaking of mine arm,
 And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
 He rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound
 As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
 And end his being. That done, he lets me go,
 And with his head over his shoulder turn'd
 He seem'd to find his way without his eyes,
 For out o' doors he went without their help
 And to the last bended their light on me.

Hint

Elizabethan playwrights were often called poets because they used verse so frequently in writing their scripts. Outside of writing playscripts for the playhouses, they usually did also write poetry.

Act IV, Scene V

Ophelia I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I cannot
 choose but weep, to think they should lay him i' the cold ground. My brother shall
 know of it: and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach! Good
 night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night. ...
 ... [To King.] There's fennel for you, and columbines. [To Queen.] There's rue for
 you; and here's some for me: we may call it herb of grace a' Sundays. You may
 wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy. I would give you some violets,
 but they withered all when my father died. They say he made a good end.

Direct address

Sometimes a character will speak not to other characters on stage, but will talk instead with the audience. This convention is called direct address because the character, or the actor playing the character, addresses the audience and speaks specifically to them. Narrators, MCs and other informative presentational roles will make extensive use of direct address. Some styles also use direct address by the regular in-action characters, such as in Brecht's works.

Direct address

Where a character turns away from the dramatic action towards the audience in order to speak specifically to them.

Narration

One type of direct address that has been used for centuries in presentational drama is narration. This is when a role gives the audience a verbal description of the events, and/or the behaviour, thoughts and feelings of various characters in the play. They can give this narration as the events happen, interspersing it with the action. Or they might share the information with the audience at the beginning of a scene or episode.

Most usually narrators do not take part in the dramatic action, but rather describe or comment on it.

Narration

Giving an oral or written account of a series of related and usually sequential events.

Aside

When a playwright wants to indicate to the actor that a particular line is meant to be said to the audience and not be heard by the other characters, they will add in a stage direction such as:

Aside

or

To the audience

Aside

Where a character uses direct address to speak to the audience and is unheard by the other characters or roles.

An aside is a type of direct address where the speech uttered by the character is apparently unheard by anyone else who is on stage at that time. Asides can vary in length, anything from one line to a full monologue.

Reported speech

In some presentational styles such as, once again, Brecht's epic theatre, some of the script might be written in reported speech. This is when a role or character states their own involvement in the action or line as they say it. This can occur immediately before, during or sometimes after the line or action. For example:

- A character might describe an action they're about to do in the third person:
'She sits' or 'Mae sits'
- A character could describe oneself as the subject, in the third person, during their speech:
'She said, 'I don't like it' or 'Mae said, "I don't like it"'
- A character might describe inner emotions that contradict with their speech (or movement):
'I was very angry when he would not talk with me about politics. "I love that you don't bring your work home."'

One character might also describe someone else's emotions that contradict with what they say or do.

Reported speech

A device to comment on action, thoughts and feelings where the speaker talks about oneself using third person language.

Activity 10.5: Investigating an aside

1. Consider this monologue said in its entirety as an aside by Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare.
2. Write a summary answering the following questions about the use of the Aside:
 - Why might Shylock want to share this information with the audience?
 - Why might Shylock not want any of the other characters to hear his speech?
 - What might his speech and his aside action reveal about his character?
 - How might Shylock have been harmed in the past to prompt him to behave this way now?

SHYLOCK [Aside]

How like a fawning publican he looks!
 I hate him for he is a Christian,
 But more for that in low simplicity
 He lends out money gratis and brings down
 The rate of usance here with us in Venice.
 If I can catch him once upon the hip,
 I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
 He hates our sacred nation, and he rails,
 Even there where merchants most do congregate,
 On me, my bargains and my well-won thrift,
 Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe,
 If I forgive him!

Monologue and dialogue

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, whether verse or prose, the characters and roles in every play will speak either in conversation together through dialogue or in longer sections of uninterrupted speech called monologues. Typically dialogues, exchanges of between two or more characters, are more active and help to move the dramatic action forward. By contrast monologues don't usually progress the plot of the play, but instead allow a particular idea or perspective to be explored, or an insight to be discovered.

Monologues can be highly reflective, where one character works through their own thoughts about a particular problem or event in order to gain clarity about them. Alternatively a monologue might be highly emotive, where a character verbalises the positive or negative feelings that they're experiencing, or shares information about how something or someone is affecting them psychologically, emotionally or even spiritually. A third type of monologue exists which is expositional in that the character will share a story or describe a particular sequence of events. A last type of monologue is where the speaker reveals something hitherto unknown by the other characters or shares a secret that they have been guarding for some time.

Plot

A series of connected events within a dramatic or literary work.

Activity 10.6: Comparing language

1. Compare the monologues of two characters from two plays by playwrights writing at different times in different locations.
2. Write a summary that compares:
 - each type of monologue
 - what the language reveals about each character
 - how the language reflects each time/space of the playwright
 - anything else that's appropriate about the language.

***The Andrian*, A comedy by Terence**

A Roman Republic citizen of North African descent, writing during 2nd century B.C.

Pamphilus Oh all ye pow'rs of heav'n and earth, what's wrong
 If this is not so?—If he was determin'd
 That I to-day should marry, should I not
 Have had some previous notice?—ought not he
 To have inform'd me of it long ago?

Mysis Alas! what's this I hear?

Pamphilus And Chremes too,
 Who had refus'd to trust me with his daughter,
 Changes his mind, because I change not mine.
 Can he then be so obstinately bent
 To tear me from Glycerium? To lose her
 Is losing life.—Was ever man so cross'd,
 So curs'd as I?—Oh pow'rs of heav'n and earth!
 Can I by no means fly from this alliance
 With Chremes' family?—so oft contemn'd
 And held in scorn!—all done, concluded all!—
 Rejected, then recall'd:—and why?—unless,
 For so I must suspect, they breed some monster,
 Whom as they can obtrude on no one else,
 They bring to me.

***A Midsummer Night's Dream*, A comedy by William Shakespeare**

**An English citizen born in Stratford-Upon-Avon, writing during the late 16th century
 (approximately 1700 years after Terence)**

Lysander I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he,
 As well possess'd; my love is more than his;
 My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,
 If not with vantage, as Demetrius's;
 And, which is more than all these boasts can be,
 I am belov'd of beauteous Hermia:
 Why should not I then prosecute my right?
 Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
 Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
 And won her soul; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
 Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
 Upon this spotted and inconstant man.

Hint

Don't forget that the language of a script is meant to be spoken aloud; it's meant to be said to and heard by characters and roles. The audience too, will not see the words, they will hear them. So when you're exploring a play's language, even if you're working on the script by yourself, you will uncover a great deal if you read it aloud. The sentences will flow differently, you'll be more likely to use the punctuation and pause more effectively, and you'll probably change the words you emphasise when you silent-read the script. All of which will result in the meaning of the language working differently.

Internet exploration

Find out more about language, text and the dramatic elements at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrpAHAI_C5k&list=PLYHUtR7eZQ_SaAnWfsP3ucihU3TiBsObj

Dramatic tension

Having dramatic tension is integral to the success of any play. Without tension, without changes in character dynamics, conflicting relationships, difficult challenges to overcome and the like, one could argue there would be little reason for audience members to watch the play. People in everyday life react positively or negatively, or sometimes both, to the actions of others and to events that occur. Characters are no different, whether in representational or presentational drama. How the characters react and what the playwright focuses on will differ from one style to another.

Dramatic tension

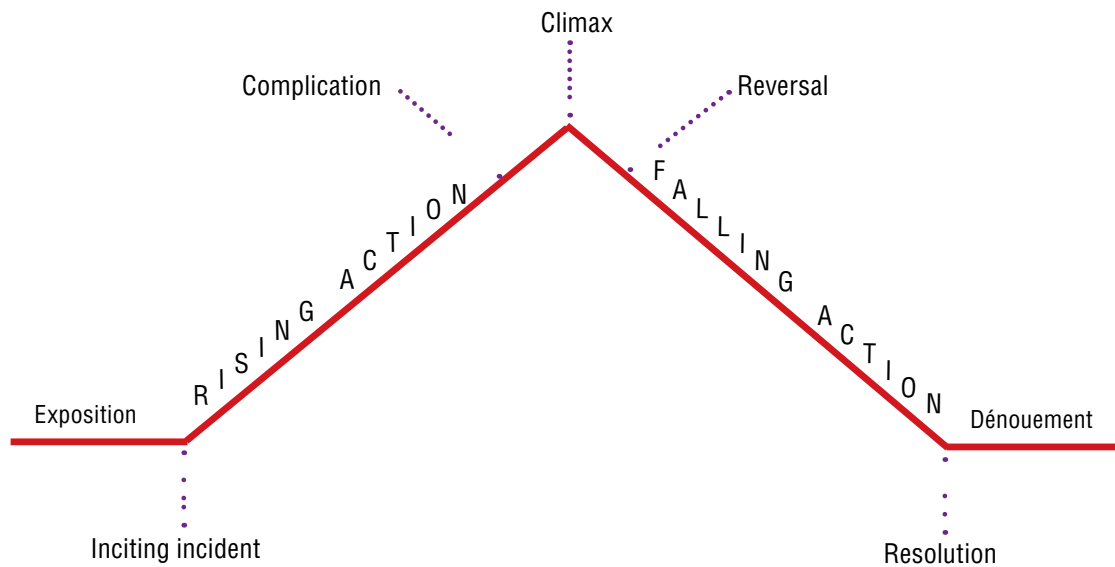
The emotional or psychological pressure that builds during performance as the dramatic action unfolds.

In works of drama there is an added element to dramatic tension. Not only will the characters experience the implications of tension as the dramatic action unfolds, but so will the audience. In fact, often the audience can experience the tension in larger amounts or sooner than the characters do. This is because by seeing the whole play audiences are privy to the actions, behaviours and interchanges of multiple characters and events, but the characters themselves usually get to experience the play only from their own perspective. This gives the audience an additional feeling of suspense that further heightens the tension within the inner world of the play.

Gustav Freytag

In the 19th century German novelist Gustav Freytag observed that there were plot patterns common to many literary works, especially novels and short stories. These patterns shared common tension and plot characteristics. He developed a pyramid that captured this on a graph-like diagram similar to the one presented on the following page.

This structure works with five main stages, common in most literature of the time:



Exposition

This first section sets the scene by providing information about the setting, characters, their relationships and the situations they find themselves in. At the end of the exposition some kind of incident will occur, either because of the actions of one of the characters, the actions of an unseen character or an event beyond their control.

Rising action

Due to an inciting incident the tension begins to rise and other occurrences are triggered. The characters will experience at least one complication during the rising action. There will be a series of connected actions, reactions, decisions, encounters and events that take place.

Climax

This series leads to the greatest point of tension in the literary work. It could be an extremely positive or negative event.

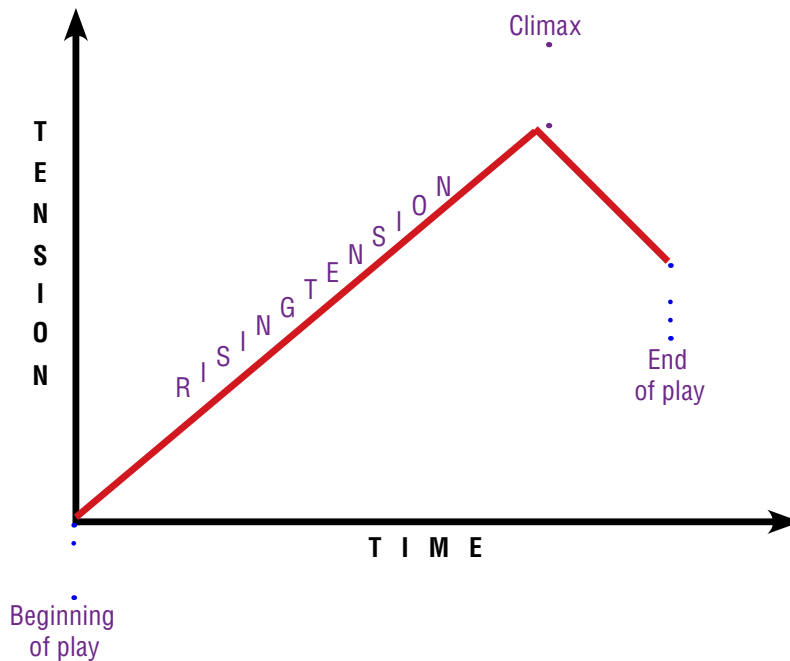
Falling action

After the highest point of tension in the climax many things will change. With these changes there will be some kind of reversal of the complication for at least some of the characters. They will work through this reversal during the falling action culminating in the resolution when they, or others on their behalf, will solve the main problem or conflict, or understand the implications of it.

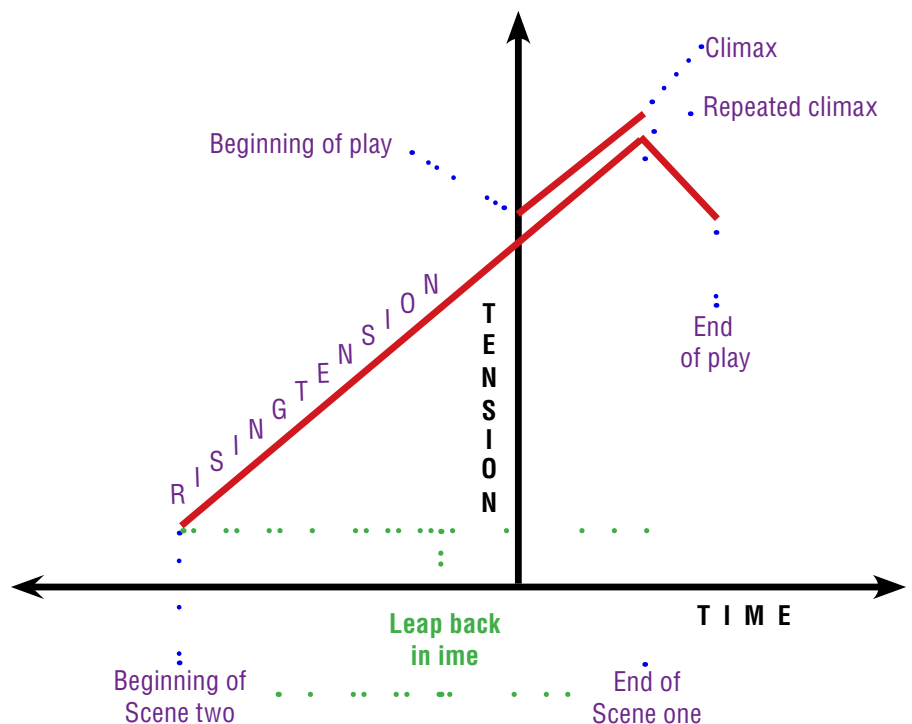
Dénouement

This final section of a work is when any loose ends associated with the problem are tied up, unanswered questions are answered and the characters affected by the problem either accept or reject the implications.

Many dramatic works do follow the Freytag's structural pyramid. This can be seen in a lot of plays from those of Ancient Greece through to the 20th Century, particularly those that have five acts. The five acts of an Elizabethan tragedy, for example, can be overlaid with Freytag's five pyramid stages. Often a contemporary play, differing to a novel, either compresses the first and second sections, or limits them to a mini-exposition at the beginning. Similarly a playwright today doesn't always offer the audience extended falling action and dénouement sections, opting to condense these into one section, leaving the audience with a sense of action right through to the last moment. Thus the narrative of many plays over the past hundred years may look more like this:



If a playwright is not using linear time, but rather a non-realistic use of time graphing, the tension becomes more complicated. For example, where there is a cyclical use of time with the play starting at the end point, jumping back in time for scene two, and then progressing forward across linear time to arrive by the end of the play back at the starting point, tension may be inverted.



Activity 10.7: Dramatic tension analysis

1. Consider a play you're studying in class at the moment. Identify the way time and dramatic tension change in the play.
2. Plot the changes in time and tension on a graph (where tension = X and time = Y).
3. Indicate where the scenes change on your graph.
4. Also indicate the major complications that take place.
5. Write a report outlining the way the playwright has kept with (or not kept with) Freytag's pyramid. You should consider:
 - exposition
 - rising action (including the complications)
 - climax
 - falling action (including any reversals)
 - resolution
 - dénouement.

Don't forget to give quotes from the script to support your analysis.

Internet exploration

Find out more about dramatic tension and a five act play at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrSjZSjKnKo

On the following pages are the second and third pages from the farce *A Not-So-Fabulous Wedding* (these follow on from the first script page on page 274). The script has been analysed to consider how the playwright might be using the dramatic elements to create their script. The annotations listed are by no means exhaustive and should be considered a starting point for analysis.

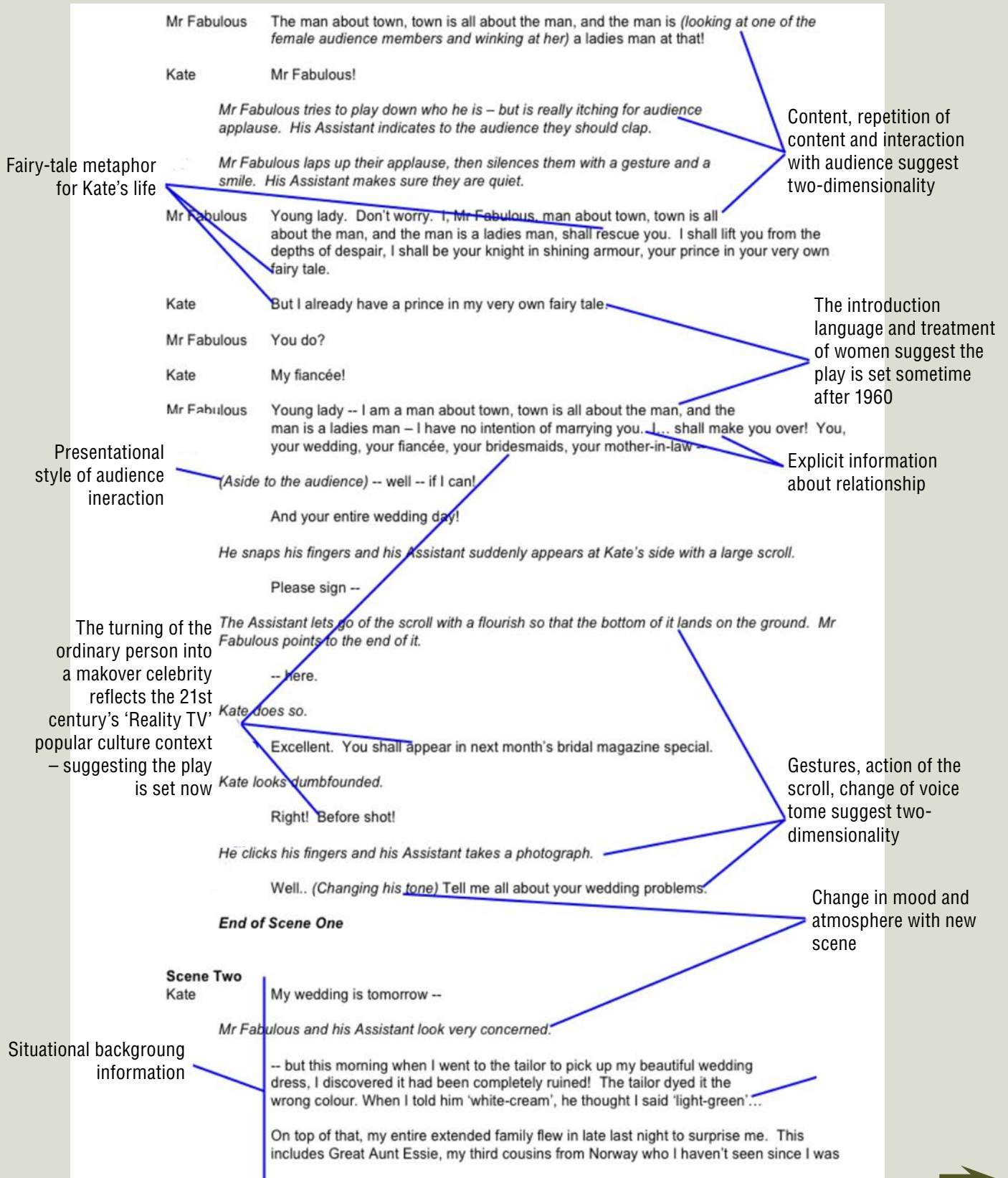
Farce

A comic form of drama involving parody, mockery or ridicule.

Activity 10.8: Script analysis

1. Read the script of the short play *This is Heaven* by Paul Tolton on pages 299-302.
2. Write a report discussing how Paul has used each of the dramatic elements in his play. You should find two examples for each dramatic element. Be sure to give quotes as examples of each of your observations.

ACT 10.7

A Not-So-Fabulous Wedding
by Susana José

ACT 10.7



A Not-So-Fabulous Wedding
by Susana José (continued...)

Stating dress colour issue, then adding a list of extra troubles, a comparison of 70 and 270 and finally sobbing suggest a rise in tension

Voice and movement suggestions

Using monologue

Switching language style to verse and quoting another text

Wide range of vocabulary suggest character has fashion knowledge

Audience involvement suits presentational style

Voice suggests actors that are exaggerated in style

Mood and character information

two years old, and even my old French teacher from Sydney who fancied a trip to Perth and needed a good excuse to come...
But none of whom were even invited to the wedding in the first place! So instead of having seventy guests at my wedding tomorrow, we now have two hundred and seventy!
And a green dress!

She starts to cry again.

Mr Fabulous (*Soothingly, with great artistic embellishment*) There is a famous old saying:
Married in Green you will not long be seen
Married in Blue your lover is true
Married in Pink your fortunes will sink
Married in Red you'll wish you were dead
Married in Yellow ashamed of the fellow
Married in Brown you'll live out of town
Married in Grey you'll live far away
Married in Black you'll wish you were back
But married in White you have chosen right

Kate But I did choose white. It's not my fault the tailor messed it up.

Mr Fabulous Never fear -- I, Mr Fabulous, man about town, town is all about the man, and the man is a ladies man, shall make you a new dress.

He clicks his fingers again and the Assistant hands him a tape measure. He measures her.

Do you want silk or satin? Organza or chiffon?

Kate I.. don't know.

Mr Fabulous Do you want printed or pleated? Glass or pearl beads?

Kate I.. I don't know.

Mr Fabulous Would you try something different like spray paint? Silicon? Or real silver thread?

Kate just shrugs.

(*Outraged*) Do you know what any of these things are?

She shakes her head.

He clicks his fingers again, and the Assistant appears at his side with several wedding dresses -- Mr Fabulous covers Kate's eye. He indicates to the Assistant to get three audience members to each hold up a dress. Then she goes back to her spot at the side.

Let's see what you think of these...

Mr Fabulous, with great flourish, takes his hands away from Kate's eyes.

What do you think?

Kate They're beautiful dresses, but...

Mr Fabulous But what?

Kate But.. I.. I don't know what I want!

Mr Fabulous I can see... that..

He looks pained. So pained that his Assistant comes over to him, whom he indicates to go away.

... a lot of help is needed. An excessive amount! A grossly exceedingly large amount!!

ACT 10.8

This is Heaven

The set is two chairs, comfortable ones. Sitting on the chairs are an elderly couple holding hands. They are William and Loretta.

The lights come up with them seated. The lights come up fast.

William: Can they hear me?
 Loretta: You're not nervous, are you?
 William: No. I just want to make sure they can hear me. Me? Nervous?
 Loretta: Just start.
 William: Where from?
 Loretta: I'll start.
 William: No, I'll start.
 Loretta: Fine darling. You start.
 William: Where from?

Loretta smiles

We first met... Why would you think I was nervous?
 Loretta: Of course you are not nervous. Can you please start now?
 William: We first met in 1953...
 Loretta: You're really starting there?
 William: That was the start. (Pause) We first met in 1953 and it was love at first sight.
 Loretta: It was not.
 William: We met on a boat called the Good Ship...
 Loretta: If you're not going to be serious...
 William: I am being serious.
 Loretta: We met in 1953 and a church dance and I called you a young curmudgeon and tried to slap you.
 William: But I ducked.
 Loretta: You ducked and we got married three months later.
 William: Am I telling this story or you?
 Loretta: I will if you're just going to be silly.
 William: Alright, I'll be serious. (Pause) We met on a Ferris wheel.
 Loretta: William!
 William: And we married three months later.
 Loretta: Thank you.
 William: She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. A real cutie.
 Loretta: Thank you.
 William: And she called me a young curmudgeon.
 Loretta: You were.
 William: So why did you marry me?

Loretta smiles. Pause.

Loretta: Why did you marry me?

ACT 10.8

William: Because you called me a young curmudgeon. We got married and moved to a small castle where I became King of the...

Loretta: We moved into a small flat on the bottom floor of a dank old building.

William: Why did we move into that flat?

Loretta: It was all we could afford.

William: Right. Right. They were tough years

Loretta: We struggled through.

William: You made jam.

Loretta: I made jam.

William: Loved that jam.

Loretta: You worked as a postman.

William: Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these...

Loretta: That's the American version.

William: It doesn't apply anywhere else?

Loretta: Oh I don't know.

William: We'll just say it does then.

Loretta: Fine.

William: Not much happened during those first years.

Loretta: Are you avoiding something?

William: I am just trying to get it in the right order.

Loretta: Then what was the next big thing that happened.

William: The war?

Loretta: What war? Oh stop being silly you old curmudgeon.

William: There it is again.

Loretta: 1960

William: When was our trip to Spain?

Loretta: We never went to Spain. 1960.

William: 1960. (Pause) Lisa. (pause) My great failure.

Loretta: I understood.

William: How could you ever forgive me?

Loretta: I understood.

William: I don't know how.

Loretta: (Holds his hand) I understood.

William: I was a foolish...

Loretta: There's no need. It happened. We got through it. We don't have to go through it all again.

William: Good! What's next?

Loretta: The children.

William: Darlene and Ruby.

Loretta: Twins.

William: Why did we call her Darlene?

Loretta: After my mother.

William: I never liked your mother.

Loretta: She wasn't too fond of you.

ACT 10.8

William: She hated me.
 Loretta: That's a little strong.
 William: She spat on me.
 Loretta: She didn't like you. But our children adored you.
 William: Beautiful children. How did you do that?

Loretta smiles
 She hit me with a bucket once.
 Loretta: Our children are very successful. They work hard but they are secure.
 William: They make more money than I ever did.
 Loretta: It's different times.
 William: They never visit.
 Loretta: They do! Whenever they can.
 William: Not enough.
 Loretta: What's enough for you?
 William: They would never have moved out of our home.
 Loretta: We had a house by then.
 William: I nice house with a lovely little garden.
 Loretta: Which you never went in to.
 William: That was your job.
 Loretta: While you did what?
 William: Important things.
 Loretta: Like what?
 William: Men's things. Things men do. Important things.
 Loretta: Like what?
 William: I took out the garbage.
 Loretta: Thank you darling. Do you remember when we took them to that fair.
 William: You tell the story.
 Loretta: We took them to this fair.
 William: It wasn't a fair, it was a show. An agricultural show.
 Loretta: They pestered us to go on this ride.
 William: They pestered you. I would have said no. They didn't pester us.
 Loretta: The ride was a train. On a track.
 William: It wasn't a train. They were little cars.
 Loretta: On a track.
 William: Obviously on a track.
 Loretta: Do you want to tell the story?

William shakes his head
 We put them in the little cars.
 William: Ah ha! Cars. Not a train.
 Loretta: When the ride started, they thought that they had to steer.
 William: They howled.
 Loretta: Floods of tears.
 William: They were terrified.
 Loretta: You laughed.

ACT 10.8



William: It was funny.
 Loretta: You shouldn't have laughed.
 William: They don't remember.
 Loretta: You filmed it.
 William: They don't remember.
 Loretta: You showed it at their 16th birthday.
 William: It was funny.
 Loretta: You showed it at their 21st birthday.
 William: She changed the locks.
 Loretta: She wasn't that fond of you. Let's move on.
 William: Why don't we talk about that trip to Spain?
 Loretta: We never went to Spain.
 William: Buenos días. Quiero el desayuno
 Loretta: 1997.
 William: El gato está en la tabla
 Loretta: 1997.
 William: Te quiero (Pause) In 1997, my sweet darling was diagnosed with leukaemia.
 Loretta: I was.
 William: She was given six months to live.
 Loretta: I was.
 William: But we beat the pundits.
 Loretta: We did. (Pause) But it was hard. (Pause) Harder for you than for me.
 William: What was I going to do? Dump you and go back to Lisa?

Loretta smiles

William: We did well.
 Loretta: 7 years.
 William: 7 important years.
 Loretta: 7 special years.
 William: 7 wonderful years.
 Loretta: And then I died.

Pause

William: Not a good year.
 Loretta: Harder for you than for me.
 William: I had three more years. Hard years. Lonely years. Years when I thought of you every day. 1000 times every day. I couldn't get rid of your things. Your purse. I used your purse for three years. Your ornaments. I dusted them twice a week. Your letters. I read them again and again. I missed you so much. So much. Then I died a horrible painful death at the hands of a...
 Loretta: William! You died in your sleep.

William smiles. They kiss. A passionless kiss yet filled with eternal love.

Loretta: This is heaven.
 William: This is heaven. (Pause then to the audience) Any questions?

Lights fade quickly.

CHAPTER 13

New Drama Works

Key Concepts

- ☛ New drama works
- ☛ Script layout
- ☛ Grammar
 - Expressive language
 - Punctuation
 - Using grammar
- ☛ Script-writing
 - The script-writing process
 - Identifying an idea
 - Drafting
 - Dramaturgy
 - Workshopping
- ☛ Devised drama
 - Narrative
 - Episodic
 - Creating thematic and episodic drama
- ☛ Improvisation comedy

NEW DRAMA WORKS

There are many different ways that theatre practitioners can create new works of drama. An individual might use a traditional script-writing approach by working on the creation of a textual blueprint for a play, one that theatre companies will then realise into production at a later date. A group of theatre practitioners may work together to create a new work collectively through a series of improvisational trial and error processes. In such a situation the creation of the drama work goes hand-in-hand with the rehearsal of it, working towards some kind of performance as a culmination of the new work's generation. Other types of theatre ensembles may create short drama works in performance by improvising within a set of defined perimeters, knowing that each instant drama piece will never again be performed.

This chapter will explore creating new works of drama using the three approaches:

- Script writing
- Devising
- Improvisational performance

Hint

In the creation of a new work, playwrights and ensembles must be able to effectively and artistically use the elements of drama if they want to create a successful, meaningful and engaging play. Thus when making a play this section is meant to be studied in tandem with **Chapter 12: Existing Works** as it goes into great detail about the dramatic elements.

SCRIPT LAYOUT

There are a variety of traditions that playwrights and drama creators can use when capturing their drama work in written form; a script. Different parts of the world have different preferences in how they lay out their scripts. Many American plays are documented using columns, underlines, capitals and text-centering. British scripting traditions, by contrast, tend to use the whole page, with less underlining, capitalising and centering than in the USA. Even within each nation, there's a diverse range of popular conventions, with one playwright preferring one method and the next playwright a different way.

At this stage in studying drama, it's important to know, recognise and utilise a methodology that stems from the British tradition. These conventions are popular not only in the UK, but also Europe, Australia and some Asian countries.

Activity 13.1: Analysing script layout

1. Imagine you're a publisher looking to publish a new version of a script (one you're working on in class).
2. Photocopy the first double page of one of the scenes and make annotations on the script copy identifying how the playwright (and previous editor) has used the layout conventions.
3. Write a mini-report describing:
 - how the playwright has *not* used any of the layout conventions
 - what changes you would make to the layout for a new edition
 - how these changes would help theatre artists when they're working on a production of the script.

SCRIPT LAYOUT EXAMPLE
Richard III a play by William Shakespeare

Stage directions are in italics except for characters' names. At the beginning of a scene the stage directions start over at the left margin.

Play title is centred, underlined or in italics at the top of the page.

Act is in large roman numerals, scene number is in small roman numerals. These are at the centre top beneath the title.

Missed line between stage directions and dialogue

Characters' names in capital letters, even in the stage directions

Dialogue is always indented.

Stage directions within a scene are indented slightly.

A line is missed between each character's dialogue.

Short stage directions are written within a character's line and are in brackets.

Page numbers are centered at the bottom of the page.

Richard III
 I, ii

London. Another Street. Enter the corpse of KING HENRY THE SIXTH, borne in an open coffin; GENTLEMEN bearing halberds to guard it; and LADY ANNE, as mourner.

ANNE Set down, set down your honourable load,
 If honour may be shrouded in a hearse,
 Whilst I a while obsequiously lament
 The untimely fall of virtuous Lancaster.
 Poor key-cold figure of a holy king!
 O! Cursed be the hand that made these holes;
 Cursed the heart that had the heart to do it
 Curse the blood that let this blood from hence!
 Come, now towards Chertsey with your holy load.

The bearers take up the corpse and advance.

Enter RICHARD.

RICHARD Stay, you that bear the corpse, and set it down.

ANNE What black magician conjures up this fiend,
 To stop devoted charitable deeds?

RICHARD Villains! Set down the corpse; or, by Saint Paul,
 I'll make a corpse of him that disobeys.

BEARER My lord, stand back, and let the coffin pass.

RICHARD Unmannered dog! Stand thou when I command!

ANNE What? Do you tremble? *(Bearers stop)* Are you all
 afraid?

GRAMMAR

Playwrights and creators need to understand the ways in which language works if they are going to use it effectively to create verbally-based drama works. Knowing the grammatical rules and systems of a language allow drama practitioners to write plays that make sense, can be articulated successfully by actors and enable dramatic meaning to be communicated. Even if a playwright is not going to follow the rules because, for example, one of their characters wouldn't speak using grammar that is 100% accurate, they need to first properly understand the rules to then be able to break them effectively.

Grammar

The system of rules that governs how verbal language is constructed in order to make meaning.

The most basic and fundamental word types are:

- noun
- pronoun
- article
- verb.

Noun

Words that indicate definitive articles are nouns. Put more simply, a noun is a person, place or thing. It can be tangible in that it can be touched or seen, or intangible in that it can be heard or sensed. It can also be real or imagined. For example, in the following sentences the nouns are bolded:

- There is a **child**.
- It makes **whimpers**.
- It sees **monsters** under the **bed**.

A proper noun is the name of something unique or important, or the title of an individual, and always starts with a capital letter.

- It is **Australia**.
- She is **Yani**.

Article

Words that are used before a noun to define it as specific or non-specific are articles. There are only two:

- I'm going to **the** shop.
- I'm going to **a** shop.

An is another form of *a* and it's used when the consecutive word begins with a vowel. For example:

- I'm going to **an** outlet.

Pronoun

A word that can replace a noun is a pronoun. When people or things do something, they can be replaced by a subject pronoun, such as *he*, *she* or *it*. When people or things have something done to them, they can be substituted by an object pronoun, such as *him*, *her*, *it*, *them*, *us*. Finally, when referring to a person or the ownership, however temporary, of someone or something else, a possessive pronoun can be used, such as *my*, *your*, *his* or *their*. For example:

- **He** wants the information.
- She gives **him** the information.
- The information is now **his**.

Hint

When a particular person or thing is being indicated, such as this hat or that book, the *this* and *that* are demonstrative pronouns. They are replacing an article and not another noun.

Verb

Words that are used to capture an action, occurrence or state are verbs. They are most commonly known as *doing* or *happening* words.

- They **watched** the lighting.
- The lighting **flashed**.
- She **worried** about the lighting.

EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

When writing a script or devising a new work drama practitioners can add in expressive vocabulary to the basic language spoken by the characters (or writing it into the stage directions) in order to make the play more engaging, interesting and informative for the audience. By being flexible with the language choices for each and every character within a work, perhaps by having some speak more eloquently than others or by some being more descriptive than others, creators are able to use language to reveal insights about character, class, social structure, relationships and, of course, meaning.

Three of the ways writers can do this is to include:

- Adjectives
- Adverbs
- Phrases

Adjective

An addition can be made to a noun in order to be more descriptive, powerful or clearer in meaning. When an adjective is placed before or in some cases after a noun, then the noun itself is modified.

For example:

- The **fast** runner.
- The runner is **fast**.

Adverb

Alterations can also be made to many other words, such as verbs, phrases and adjectives in order to once again be more descriptive, powerful or clearer in meaning. Adverbs can be placed before or again in some cases after other words to modify them. For example:

- He **cautiously** entered the room.
- He crept in **well**.

Some adjectives can also be adverbs, such as:

- She ran **fast**.

Numbering or other words that state frequency or sequencing information are adverbs. For example:

- **Firstly**...
- **Lastly**...
- The **second** speaker...

Hint

An adverb is able to modify an adjective, but an adjective can't modify an adverb. For example 'The second best runner won.'

Many adjectives can be turned into adverbs by adding 'ly'. For example, gentle becomes gently, soft becomes softly, beautiful becomes beautifully, etc.

Phrase

A cluster of words that act together collectively as if they are a single noun, verb, adjective or adverb is a phrase. A phrase is often a group of words within one sentence. For example:

- The **clothes on the line** hang (acting like a noun).
- They were **flapping back and forth** (like a verb).
- They were **dry as a bone** (like an adjective).
- They'd been cleaned **rather poorly** (like an adverb).

Hint

A written phrase is directly related to voice phrasing for actors. See **Chapter 1: Acting fundamentals** for more information on this.

Punctuation

In order for sentences to function properly, allowing the future actor and audience to make sense of the original written text, punctuation is included to mark the end of an idea, sentence or phrase. Most writers at least work with the basics such as commas,

full-stops and question or exclamation marks. To help clarify meaning, add layers of subtlety and increase the expressive nature of the language, as well as suggest ways to an actor to interpret the text, other punctuation should also be considered such as the:

Colon:

This indicates that what will come next is a list of substantial things or one statement of high importance and/or urgency. If a list is going to follow the colon, each item needs to be a clear idea or a full sentence. A colon is usually preceded by collective information about that coming idea or list. For example:

There are three things to be asked:

- What has failed?
- What is working?
- What should we do next?

Semi-colon;

A semi-colon is used to indicate that what comes next is either further explanation of what was just previously said or to imply that there's some kind of relationship between the words before and the words after the punctuation. For example:

There are too many people wanting too many things; most adults here are seeking some kind of revenge, but the children just want the session to end.

Parenthesis ()

In a script parentheses are used to articulate something that is relevant to the main point of the sentence, but is not as important as the rest. For example:

It's crucial that we come to an agreement (while making sure these children are not too tired) before anyone leaves today.

Ellipsis ...

Technically this when words are being omitted in a quotation. When used within a character's line it usually means the character is holding back on revealing something or is searching for the right words to capture their thoughts. Ellipses can be used inside a sentence as a mini-pause or at the end of the sentence indicating the actor is to trail (fade) off with their speech and not complete their idea. For example:

I think it's absolutely outrageous ... It's inconsiderate that we rush our decision.
We have to wait, a bit, until...

Dash

These can be used to indicate the speaker is to be interrupted by another person or an event occurrence before they finish their sentence. For example:

We can't do all that we want to do within the time we've allocated to—

The sound of the knocking gavel is heard as the mayor tries to regain control of the meeting.

A dash can also be used to indicate that the speaker has had a change of thought whilst they were talking. For example:

I demand that every adult — every person, the children and the adults, take the stand today.

Using grammar

Playwrights should not simply write lines for their characters that imitate their own personal way of speaking. They need to first understand the correct ways to create English, or any language, before they can use it. Then they ideally will choose vocabulary and construct sentences, phrases and vocalisations that best match with each character at a particular point in time, in a specific place and within a certain situation. The age, gender, nationality, culture, education, past experience, etc of each character will impact the way they talk and interact with others. These things will impact how accurately a character follows the rules of grammar, how wide their vocabulary range is and how verbose, or not, they are when they communicate.

Internet exploration

Look at a useful grammar link on how to structure a sentence:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzHotHaXGk0

Activity 13.2: Analysing grammar

1. Photocopy a double page of a script that you're working on in class to analyse how the playwright has used grammar.
2. Make annotations on the script identifying at least two examples for each of:
 - noun
 - article
 - pronoun
 - verb
 - adjective
 - adverb
 - phrase.
3. Identify if the playwright has included any of the following:
 - colon
 - semi-colon
 - parenthesis
 - ellipsis
 - dash.

SCRIPT WRITING

This is the process whereby a writer creates a play by composing an original script. This script will become the blueprint that creative and production team members, together with actors, use to stage a theatrical production. The playwright will explore, manipulate and unify the elements of drama to create a series of occurrences and interchanges involving events and people (and sometimes creatures and animated objects) with the aim that these will eventually be enacted within a performance playing space for members of the public. The playwright will document these occurrences and interchanges in a script by describing the environment they take place in, through writing words for the roles and characters to speak, and by describing their actions, behaviour and non-verbal expression. They will use the elements of drama in the process of creating a play and documenting it in a script.

Dramatic Elements
Components essential to every drama work that create, communicate and increase dramatic meaning.

Inside every play there are people (creatures/animated objects) who may, or may not know each other, existing within a certain context, experiencing a set of circumstances. As they interact and communicate with each other and the world in which they live, some of their actions and reactions (including the consequences of these) will be easy and some difficult, about some they will feel positive and about others negative. For some there will be warning signs and others none, for some the meaning will be literal and others multi-layered. This is a summary of the dramatic elements at work within a play. To describe this more clearly:

Dramatic element	Inside every play there are:
Role and character	People
Relationships	who may, or may not know each other,
Space and time	existing within a certain context,
Situation	experiencing a set of circumstances.
Voice, movement, language and text	as they interact and communicate with each other and the world in which they live,
Dramatic tension	some of their actions and reactions (including the consequences of these) will be easy and some difficult,
Mood and atmosphere	about some they will feel positive and about others negative.
Symbol	For some there will be warning signs and others none,
Metaphor	for some the meaning will be literal and others multi-layered.

Playwrights must utilise each and every one of the elements if they want to write a script that will work effectively in performance, whilst being interesting, engaging and

thought-provoking for the audience. This is not just in the play as a whole, but also in every scene or section of a play. Of course in some sections a writer is likely to focus on or highlight some dramatic elements more than others. In the beginning section of a script, where everything is new to an audience, they need to be provided with information about the inner world of the play. In particular they're looking to know about the space, time, roles/characters and situation of this world. Whilst having some information about some of the relationships may be useful, often a playwright reveals this information as the play unfolds. Typically, giving the audience only some information about the situation, or any of the elements, in the beginning section tends to work best.

Inner world of the play

The imagined setting, including the time and space of a drama work, reflective of real cultural, socio-economic, political, historical and environmental landscapes.

This is about balancing providing audience members with enough information so that they can make sense of the inner world of the play and the events as they begin to unfold, without giving away too much about the plot, the challenges, the deeper motivations or hidden plans of the characters. If a playwright tells the audience absolutely everything about the situation and the relationships, they run the risk of not creating an interesting or engaging work. They need the audience to want to keep watching the play. One of the most popular ways to do this is through creating a strong sense of dramatic tension.

This tension is not just about the conflicts that exist between characters as they interact with each other and the environment around them, nor is it simply about the inner turmoil a particular character may be going through. Dramatic tension is also about the audience's interpretation of the characters' challenges, as well as the anticipation, expectancy, excitement or sense of dread that the audience experiences as they begin to predict what will happen next. When the audience is either caught up in or, as is the case in some presentational drama styles, intellectually affected in some way by the dramatic tension, then the script writer is using this element effectively.

Aristotle, the Ancient Greek philosopher, was the first to identify the phases (components) of what he deemed formed a well-made play. In his book *Poetics*, written in 335 BC, Aristotle discussed these components in great detail and explained why they are imperative in a play for it to be successful. The six essential phases he explained were:

- **Ethos** – Character
- **Lexis** – Language and communication
- **Dianoia** – Character's thought
- **Opsis** – Spectacle and visual design
- **Melopoia** – Song and verse
- **Mythos** – Plot

Well-made play

The structure and elements required for an effective play first identified by Aristotle in 335 BC, including the use of rising tension across a beginning, middle and end.

Mimesis

The dramatisation of the unfolding of a series of connected events using poetic language and stylised physicalisation in imitation of real life.

Mythos

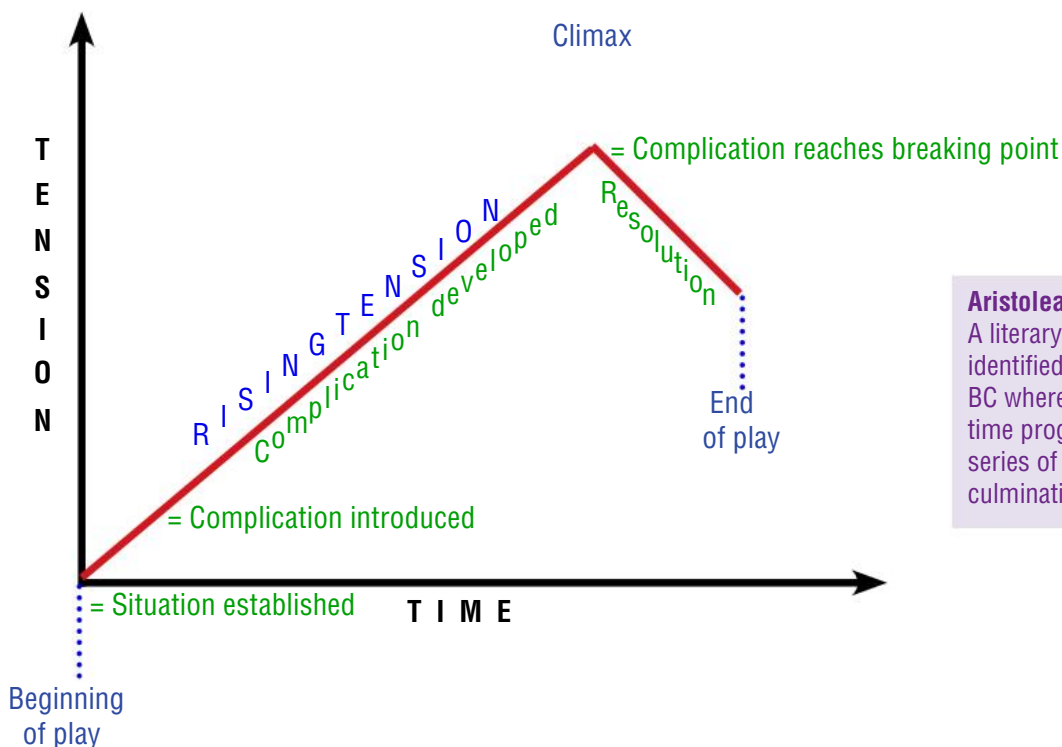
The unfolding of a series of connected events using a traditional narrative structure.

Aristotle outlined what he thought needs to be part of the script if it was going to be effective. He observed that the elements of time, tension and situation are crucial to the mythos. He also recommended the way in which mimesis can be used to capture the unfolding of the mythos. Mimesis is a representation of action through the poetic construction of the mythos (that is, the action of the plot as it is captured in the script).

Hint

It's important to note that at the time when Aristotle was writing, more than two thousand years ago, playwrights were considered poets and the plays they wrote used a form of poetic language, hence his definition of mimesis includes poetic plot construction. Today practitioners might replace poetic with *language-based* or *linguistic*.

In exploring the three dramatic elements Aristotle identified that in a well-made play time needs to move forward, tension needs to increase and the situation needs to change through the addition of complications. This basic structure has become known as the Aristolean Narrative structure, also sometimes referred to as a Traditional Narrative structure.

**Aristolean narrative structure**

A literary structure first identified by Aristotle in 335 BC where tension rises and time progresses forward as a series of related events unfold culminating in a climax.

This Aristolean narrative structure forms the basis of much representational drama, in particular realism, as well as many presentational works. However presentational drama created since the late 1800s frequently uses time in a more fragmented or non-linear way than what Aristotle recommends. For more information on this, as well as all the elements of drama, see **Chapter 12: Existing Drama Works**.

Hint

Using an Aristolean narrative structure is not the only option available to a playwright. When creating a presentational script there are other possibilities that might be better suited, such as episodic or thematic structures. Make sure you choose the best structure to suit the performance and historical styles you're using, as well as the dramatic meaning you're wanting to convey.

For more information on using an episodic or thematic structure see pages 319-320 in this chapter.

Internet exploration

Hear from a professional playwright about dramatic tension at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxvlogDwmuY

Script-writing process

Similar to all practitioners working in the theatre industries, each playwright is likely to have their own unique working process; a sequence and methodology of creating a script that works best for them. One playwright's process is therefore likely to be slightly different to another's. Some playwrights will write a script over several weeks, whilst others might take years. Some writers will work on a play one scene at a time, reworking each scene over and over again before they move onto the next scene. Others will write a play from end to end before they go back and rework a particular section. Of course, within this range of working styles, there tend to be certain similarities that form part of many playwrights' processes:

- Identifying an idea
- Drafting
- Dramaturgy
- Workshopping

Identifying an idea

Central to every great script are not only the elements of drama, but quite simply a good idea. A good idea can come from anywhere. A playwright might dream up an action-packed story, visualise a community working in an alternate way or imagine strange events in another world. They could be inspired by observing a fascinating person, reading a wonderful novel or watching a devastating news report. When creating a script a writer first needs an idea, before they can flesh-out that idea using the dramatic elements. Even if a playwright's main purpose is to write a play that will change audience thinking or prompt them into action, such as in didactic theatre genres, they still need a creative idea that can be developed into a drama work to then prompt the reaction they're hoping for.

Didactic theatre

Drama that is intended to teach something to the audience.

Drafting

Once a playwright has an idea it's time to get their ideas out of their head and onto the page. Starting is often the most difficult part of writing a script. Many novice playwrights can easily doubt their own ability to write a play that they believe will work well in performance. Perhaps they're worried that they don't know what's going to happen in the end, maybe they're concerned that the characters aren't robust enough to withstand being on stage for longer than a few minutes or it could be that they simply don't know where to start the action. The beauty of script-writing, is that during the creation process

anything can be changed. In fact, one should always be open to changing anything. But first the playwright must have something to consider changing. Writing down just one line from one character, any line from any character could unlock the rest of the dialogue of that scene. Describing merely one action, once again any action of a character, is likely to lead to uncovering the reactions of other characters.

Once a playwright has something written on the page they can then continue on in writing the rest of the script. It's crucial once a scene or an entire play has been written for the first time, the playwright remembers this is simply the first draft. Scripts need to be reworked in a drafting process before the final version is ready for preproduction planning and rehearsal. Playwrights might rework the script by refining, extending or deleting sections. A 'section' could be a word, a line, a dialogue interchange, a stage direction or a whole scene. They might introduce a new character or remove an old one. They might develop a stereotypical character into a more three-dimensional one. They could decide to reveal more or less information about a particular complication at a certain point in the play, or rework an interchange between several characters to increase or decrease the dramatic tension. They might introduce new external events and changes that will have an impact on the inner world of the play in new ways. They could make the implications of the climax more severe or change the way it's resolved. Reworking a play by creating multiple drafts is crucial to getting the best end-result possible; a script that effectively allows the dramatic action to unfold and successfully communicates the dramatic meaning the playwright intends.

Internet exploration

Investigate how Deck Chair Theatre company approached the creation of a new work at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmcECKlQrVs

Activity 13.3: Ideas generation

1. As a playwright read through a newspaper from cover to cover, looking for news reports that could potentially be converted into a play.
2. Identify at least five news reports that could become a play and cut out these articles.
3. For each article write a summary on why the story would make a good play, including:
 - why the story would work well as a play
 - what performance and historical style might suit the story (and why)
 - what the basic plot overview and the potential characters could be
 - what type of audience would be attracted to a play version (and why the play would interest them)
 - how the story might be realised from a design perspective.

Hint

If, once you've got over the initial starting-procrastination barrier, you find that ideas aren't flowing or that you can't find a way to fix a particular issue with the script, take a break. Go and do something else for a while, something that's totally unrelated to drama like playing a game of sport, visiting the beach for a swim or creating havoc in the kitchen by cooking something. Sometimes the best thing you can do is to take yourself away from the computer screen and focus on something else, something that requires no intellectual, analytical or linguistic effort. By taking a break, using your mind and body in a different way, and then coming back to the script, you will be surprised what new ideas might suddenly come up. Coming back to the script fresh and reenergised can really help your creativity flow.

Dramaturgy

Part of the drafting process could include the playwright working closely with a dramaturg. A dramaturg is a theatrical practitioner specialising in noticing and understanding things in scripts that are easily overlooked by others. There are different types of jobs a dramaturg can undertake. When working on the development of a new script they are likely to try to identify when the meaning isn't clear in the text or when a line or stage direction doesn't seem to be working. They will often try to work out why the meaning is unclear, or what is causing the lines or stage directions not to work. New script dramaturgs will also be likely to solve problems for the playwright. This could be by researching problems where they need to uncover the way things were done or said in a particular place in the world at a specific time period. They might look at how items unique to that place and time were used, so that the playwright can accurately describe them in the script. In some cases it could even be the dramaturg working on the redrafting (rewriting) of a section to accurately reflect their research findings.

Dramaturgs are particularly good at providing a playwright with a new perspective on their script. Sometimes a writer can be so caught up in the way they view and understand the script, that they're not able to see the work as clearly as others do. Dramaturgs help to hold a mirror up to a script so the playwright can better identify edits that need to be made, inconsistencies about the characters that exist, confusions in the plot development that need changing and so on.

For more information on the work of a dramaturg, see **Chapter 8: Dramaturgy**.

Dramaturg

A person who practices researching, investigating, analysing and interpreting the contextual components of a dramatic work, including the historical, socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental landscape in order to share information with and make recommendations to the other creative team members.

Workshopping

Another part of the script development process that many writers use is workshopping. There are two main types of script workshopping that playwrights use:

- Script-read
- Staged-reading

After the playwright has finished an early draft version, they may like to test out what it sounds like when the lines are being articulated aloud by having a script-read. Theatre is, after all, an experiential occurrence and scripts are written to be performed, not silently read. Playwrights will get a collection of actors together to sit around a table or in a rehearsal venue and read the script aloud. Each actor is likely to read the part of one character, whilst the playwright or another person reads the major stage directions and any other notes in the script. The purpose of doing a script-read is for the playwright to begin to get a sense of how the character lines work in reality. It also provides an opportunity for the actors to provide feedback and ask questions about the script to the playwright at the end of the read-through. Ideally the playwright listens to the feedback offered, without judging or disagreeing with it, as it provides useful insight into the way others, and potentially an audience, will interpret, understand and engage with the script.

The second type of workshopping process, a staged-reading performance, is more active than a sit-down script-read. Once again the playwright will get a group of actors together perhaps for a day or, if they can manage it, a week to experientially work on the script. The playwright may get a director to work with them, but more often than not, they will direct the actors themselves. During a staged-reading workshop the actors will spend a small amount of time working on each scene or section of the play. Although this could include some character work, it's more likely to focus on loosely exploring the way the lines work when actors vocalise and physicalise, the overall dynamics between the characters as the dramatic action unfolds and a rough use of space through basic blocking decisions. In the last couple of hours of this workshopping process, the actors will run the play from end to end without stopping within a playing space keeping their scripts in hand. The playwright can then get an experiential sense of what the play might look, feel and sound like in performance, and therefore which parts still need adapting. Once again it also gives them the opportunity to receive feedback and questions from the actors. Because this process is a physical process, it's more likely to occur with a late-draft version of the script.



Internet exploration

Watch a theatre ensemble at work devising a play based on the Antigone legend at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=73t1RNrl2jQ

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

Paul Tolton – Playwright

Paul Tolton graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts. He then embarked on a roller coaster of a career, primarily as a professional actor. Even in school he was writing plays and then, while working for Barking Gecko Theatre Company in Western Australia, he began writing and co-writing a lot more, including *Visiting the relatives* and *Black diamonds*. He also worked with Kathryn Heyman and David Lennie to write and perform *Sex, lies and model aeroplanes*. His one act plays *You can't stop the music*, *You're an idiot* and *This is heaven* have all won awards and received several productions.



Recommendations from Paul on playwriting:

1. Know your last line before you write your first. Knowing what you are going to write and planning is, for me, an essential part of writing. Every play is a journey and every journey has its calm waters and rapids. It is essential to know where they are. Every journey has a destination. Make sure you know what your destination is or you will write forever. I make numerous files on my computer that deal with different parts of the journey. Others use cards or white boards to plan. Whatever you use, have a plan.
2. Make sure each character has a voice. Plays are usually about dialogue so having a clear voice in your head for every character will help differentiate them. I trust actors and believe they will add the physicality, so, unless there is a specific physical attribute that the character and the story needs, I leave them out. I often think of people I have met or even have seen on television and use their voice while I am writing.
3. Have your own style. This is the difficult bit. It took me ages to develop a style that was uniquely me. I did it by deliberately copying other writers to see how they worked. See how Shakespeare uses rhythm by trying to write like Shakespeare. I copied Vonnegut to explore passion and anger. I tried writing like Jane Austin who mixes irony and realism with such a deft touch that it is worth the time learning it. What this teaches you is that there are many ways to write and, one day, you will write something and realize it is you.
4. Finally, don't be precious. I have known writers who insist that every word they wrote is spoken on stage. I am not one of those people. I believe that the creative process is a continuous one and I give permission, with all my plays, for the actors and director to re-write anything they want. Writing is a part of creative process, not the end.

Devised drama works

Sometimes a group of theatre practitioners work together to create a new drama work taking an experiential focus, using group-brainstorming methods, improvisation-based explorations of ideas and practical experimentation. This method of creating new works of drama is called devising. It is particularly popular with ensemble theatre companies keen to take a collaborative approach to drama creation and performance.

Devised drama

The creation of drama by an ensemble of theatre practitioners using collaborative and improvisational techniques.

Typically devised drama uses one of three types of structures:

- Narrative
- Thematic
- Episodic

Improvisation

The act of behaving spontaneously in the creation or performance of drama.

Narrative

A devised work that tells a story from its beginning to end and is plot driven is narrative-based drama, with the focus of telling a story. Such plays most often have an Aristotelean narrative structure, but their events may not necessarily unfold in chronological order and instead may incorporate forward or backward leaps of time. Sometimes a devised narrative play will draw on some realistic characterisation and performance conventions, whilst other works are extremely stylised and highly presentational.

Devised narrative-based works can be inspired by an original idea or be a dramatic realisation of a story or a fable. For more information on how to structure a narrative-based drama, see page 313 in this chapter.



Internet exploration

Watch a short devised physical theatre piece that uses a narrative structure inspired by the Robin Hood tale at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hI9t86hDNC0 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_Tj7CTI-Ws

Thematic

Devised works that focus not on enacting one particular story, but rather on exploring a theme or issue in a variety of ways are thematic-based works. A piece of this type of drama could include several different narrative-based stories, each with a unique situation, time, space and set of roles, that are played out as the drama work unfolds. Whilst they each have their own plot, they share the same central theme. These dramatic stories are often interwoven with each other, alternating between the different scenes of different stories.

Sometimes when devising a thematic-based drama, the creators might not use a narrative structure in any or only in some parts of the work. Instead they will find alternate creative ways to dramatically interpret their chosen theme in each episode. They could create sections using different styles of drama, switching from realism to epic theatre to Holy theatre to Naturalism to dance theatre, thus enabling them to focus on different aspects of the theme. They could have the same basic plot structure and characters for several scenes, but vary the location and time period to explore how their theme is valued across time and culture. They might use a hybrid of narrative-based scenes one moment, and then stylised sections the next.

The goal in thematic-based drama is not to tell a story but for the audience to understand as much as they can about the theme, often including different viewpoints or perspectives of it. Because there are several independent stories unfolding in the work and/or several styles being used to create and perform the work, even if some of these sections are performed realistically, thematic-based drama is, by its nature, presentational.

Episodic

Lastly a devised piece that is made up of a collection of individual drama works, with each section being able to stand alone as an independent work of art in its own right, and yet also be more meaningful when experienced as a unified collective entity is termed episodic-based work. Whilst some individual sections, more accurately called episodes, may use an Aristotelean narrative structure, the tension in these sections is likely to build rapidly and the depth to which complications are explored is not likely to be extensive. This is because each section operates as its own individual mini-play. The series of episodes are linked together by some common thread that could be character-based, event-shared, culturally- or politically-related, or have some other kind of link. For example, a group might devise a work where one character is the only common connection across several otherwise unrelated dramas.

Some thematic-based works are also episodic. The test is whether the mini-units within the piece can be experienced by an audience individually and still be made sense of. If they can't, that is if they need the other sections to be interpreted or understood, then the work is thematic, but not episodic. Because the audience will be exposed to a range of episodes that can each stand alone, whether some are performed realistically or not, episodic-based drama is, by its changing nature, presentational.

Hint

Sometimes when devising a work with a group of actor-creators, it's difficult to make sure that all the actors are on the same wave-length. Perhaps there are different opinions about what theatrical style to use, about which technique might be most effective at a particular point, or even about the purpose behind the work. If there is not a shared understanding, nor agreed-upon goals to work towards, conflict is likely to occur. Disagreements will arise and the tension may have a negative effect on the creation or performance of the dramatic work. Make sure everyone involved in the devising process agrees on the scope of the work and the way you're going to achieve your performance goals.

Creating thematic and episodic drama

In devising thematic or episodic based works, there are many structural choices and creation conventions that drama practitioners can use, other than an Aristotelean narrative structure. These include:

Alternating points of view

An episode could be presented from one role or character's point of view, while another episode presents an opposing or contradictory viewpoint.

Break character

An actor will step out of the role they're playing to communicate personally as themselves. This could be to communicate with other actors on stage, but more likely it's to interact with the audience.

Break character

The process when an actor stops characterising either intentionally or by accident.

Cross-cutting

This is where the dramatic action shifts from one group of actors to a separate group within the playing space. Crossovers could be within the same section (scene or episode), or from section to section.

Freeze

In a freeze the roles and characters literally stop moving as if they've been frozen in time. Freezes can be used to pause the dramatic action and then focus in on one character who remains animated, unnoticed by the others. This could be to allow the individual to share their perspective on an issue with the audience, to divulge their thoughts or concerns about it or pose a rhetorical question prompting the audience to think.

Multiple action

Several or all of the characters will individually and independently carry out stage business or undertake activities within in the playing space as if they are the only ones there.

Stage business

The behaviour, small activities and incidental actions of a character during performance often involving props or interacting with the set in some way.

Narration

A narrator could be used to describe a series of events or character interactions to the audience. They could speak alone on stage to preempt what is about to happen or to fill in the missing gaps that exist between one section and another. Alternatively they might narrate whilst, at the same time, the events they're describing actually unfold in the playing space. In this situation the audience are able to both hear about the dramatic action through the narration and observe it through the enactment. Narration can also be used to transition between sections and to make comments about the characters, events or the issue under examination.

Tableau

Tableau is the French word for table, picture, blackboard, spreadsheet or canvas. In drama a tableau is a still picture created by actors to represent an event, landscape or situation, like a snap-shot in time. The actors might take on the roles of living creatures or inanimate objects. The focus for the audience is not simply on identifying who or what each actor is within the tableau, but to learn something about their relationships, the situation they are in and how this image relates to the whole drama work. A tableau differs from a freeze in that it is only ever a 100% still-picture. A freeze, by comparison, will start, end or be placed in the middle of an otherwise animated and action-heavy section.

Thought tracking

This is the opposite of a freeze, where one character shares their thoughts with the audience, while the others remain frozen. Instead of this, in thought tracking, one or two characters will freeze mid-action. This will be immediately followed by other non-frozen performers suggesting aloud what it is that the frozen characters are thinking. Other than describing thoughts, the animated characters might also reveal the feelings, instincts, desires, attitudes and beliefs of the frozen characters. This convention can even be used to reveal contradictions, fears, hostilities, repressions and other negative information that the frozen characters are hiding.

Vox populi

This convention, 'vox pop' for short, literally means the voice of the people. As such it is a series of short monologues from supposedly real people who share their thoughts about a particular subject, character or event. Vox populi imitates documentary-style interviews, where 'grabs' from the general public are delivered to the audience in the style of a documentary.

Grab

Short aural or written recordings from the general public that are included in journalistic articles or reports.

Internet exploration

To see a short devised thematic based work have a look at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hl9t86hDNC0

Activity 13.4: Experimenting with devised drama

1. Working in a small group create a short performance piece of three to five minutes in length based on a theme or issue.
2. Select two different presentational conventions to use in your drama work:
 - Alternate points of view
 - Break character
 - Cross-cutting
 - Freeze
 - Multiple action
 - Narration
 - Tableau
 - Thought tracking
 - Vox populi
3. Experiment with at least three different potential ways you could use *each* of your selected conventions.
4. Make a decision about which experiments you will use in your original drama work.
5. Fine-tune your piece through rehearsal.
6. Perform your drama work.
7. Reflect on your chosen two conventions, including the potential ways you could have used each, and in what ways they were appropriate for your selected issues or theme, and how effective they were as part of your new drama work.

IMPROVISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Improvisation is a creation process where actors generate drama by making it up on the spot. It is the unrehearsed, spontaneous actions and reactions of performers when placed in a particular situation. Improvisation can be used to create once-off, instant dramatic works that stand alone. It can also be used to help develop a longer, more robust drama work.

Hint

When devising a dramatic work and creating the scenes or episodes within that work, practitioners could improvise based on an idea, character, theme, style, and so on. After conducting the improvisation they would then spend some time reflecting on and discussing the piece. They could then revisit the same piece by doing a new improvisation and adding in some agreed plot, relationship or interaction points. This re-improvising discussion process might occur several times, until the practitioners are satisfied with the scene. Alternatively, at any point, they might take a more traditional script-writing approach by one person redrafting a new version by typing at a computer or writing in a note-book.

Improvisation as a means to creating and delivering a once-off humorous product is a popular form of entertainment called improvised-comedy. It's also known as comedic-improvisation. When improvising in front of an audience so that the process of drama creation is being witnessed at the same time as the performance product, the actors don't get the chance to create a script, nor rehearse in any way. They may have a few ideas about what they might do before they start the improvisation, but these ideas merely provide a guideline to create a piece of instant drama in the playing space. Typically in improvised-comedy the actors will be given a few facts with which they must create a scene. They might be provided by the audience or an MC with a place and time, a character or an object to include, or perhaps a tricky situation to begin with. If, however, such parameters are not provided, then the actors are thrown completely to chance to create their instant dramatic piece.

Improvisational comedy

Very short dramatic works that aim to entertain and provoke laughter, that are unscripted and unrehearsed.

Because of the brevity of an improvisational comedy piece, the actor-creators work most successfully when using an Aristotelean narrative that has a clear beginning, middle and end, during which the characters have to overcome a difficult challenge. Before performing an improvisation the artists clarify the role or character that each person will play and make sure everyone clearly understands the when (the time/date/season/year), where (which location the characters are in), what (the activities the characters will undertake) and why (the reason for the characters to be brought together). Most usually actors use two-dimensional stereotypical characterisation, as there's not the time to develop psychologically-driven characters within a complex plot.

The most important three conventions to creating a successful improvisational drama work are:

Offer

This is when one actor comes up with an idea and suggests it to the other actors during the improvisation. For example, three characters could be picnicking when one suddenly points to one side of the stage and says, 'Oh no... There's a bear on the other side of that tree!' This actor has come up with a great idea that can be used to develop the scene.

Accept

This is when the other actors take on board an existing offer. Through their reaction they demonstrate a shared understanding of the offered idea and make it a firm part of the scene. For example, returning to the bear-at-the-picnic scenario, one of the characters could reply, 'It's got that I'm-ravenous-after-a-very-long-cold-winter-absent-of-all-food-hibernation look in its eye!'

Extend

Once an idea has been put forward and been accepted, it's time to develop it further. For example, in response to the hungry bear comment, an actor might then say, 'Quick, let's all climb up this tree before it comes to eats us!'

The most important two conventions that need to be avoided when improvising are:

Block

A block is when characters do not accept an offer made by someone and thus prevent the scene from developing. For example, after the first bear offer, an actor could reply, 'No it's not, it's just a shadow on a rock.' In this situation an idea (the bear) was presented and then rejected (the shadow), thus not only stalling the progress of the scene, but not allowing the group to work together as one. Blocking is *not* a technique to use when improvising. Even if an actor wouldn't have thought of the offered idea themselves, they need to turn off their judgement, forget about where they had previously assumed the scene was going to go to, and instead embrace the unexpected idea.

Gag

If the actors break character and laugh at themselves, at other characters or at the unfolding events, then they're disrupting the dramatic action and potentially stopping the piece from moving forward. They might also lose the trust of the audience who were wanting the actors to stay focused to help them suspend their disbelief. For example if, when climbing the tree to get away from the bear, one actor finds it funny that another actors slips over by accident and starts to laugh at them, they are gagging. Improvised comedy is supposed to be humorous for the audience, but not for the actors taking part in the improvisation.

Suspension of disbelief

The acceptance of something unreal being real for a period of time.

Hint

Actors should also be wary of appearing to accept an offer without fully embracing it. For example imagine, to the offer on the previous page, another actor replied with nothing more than, 'Yes it is a bear'. Whilst they have acknowledged the first person's idea, they haven't developed it at all. Even worse, imagine they replied, 'Yes it is. Do you know what the time is?' With this second response, they have seemed to accept the idea, but only to then forget it and move on to something else. In either situation they're both preventing the scene from developing and also not working together as a team. It's a waste of time and not entertaining for an audience.

One of the keys for actors being successful during an improvisation is by remembering that as long as they use the offer-accept-extend process, they cannot make a mistake. Because the scene is entirely unscripted, anything is possible. The two most important things that actors can do when improvising together is to trust and to take risks. Trust both in the other actors and also in their own imagination. Then it's simply about jumping in and taking a chance by offering, accepting and extending (without blocking or gagging).

Activity 13.5: Creating drama through improvisation

1. Working in a small group of approximately four people you will devise a drama work using improvisation working impromptu with three given circumstances.
2. A TV news reporter/anchorperson (played by your teacher in role) announces, *'After the break we will be back with ground breaking news. Earlier today a xxx was involved in a xxx at a xxx.'* The TV reporter substitutes the first 'xxx' with a character, the second 'xxx' with a situation and the third 'xxx' with a location. For example:
*'After the break we will be back with ground breaking news.
 Earlier today a thief was involved in an explosion at a chocolate factory.'*
3. Your group will get 30 seconds (in place of a commercial break) to plan your improvisation, including a clear beginning, middle and end.
4. You will then enact your drama work using the three circumstances drawing on the improvisation techniques:
 - Offer
 - Accept
 - Extend

Your group should avoid blocking ideas and gagging.

Internet exploration

Hear from some professionals about improvisation warm-ups at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWORPZDgUI8

www.youtube.com/watch?v=054BUa3Z0os

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnyyxzdWe4M

www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOwzSoUa-NE

CHAPTER 14

Rehearsal and Performance

Key Concepts

- ☛ Rehearsal and performance
- ☛ Rehearsal
 - Acting rehearsal process
 - The first script-read
 - Warming up
 - Experimentation
 - Building a character
 - Spatial awareness in representational drama
 - Spatial awareness in presentational drama
 - Blocking
 - Learning lines
 - Run-throughs
 - Dress rehearsals
 - Sitzprobe
 - Technical rehearsals
- ☛ Final dress rehearsals
- ☛ Performance
 - Previews
 - Opening night
 - The run
 - Closing night

REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE

Much of this book has focused on the skills, techniques and methodologies that individual theatre practitioners will undertake when working on a dramatic project. This chapter, by contrast, will explore two periods during a project and the associated processes that especially actors, but also directors, stage managers and sometimes dramaturgs, collectively undertake; rehearsal and performance. In the first phase, rehearsal, the second phase, performance, is prepared for. Different historical styles and practitioners place different emphasis and value on each of these two phases.

For many the rehearsal period is a time and opportunity to explore the play in a variety of ways in order to be ready for the end-goal of the performance. Yet for others the exploration process itself is far more important than the performance, such as Grotowski and his colleagues at the Laboratory Theatre.

Rehearsal

Rehearsals are, by and large, part of the preproduction process. The term **rehearsal** can be slightly confusing. It indicates an:

1. **Event:** the occurrence of script or concept exploration and performance preparation.
2. **Time period:** the prescribed schedule of time during which the occurrences of (1) will occur.

The term **rehearsing** is a verb indicating that the actors, director and stage management team will together undertake a series of primarily practical exploration and preparation processes of a script or a concept. Technically it would therefore be correct for an actor to say, 'I'm going to a rehearsal to rehearse because we're in rehearsal'. As this sounds absurd, most practitioners say, 'I'm going to rehearsals', and imply all three meanings of the word. It's important to be aware that there are different meanings, because sometimes two people could be using the same word and yet have completely different understandings of the topic of conversation.

Even more confusing is the term **production**. This word can indicate the:

- **Project:** the play or dramatic work being produced by a theatre company. For example, 'I'm working on a production of *Romeo and Juliet*.'
- **Time period:** the length of time from when a company moves into a theatre venue to when the show finishes, typically from bump-in to closing night. For example, 'We're in production right now.'
- **Components:** the disciplines, practices and personnel involved in the construction, technical and stage management side of a performance event. For example, 'I'm part of production.'
- **Production manager:** the person who oversees the production components *and* is the liaison between the producing theatre company, venue personnel, and the creative and production teams. For example, 'I'm the production manager of *Romeo and Juliet*.'

Rehearsal

The period and process of experimenting, practicing and preparing the script or text of a dramatic work for public performance.

Pre-production

The period before a production moves into the performance venue, including the planning, designing and rehearsal periods.

Bump-in

Moving and setting up performance equipment and materials into a performance venue for show-run.

Production team

The production manager, stage manager, constructionists and crew members involved in the realisation of the non-acting components of a production, including the physical environment (and the components of it), logistics and technical areas.

Creative team

The director, dramaturg and designers involved in conceptualising and realising imaginative, artistic and meaningful ideas for performance.

Similarly to using the word **rehearsal**, when the term **production** comes up practitioners need to ensure that they understand to what it specifically refers, or confusion may arise. In this chapter, the first focus is on the processes that occur at rehearsals during the rehearsal period in pre-production.

Acting rehearsal process

The rehearsing process for actors involves the many different things they will do, together with the director and stage manager, to prepare for performance. There are different types of rehearsals involving different cast members, from the entire ensemble for group scenes or script run-throughs, to specific individuals for character or scenic work. There are special types of rehearsals that utilise particular acting skills, such as the voice for speech rehearsals, singing for working on the songs, movement for physical communication rehearsals and choreography for dance numbers or fight sequences.

The director might rehearse the actors using a particular acting methodology. Much of the rehearsal period will be taken up using this preferred technique and process. For representational styles of drama, such as naturalism or realism, the director and actors might work with Konstantin Stanislavski's System of acting, Stella Adler's technique of acting or Sanford Meisner's Meisner technique. In presentational drama a director might choose instead to work with Bertolt Brecht's Brechtian acting approach, Jerzy Grotowski's psycho-physical actor approach or Rudolf von Laban's human movement traits. For contemporary drama works, where the playwright has drawn on multiple conventions to create their script, a director may draw from several acting methodologies when rehearsing the play.

For information on these acting approaches, see **Chapter 2: Acting**.



Photograph by Kerry Sands

Ensemble
The full cast of a performance.

Hint

If a contemporary director chooses to use more than one acting methodology to rehearse a play, it's unlikely they will incorporate all the conventions, techniques and processes of all the practices in rehearsal. Time will almost certainly not allow it, plus if they did, there are likely to be contradictory parts to the approaches that might be confusing for the actors. Typically when using multiple approaches a director will use the parts that are most useful to the actors, the script and their own vision for the production.

Sometimes, there may be a particular technique that the director wants the actors to utilise which they don't have expertise in. In these situations a specialist may be brought in to conduct a technique workshop with the actors. Alternatively, the actors may go and take a public workshop outside of the rehearsal room, in order to top up their skills. Acting workshops are highly practical sessions. In the same way that the activities taking place in a carpenter's workshop or a mechanic's garage are physical, the work occurring in an acting workshop is experiential. Armed with new knowledge learned kinaesthetically at the workshop, they're ready to return to rehearsals and apply it to the production.

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

Joyce Gan – Theatre Practitioner

Since completing her studies at the LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore, Joyce has worked professionally as an actor and designer in the theatre industries. Having an acting and technical interest in theatre, she loves to work on both aspects of a production. Her recent acting credits include the Singapore Repertory Theatre's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Young Company's *Agamemnon* and several short films for Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

Below we have an excerpt of her essay, 'Thou'lt Come No More: The RSC tours and leaves'. This was written in response to seeing two Royal Shakespeare Company touring productions and to workshops conducted by Sir Ian McKellen that Joyce was fortunate enough to participate in.

'The performances of King Lear and The Seagull by the Royal Shakespeare Company marked not simply a highlight in theatre this year but certainly in this student actor's life. Beyond the commercial factor of Sir Ian McKellen, whose work has partially influenced my choice to be an actor, the rest of the company was built upon a cast of equally recognized, accomplished actors, and complimented on stage by good production values in terms of directing, set, staging, and technical aspects. To be able to watch such a large ensemble work so effectively together was more than a thrill to watch, it was something to aspire to.'

'To top it off, having a voice workshop and an audience with Ian McKellen himself was a chance to learn something more as a student actor. While both occasions were short, workshops are essentially that. As they are unable to follow a long journey in the progress of learning and understanding and do not set upon a long practice regiment, it is unlikely that something breakthrough will be said or done within such a short time. Rather, I feel a workshop can be useful in the ideas or ways that may be introduced, even if it is something known previously, but has now been brought into focus or context.

In this case, there was an emphasis on listening, be it the meaning of the text, or what the other characters are saying, or the structure and rhythm created by the words within the text, and as I found apparent in The Seagull, even listening to the moments of silence. Within the exercises, each line could drive a person in a different direction, sometimes literally, and the focus of certain parts of a text, such as the first or last words, introduced new possible perspectives of reading and comprehending a text, as well as the possible importance of even a single word.

This was revisited during the workshop with Ian McKellen, during which he had talked about the various intentions behind his portrayal of Lear, and in the context of Cordelia's death scene, discussed how he had attributed a different meaning to each of the five "never"s in a single line. When he slipped briefly into character in that line, it was apparent how much work and preparation had been made to build this character's story beyond what was simply written, and how emotional a single word or line could be with the right meaning. If nothing else, that made a deep impression on me and would certainly be a constant reminder in striving to be more detailed and invested in each performance. At the same time, he had talked about the trust needed in fellow actors to allow oneself to be comfortable to explore and to be in an exposed and vulnerable setting like the stage.

Being fairly new to theatre and acting, and surrounded by similar peers in the Young Co, it is somewhat apparent that we have yet to reach a greater level of trust and ease with each other, but might perhaps be something to look forward to as we go along. Beyond that it was simply a pleasure to listen to him speak casually, like any other person, about his experiences and regrets as an actor and as a person, about preparing for each night, or the difficulties between the film and stage mediums. Knowing that he too started from the beginning at some point and built his stagecraft over years of work and experience, made me more aware that there was just so much more to learn and achieve, regardless of whether any of us ever reach a career level close to his.

More than simply being a weekend of brilliant theatre, I am awed!

Internet exploration

Listen to an American professional actor talk about the rehearsal process at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=cP2GJooJaSs

The first script-read

If the theatre company is producing a play using a published or existing script, then the first rehearsal is likely to include the first read-through of the script. This is typically the first time the actors are brought together to meet each other and begin working collectively on the production. If the scenes or episodes are lengthy, this is also typically the time when the director or stage manager will talk the actors through the script to break it up into smaller workable sections. Future rehearsals, especially those early on in the process, will be likely to concentrate on one of these smaller scene sections in great detail, before moving onto the next.

Script-read

The reading aloud of a play from beginning to end, with each actor speaking their part.

A first script-read is a static rehearsal in that the ensemble sit around a table, and read through the script aloud. The stage manager reads the stage directions. Up until this point during the pre-rehearsal preparation period, the director has only imagined what the production will sound like. They've only guessed at how the voices and actor dynamics will work together. A first script-read gives them, and everyone involved, a rough idea of how the play is likely to sound in performance.

Depending on how the director prefers to work, the group will either stop during the reading and ask questions of the director as they arise, or they will make note of their queries in a notebook whilst continuing to read through the entire play without interruption and save their discussion to the end. Although working either way is appropriate, many directors prefer option two because it gives them, and the actors and stage manager, a real feel for the play in its entirety. Also, often questions that arise early in the script-reading are answered when later scenes are read through, and so the questions don't really need to be asked in the first place.

Warming up

Once getting onto the rehearsal room floor and starting to explore the play experientially, actors need to make sure their acting instrument is ready to use. An actor's instrument is their body; their physical, vocal, mental and instinctive self. To prepare this instrument and make sure it's ready to creatively, efficiently and safely work, the actor needs to warm up their body, voice and mind.

Warm-up

A series of activities to prepare the body, including the voice and the mind, to work in a class, workshop, rehearsal or performance environment.

By warming up, an actor becomes ready and able to communicate, interact, experiment, play and affect others in the playing space. They're better able to access and manage the nine movement techniques (of facial expression, posture, gesture, gait, weight, space, time, energy and proxemics) and the nine voice techniques (of posture, breathing, pace, pitch, pause, projection, phrasing, tone and accents). Warm-ups can also help actors to focus their mental state, to forget the outside world and completely concentrate on the rehearsal task, as well as to be better aware of and able to access their emotions, thoughts and instincts.

Warm-ups ideally start every rehearsal. If time has not been allocated for warm-ups at the beginning of a rehearsal session, then the actors should arrive early and conduct their own warm-ups. There are many different types that can be used. Some movement based exercises focus on stretching and invigorating the body's muscles, whilst others on physical alignment and unity. With the voice, actors can choose to focus on accessing the breath system and better project the voice, or to develop clarity and dexterity of vocal expression. In preparing their mental state actors could work through warm-ups that improve their focus and redirect their attention away from distractions, or perhaps exercises that promote a relaxed state and increase their self-awareness.

Every time actors rehearse or perform they need to ensure that they:

- warm up the voice, body and mind to prepare it to work well
- develop whole-body awareness and control
- engage their whole breathing system, especially their diaphragm and connect their voice and movement
- work with an effective posture and body alignment
- vocalise and move freely without tension
- apply specific voice techniques to be able to whisper, shout, scream, sing or use other vocal communication extremes safely on stage
- apply specific movement techniques to be able to run, jump, fight, dance or use other physical communication extremes safely on stage
- develop flexibility, diversity and range in their movement, voice and mind.



The process of warming up together as a group can help to unify a cast and ensure they are working as one cohesive ensemble. If there's a voice or movement expert among the cast, they may be tasked with taking the lead in warm-ups. At other times this task could rotate from actor to actor across the rehearsal period.

Internet exploration

Hear from a professional director about rehearsals at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=O--glqM-j_M

Hint

If, as an actor, you're going to do a series of warm-ups with separate movement, voice and mind exercises, it's a good idea to start with the physical activities before doing the vocal ones. This is because the voice is, after all, the body (and the body is the voice). If you're physically prepared to work, then your vocalisation should happen more easily and effectively. There's no best practice for mental warm-ups, so whether your group wants to start or end with these is entirely up to you.

Activity 14.1: Breathing warm-up

1. As an actor lie on the floor on your back in a relaxed state with your hands resting over your abdomen area.
2. Slowly breathe in through the mouth, 'sending' the breath down to your hands. Hold the breath there for a few seconds and then slowly send the air out through the mouth.
3. Do this several times.
4. Try 'sending' the breath down to different parts of your body, repeating the steps above
5. Say the word "maaaa . . ." when exhaling and try to make the vowel sound last as long as you have breath.
6. Do this several times changing the consonants each time. (eg. 'da', 'fa', 'ya').
7. Repeat the exercise above with your back up against a wall. Make sure your legs are bent and that you are leaning against the wall for support.
8. After a while can you try and project your voice to the other side of the room? You will need long, deep breaths in and when you exhale you will need to control the amount of air released to ensure the sound stays constant and even.

Activity 14.2: Posture and mind warm-up

1. As an actor adopt a neutral position and take three slow, long breaths in and out
2. Maintaining this position, take a deep breath in, consciously relax and then release the breath with a vocal sigh. Repeat this several times.
3. Close your eyes and visualise your skeleton. Beginning with your feet, focus on each set of bones and joints. As you think about each area, consciously release all the tension from the surrounding muscles so that the area feels lighter and longer than it did before. Do this slowly with each area of the body, moving upwards from the feet ending with the neck and skull.
4. Now all your muscles are floating freely and are totally relaxed. Visualise a string coming out of the top centre of your head that is slowly and gently being pulled upwards. Keeping your body fluid and relaxed, notice what happens to your shoulders, chest, spine and pelvis. Feel a wonderful sense of readiness. This is the neutral position.

Activity 14.3: Voice warm-up

1. As an actor try saying these tongue twisters five times very quickly, exaggerating the consonants as you speak:
 - Red leather, yellow leather
 - The sixth sick sheik's sixth sheep's sick.
 - A cup of proper coffee in a copper coffee cup
 - Which witch wished which wicked wish?
2. Immediately following your tongue twisters, vocalise aloud a monologue or several lengthy dialogue lines maintaining the same pronunciation dexterity and energy that you utilised in the tongue twisters.

Activity 14.4: Vocal projection warm-up

1. As an actor find a place on the stage and choose a line that your character says, from the play you are working on.
2. Try saying the line aloud so that the sound carries to another actor who is close to you.
3. Say the line sending your voice to an actor who is far away.
4. Now turn out towards the audience seating and try sending the line to an imaginary audience member in the front row.
5. Then send it to someone halfway back.
6. Then to the back row.
7. Finally send your line to those seated upstairs in the next level (often referred to as the dress circle).
8. Repeat this entire process several times, saying the line with variations of dynamics (loudness/ softness).
9. Repeat the process again varying the intensity of the line.

Activity 14.5: Warm-up reflection

1. Identify as many of the advantages of warming up the voice after warming up the body that you can think of.
2. Identify any disadvantages of this warm-up sequence. Be as specific as you possibly can. Capture these advantages in you journal.

Internet exploration

Watch two different warm-ups of professional and student actors at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tc-hoG4nec

www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9zpXFvEWG4

Experimentation

Typically in the first part of the rehearsal period the director and the actors will experiment with the play; with the characters, their relationships, their interactions and the challenges they face. This is a really fun time and ideally it should take up the longest period of rehearsals. It's where the actors and director trial ideas, take risks, apply acting technique/s, explore the playing space in different ways and generally 'play' with the script.

Each scene or section of the play will be experimented with. The practitioners consider different ways for the dramatic action to unfold; discovering layers in the relationships and the script, uncovering different perspectives to the given situations and test how dramatic meaning can be generated and communicated. The tempo of the play is experimented with; different possibilities in the pacing and duration of not only the dialogue delivery, but also the speed at which events occur and the alacrity of the characters' behaviour and actions are explored. There's experimentation in creating actor-audience relationships; different ways to communicate with the audience, to include them spatially or even involve them participatively, might be experimented with.



Tempo

The speed at which the dialogue, interaction and events of a play occur.

At some point though, this trial and error free playtime must come to an end. Definite decisions about the staging, delivery and characterisation need to be made if the production is going to progress to the next level. Sometimes in rehearsals a director will consciously and clearly move to the decision-making stage early in the process, whilst others will finalise ideas just before the show opens.

Building a character

One of the focuses during the experimentation stage of rehearsals is for the actors to create characters. The process by which an actor does this will vary according to the style of the play, the approach of the director, the actor's preferences and, especially, the acting methodology and technique chosen to create it.

In representational drama an actor almost always plays a single character. This is primarily for two reasons: Firstly to allow them the time, focus and energy required to create the type of in-depth, multi-layered, psychologically-rich three-dimensional character that most plays of this performance style require. Secondly it's to encourage the audience to believe in the performance as being a slice of real life. If they were to see an actor play one character in one scene, and then a different character in the next, their suspension of disbelief would be interrupted as they're reminded that the

Three-dimensional character

A well-rounded, multi-layered part within a drama that has an active inner life and a detailed history.

characters in front of them are not real. Usually the only exception to one actor playing one character in this type of drama is if there is a very large number of characters and too few actors to play the parts. In this case, some actors may play multiple roles. It's likely that their physical appearance will be altered from character to character through the aesthetics (costume and make-up) and the actor's interpretation (voice, movement and characterisation).

In presentational drama actors can play characters that range from two- to three-dimensionality. Those that are more towards the two-dimensional spectrum tend to be somewhat simple, stereotypical or superficial, and are not usually psychologically complex. These parts in a play are termed *roles*, rather than *characters*. In presentational drama an actor may take on only one part for the entirety of the performance or they could shift roles during the piece. For example, they might play one character in the first section or episode, and then a new one the next. They might play multiple characters over the course of the play. If they do play more than one role, an actor needs to be extremely adaptable and versatile in how they create each role; how they vocalise and physicalise, interact with other roles, use the space, carry out activities, communicate with the audience and so on. Each role will need to be clearly defined and distinguishable from the others.

Shifting roles

The sharing of a role amongst more than one actor during a single performance, or the enacting of more than one role by a single actor during a performance.

Sometimes in presentational drama there might be two or more actors playing the same character at different points in the play. The actors will need to work very closely together in the creation of this character, paying attention to the many fine physical, vocal and mental details of the character, to ensure they have continuity in performance and that the audience accepts the change. To help both the actors and the audience in the changing-performer transition process, sometimes this will occur in the playing space in full view of the audience.

Hint

The term role can be somewhat confusing because, in addition to it meaning an acting part, it can also refer to the job that a practitioner does when working in the theatrical and entertainment industries. For example, a designer could answer the question, 'What's your role in this production?' with 'I'm a costume designer'. An actor, however, could answer it either based on their job, 'I'm an actor' or on the part they play, 'I'm playing Romeo'.

Whilst the specific methodology and technique used to create a role or character will vary from production to production, one process that is popular across many approaches is to integrate improvisation. If an actor wants to experientially understand more about the part they're playing, then they will use their character to improvise by placing them in settings, situations or relationships that are not part of the script. These could be completely imagined or they might be alluded to in the play. They could fit in-between scenes, just before or after the play begins, or in the distant past or future.

When an actor finds that their character is stagnating, if they've become too mechanical or are doing things repeatedly in the same way that is no longer believable or doesn't match with the dramatic action, they might improvise to break the ineffective patterns. Improvisation brings spontaneity and new experiences to a scene.

In presentational drama it can assist the actor to make their actions more purposeful and, if appropriate, flesh out a two-dimensional role. For example, improvisation can be used in character mapping to chart their role's history and past experiences before the play began, as well as the way they are connected, or not, to other characters and events. In representational drama improvisation can help the actor understand the psychology of their character and develop a rich inner life. For example, in addition to character mapping, it can help the character to fully explore their given circumstances and to uncover the motivation behind the things they say and do. Improvisation can also assist the actor in where to direct their circle of attention at any given moment. That is to know where and on what/whom to focus on at a particular point during a scene.

For more information on acting technique and processes, see **Chapter 2: Acting**.

If there isn't time for improvisation in rehearsal, then actors can individually improvise in their own time. This could be as simple as walking down the street in character, getting ready for bed, eating lunch, reading a book, catching a train or doing the shopping as their character. Of course it becomes much more difficult to individually improvise a major event where there are many characters involved. While an actor may not be able to improvise a bus accident by themselves, they could improvise waking up in an ambulance after the accident. Similarly a marriage ceremony is difficult to do alone, but styling hair or putting on make-up for that wedding is definitely achievable.

Character mapping

The notating of a character's situation (their relationships and given circumstances within the time and space of their world) and the tracking of their journey across the play, including the events they take part in, their major actions and their changes internally, externally and with others.

Internet exploration

Hear from a director working at England's National Theatre about discovery and experimentation at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=7V9If3aPpuM

Spatial awareness in representational theatre

Part of the experimentation process is learning about, testing and working with the playing space. The playing space is the area utilised by actors, designers and directors to realise a dramatic work. It can sometimes have exactly the same geography as the regular stage space, at other times a scenographer adapts the stage (or the whole venue) to create an amended or an entirely new playing space. Where the space is, in relation to the audience, and how it is accessed by both the actors and the audience during performance will affect the dramatic meaning and the relationship between performer and audience member.

In representational drama there exists between the playing space and the audience an imaginary see-through wall. This is sometimes called the fourth wall because many settings of realistic and naturalistic plays, especially those written around the turn of last century, take place within the room of a house. Three of the four walls of this room typically frame the stage-right, up

Playing space

The three-dimensional performance space

Imaginary fourth wall

The impression of an invisible barrier that runs across the front of the stage between the actors and the audience.

stage and stage-left boundaries of the playing space. The final see-through wall that supposedly exists between the actors and the audience becomes, therefore, an imaginary fourth wall. Behind this imaginary wall actors play out their drama as if the audience is not there, interacting with each other with a disregard for the people watching them. In turn, the audience members suspend their disbelief and accept that the play in front of them is basically real for its duration.

Suspension of disbelief

The acceptance of something unreal being real for a period of time.

For more information on venues, stages and space see **Chapter 10: Performance Spaces**.

When an actor is moving in the playing space in a representational play, their disregard of the audience is not as complete as it seems. The actor always has an awareness of the audience, but this awareness is not shown, nor alluded to in any way. Ultimately this means that an actor needs to be able to move through the space, interact with other characters and carry out activities as if the audience aren't there, yet ideally ensuring the audience can still see the action, hear the vocal communication and understand the dramatic meaning. The exception to this can be when acting in plays that are of pure naturalism.

Because truly naturalistic plays are a study of human nature, behaviour and psychology, one could argue that a character should not be aware of the audience at all. Thus if they happen to do the whole play facing up-stage and away from the audience, then that would be acceptable. Conversely some practitioners would argue that drama is always *for* an audience, so if that audience can't see and hear the actors, then they can't understand what's going on and they can't, therefore, effectively study human nature. Many people take a blended approach when acting in naturalism; having a limited awareness of the audience, enough to ensure meaning is communicated, but not enough to dictate spatial usage.

From a functional perspective actors need to take care when turning towards other characters to communicate to them or when going up stage to do a particularly important activity. In the process of turning to someone else or in moving away from the audience, actors are likely to turn their back on the viewers. Their back then might become a barrier preventing meaning from being exchanged. The direction of the body facing away from the audience might also mean acoustically the sound won't travel well through the seating area. In solving this challenge actors may need to stand in profile to the auditorium when communicating so that both the other character and the audience can see and hear at the same time. It might mean that instead of taking a direct route up stage the actor will choose an indirect path revealing their profile, or will find a reason to semi-turn back towards the front. It could be that the listening actor in a communication exchange, or the object that is part of a crucial activity, are placed down stage. Then when the first actor speaks or moves they will naturally be facing the audience.

If the actor wants to completely face the audience for a long period of time, they would need to find a reason to do so. For example they might look through an imaginary window in the fourth wall or at an imaginary object supposedly placed on that fourth wall. They could be turning away from the other up-stage character because they want to hide their reactions and emotions, or take time out to think or reflect on something. In such situations the audience almost shares in a secret with the character who is facing them, because they see something that the other characters are excluded from. This helps the audience to suspend their disbelief and be drawn into the inner world of the play, to be affected by the mood and atmosphere, and to feel empathy for the characters.

Hint

This doesn't mean that as an actor you should never turn your back on the audience. Turning your back on them is fine when moving from one place to another, when saying a couple of lines (but not a whole monologue) or when doing part of an activity. Experimenting with the playing space and the audience is the key to eventually making some effective movement choices.

There will, of course, be times when an actor will want to purposely turn away from the audience. Perhaps they want to hide something from them; something that may or may not be revealed later in the play. Maybe the focus is not on the actor who has their back to the audience, but instead on another character who is speaking. In this case it could be appropriate for the first actor to be facing away from the audience, physically signalling to the viewers to look elsewhere. In fact sometimes deliberately having the actor's back to the audience not only helps the viewers know where *to* and *not to* look, but it also can be used as a staging convention to help establish the time, space, situation and relationships.



Activity 14.6: Experimenting with body direction

1. Work in a small group of four people to experiment with body direction, using an excerpt from a script that you are currently studying in class. Two people will be actors and two people will be audience members.
2. The actors will deliver their lines moving about the stage. Actor One will only be able to move from left to right in the U/S area. Actor Two will only be able to move from left to right in the D/S area. The two actors must face each other at all times, which means that person two will regularly have their back to the two audience members.
3. Actors try out the scene! Audience members notice how this blocking affects their communication, both with each other and with you. Is it effective? What works and what doesn't work?
4. Once you have done the scene and BEFORE the four of you discuss it, swap the pairs over, repeating the steps above.
5. Once both pairs have been actors and also audience members debrief on the experience and share what you discovered.

Hint

As an actor if you do have your back to the audience and you have to speak, remember your voice will be traveling away in the opposite direction from them. So you will need to project even more than normal to be heard.

Spatial awareness in presentational drama

Clearly, given there are so many types of presentational drama, there are also many different approaches to using the playing space successfully. Because an actor's movement is, at least in part, stylised and externally driven, the way they utilise the playing space also tends to include a level of stylisation. This might draw on the work of a theatrical practitioner, such as Jerzy Grotowski or Rudolf von Laban to move, use the space and interact with the other roles, characters, and the audience.

It's often appropriate to turn-out and directly address the audience either in-character such as through an aside, or in breaking character and allowing the actor personally to communicate with the audience. Whether it's the character or actor speaking to the audience, they could be doing so to comment on the action, provide narrative information, give warning of what's about to happen, talk about the other roles and characters, or share insights and secrets with those watching. Interacting with the audience in this way encourages a strong conscious relationship between actor and audience member, which is an appropriate and often necessary practice in presentational drama. For example in Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre direct address to the audience is one of the conventions used to employ the *verfremdungseffekt*, also known as the alienation effect. By breaking the dramatic action and talking directly to the audience about the events, the characters involved in them, or society at large, the actor is both preventing the viewers from becoming too emotionally involved with the action and also prompting them to think more consciously about it.

Sometimes an ensemble will remain on stage, in full view of the audience throughout the play, even when they're not part of the dramatic action in the main playing space. For example, they might sit or stand in a designated 'non-acting' spectator place on the stage side and watch the action, just like the audience. In other productions where the actors do leave the stage completely, they might enter and exit not only from the wings, but also from behind the audience. They could play out some of the action in amongst the audience, whether in the seating or the aisles between two sections.

Verfremdungseffekt

Alienation effect in English. A technique first employed in the west by Bertolt Brecht to distance the audience from the action, allowing them to think about, rather than emote over, the events, as well as their causes and impacts.



The way in which the actors use the playing space is often affected in a major way by the other dramatic elements, such as time, setting, situation and relationships. For example, if time is being manipulated with conventions such as freeze and slow motion, then an actor will need to use their energy, control and flexibility to animate one moment and then be still the next. When freezing they will need to hold their body completely motionless in a particular position for a certain time period, whilst something else occurs on stage. For slow motion, they will need to manipulate every muscle and joint so they are able to move through space at a consistent, slow, meaningful pace. The situation and setting might affect the way the actors are able to use the space. If the stage is relatively bare, then the actors may need to fill the space, more with their bodies. Perhaps they will need to travel further across the space and more often. They may be required to imagine that certain objects are in the space and move around them accordingly. In some highly presentational theatre styles they may even need to mime their use of objects, to become an inanimate object themselves or to endow a particular prop, through their physicalisation, with different meanings.

Freeze

Holding an energised physical position without moving for a suspended period of time.

Apart from working with Grotowski or von Laban's movement and spatial theories, actors need to understand how the space works inside the playing space, and how it has an impact on their relationships within it. They can increase this awareness by undertaking a range of spatial exploring improvisational activities. Viola Spolin, a famous American actress who was instrumental in using improvisation to help actors improve their acting technique wrote:


SPACE WALK and SPACE SHAPING exercises (below) are ways of perceiving/sensing/experiencing the environment (space) around us as an actual dimension in which all can enter, communicate, live, and be free. Each player becomes a receiving/sending instrument capable of reaching out beyond the physical self and the immediate environment ... Objects made of space substance may be looked upon as thrusts/projections of the (invisible) inner self into the visible world, intuitively perceived/sensed as a manifest phenomenon, real! When the invisible (not yet emerged, inside, unknown) becomes visible – seen and perceived – theater magic!

Spolin (1963, 1999) *Improvisation for the theatre*, (3rd Ed.). Northwestern Uni Press

Below are some improvisation exercises inspired by Spolin's work to help actors explore the playing space, to use it to their advantage and to feel comfortable in it.

Activity 14.7: Exploring space

1. As an actor find your own position in the rehearsal space/stage and stand in neutral.
2. Allow yourself to reach out and gather a handful of 'space', as if it is an actual object or living thing. Hold the substance in your hand, feel the shape it makes in your palm and the weightlessness of it.
3. Move your whole arm through the space allowing yourself to register the way the space feels against your arm and how your arm moves through it.
4. Try moving your foot and leg through the space. Balance some space on your foot, your ankle, your knee. Gently kick the space and then catch it in your hand.

- 
5. In your own time, try moving through the space consciously making contact with it. Allow yourself to continually think about the space substance against your skin, on your shoulder, in amongst your hair and so on.
 6. Move the space around; send it up, down, under other things, across the floor, bounce it, throw it, cut through it and so on.
 7. Get to know the different variations of space substance in every part of the rehearsal room/stage. Notice the difference of how it feels in different areas of the room.



Activity 14.8: Resting on space

1. Break into pairs. One person will move through the space and one person will side-coach. The person side-coaching will instruct the moving person on ways to interact with the space so that it supports different parts of their partner's body.

For example:

'Extend your right arm to a 45 degree angle to the body. Allow it to rest on the space as it is extended. As it rests on the space below it, stretch the fingertips out to touch more space that is just to the right of the body.'

Or

'Standing upright in a neutral position, allow your back to lean back against the space which is just behind you. Feel it cushion your back. Try pressing your shoulder blades back into the space one at a time, feel how the space shifts from side to side to accommodate each push.'

2. Swap over after five minutes or so.



Activity 14.9: Objects of and in space

1. As an actor, working individually, discover an object made from the space substance.
2. Play with it.
3. Move it around the space.
4. Manipulate it around the space; under other objects (whether these are real or made of space substance). Explore how it moves when it makes contact with these different objects.
5. Working individually, this time discover a space substance object that is bigger than you are.
6. Play with it.
7. How can you move this space object off the stage and into the audience?
8. How can you move it outside into the foyer or another room?
9. What happens when you take it outside into the open air?

Blocking

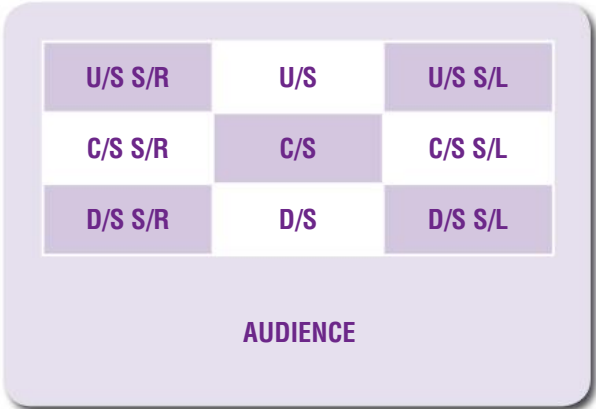
Once the actors and director have experimented with the script on the rehearsal room floor, once they’ve utilised their voice and movement to build character, explore the changing dynamics between them and the action within playing space and so on, they will make decisions about the blocking. Blocking is a process of working out not only *where* characters move to, but also *when* and *how* they move. It’s a way of organising the action of the play so that the situation, character relationships, building tension and so on, work together to enable the dramatic action to unfold and to communicate the dramatic meaning to the audience. It’s also a way of focusing the audience’s attention. An audience will, most often, look at the person on stage that is moving or the place on stage where the action is.

Focus
The point that is of most interest to an audience member.

The director will work closely with the actors in rehearsal to make decisions about how they will use the space in performance; whether to stand, sit, lean or move, as well as to which place, in what way and at what point. By blocking each scene, the actors are given a spatial movement template to utilise in performance.

When making blocking choices it is vital to know and use the geography of a stage accurately. The playing space can be divided into nine smaller areas. Each area is referred to by its location that is one or more of the following terms:

- **C/S** = centre stage
- **D/S** = down stage
- **U/S** = up stage
- **R/S** = right of stage or stage-right
- **L/S** = left of stage or stage-left



In moving within and blocking the space the geographical areas are named not from the audience’s perspective, but the actors’.

How prescriptive the blocking is will depend on the style of the play, the approach of the director and the needs of the actors. Sometimes it’s extraordinarily prescriptive and rigid, with actors being required to move on a particular word in a line, with a definitive amount of steps for a specific number of seconds. At other times, the blocking will be freer and more generalised, with actors knowing the vague place they’ll move to and an approximate time in the script that they’ll do so.

In yet other productions the blocking may be merely a guideline or suggestion. That is, the actors can deviate from the blocking decisions during performance, should they feel the inspiration to do so. One challenge for the actor, whether working with rigid or generalised blocking, is to make the blocking seem spontaneous. The most reliable way to do this is to make each movement, including each blocking decision, purposeful. In representational drama it’s also helpful to underpin all blocking choices with an internal objective.

After making decisions about the blocking, actors will record them by making annotations in the script. Whilst the stage manager does write down the blocking in a master copy of

the script, it is each actor's job to record and remember their own blocking. In addition to using acronyms for the geographical areas of the stage, actors and stage managers will often use a range of symbols such as:

→	Arrows to indicate the direction of the movement
(K)	The first letter of characters' names to indicate characters
@	At
& or +	And
x	Cross or crossing

For example in *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, the blocking for Ophelia might be:

x d/s of (K)

[To King.] There's fennel for you, and columbines.

^

→2(Q) [To Queen.] There's rue for you; and here's some for me

→c/s table & sit

Learning lines

Lines, the words that roles and character speak, are an extremely important part of most drama works. As such, it's absolutely imperative that an actor learns their lines. In fact, they should not only learn them, but accurately learn when to say them, to whom to say them and why to say them. There's nothing worse than an actor continuously forgetting their lines or getting them round the wrong way. This can easily throw the other cast members off and make them jump their own lines or miss important sections of action. It's not only the other actors who find this challenging, but also the entire technical and backstage crew who are likely to then make mistakes. For example, how is a lighting board operator supposed to know when to change to the next lighting state if the actor keeps jumping forward and backwards within a scene?

The question of when an actor needs to learn their lines is also important. If they have a script in their hand right up until opening night, then they're far less likely to connect meaningfully with other characters, because they will keep looking down at the lines, which will physically become a barrier between themselves and the other characters. They're also less likely to experiment effectively, to take risks and try out new ideas, if they're continuously being inhibited by a script. However an actor doesn't want to learn the lines too early in the rehearsal process. Having a script in hand early on in rehearsals encourages the actor to experiment vocally when communicating without worrying about which line comes next. Once the lines have been learned it's more difficult for some actors to be flexible in the way they communicate, because not only have they learnt the lines, they've often subconsciously learnt a pattern about the way they articulate the lines.

Once an actor has decided that it's the right time in the rehearsal period to learn the lines, they might choose from a variety of different methods to do so.

Some actors read their lines over and over again, saying them out loud to themselves, their peers, families, the mirror or even their pet dog until they learn them. Some people prefer to write them out because the process of putting pen to paper and constructing the lettering seems to help in remembering them. Some actors record their lines on a smart phone or tablet, and then listen to them over and over again. Yet other actors choose to record the lines of the *other* characters in the play, with carefully measured pauses in between that then allow them, when listening to the recording, to say their own lines live along with what they hear. In this way the actor gets to know not only their own lines, but also what makes them say their lines, to whom they're speaking and what their cues are.

Internet exploration

Hear from a professional American actor about learning lines at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbaBhBbwxD4

Hint

There is a tendency for young actors to get hung-up about their lines. It's too easy for an actor to focus on how many lines they have, what number of scenes they're in, or whether their lines are superficial or more conducive to a deeper level of characterisation. It's important to remember that acting is not about how many lines someone has, but rather about how they use their lines to act, characterise and contribute to the dramatic action. As a speaker's meaning tends to be communicated not predominantly through their words, but through their body, all actors have the opportunity to give a dynamic, engaging and meaning performance, irrespective of their number of lines.

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

Claudio Girardi – Actor

Originally based in Perth, Western Australia Claudio moved to Asia in late 2006 in order to complete studies in a Bachelor of Performing Arts [Acting] at LA SALLE College of the Arts. Whilst based there his theatre credits include Escape Theatre's *The Lord of the Flies*, Action Theatre's *Real Men, Fake Orgasms* and *Theatre Idols*, the Singapore Repertory Theatre's *Agamemnon* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Barry Kyle. In Australia Claudio's credits include *Cloudstreet* and *Here to Stay* with the WA Youth Theatre Company, *Heart's Desire* with Black Swan Theatre Company and *2nd Oldest Profession* with Agelink Theatre Company. He has recently completed a Masters at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London, where he now freelances as an actor. Claudio has also worked extensively in the Film/TV industries in Australia, Singapore and the United Kingdom.





Claudio on performance preparation:

- **Memorising:** One of the most dreaded tasks an actor must face! Keep it simple and logical, your character says their particular lines for a reason; once you understand why they say these things, then the lines will be a much easier task.

Question the script; What does this line mean? Why does she/he say it?

DON'T just recite the lines, develop a thought process and understanding behind them.

- **Workshopping:** Never underestimate the potential of workshops. They may be short, they may be a repetition of principals and skills you have already learnt (or think you have learnt) before, however they might just hold the key to increasing the potential of your performance.

New skills can be learnt. Remember the repetition of old skills always supports the process of consistently improving, polishing and evaluating your technique as a performer.

- **Rehearsing:** The key to an effective rehearsal is the ability to explore and play! The rehearsal period is a forum to both achieve and fail equally. Allow yourself to do both.

Use the time wisely to explore characters and situations; push the boundaries, try something new.

I think a common misconception within the rehearsal period is that nobody wants to get it 'wrong' - but this defeats the purpose of the rehearsal period! We must be able to explore as many possibilities and alternatives as we can, to ensure that when the work finally does cross from rehearsal room onto the stage that it is presented driven by the quantity and quality of textual, physical, emotional and vocal explorations discovered in rehearsal.'



Claudio as Fish Lamb in WA Youth Theatre Company's 2006 Production of Tim Winton's *Cloudstreet*

Run-throughs

When the actors rehearse the play in sequence from end to end, without stopping, they are *running-through* the show. Colloquially these are referred to simply as *runs*. The first time the actors, director and stage manager usually carry out a run is either in its entirety towards the end of the rehearsal period, or in part after a large section has been blocked (such as an entire act of the play). Sometimes the practitioners will do a stop-start run, where the action will flow *until* there is a major problem or until the director or stage manager takes issue (good or bad) with something in the playing space. If a run is undertaken with the aim to not stop, any problems will have to be overcome by the actors and crew through improvisation or problem-solving techniques whilst the play continues to unfold.

During a run it's likely the director and stage manager will take copious amounts of notes. These will then be discussed with the actors and crew after the run has finished. The scenes or sections that pertain to some of the major notes will be re-rehearsed, either

before the session finishes or early in the morning the following day. Usually successive rehearsals will be determined based on how the run goes. If more work needs to be done on the blocking, then a rehearsal will be scheduled to deal with it. If more voice, movement or character work is needed, then these areas will be further rehearsed. If character relationships, interchanges or events are not working well, then they will be rehearsed further. Ideally, these intensive focus-specific rehearsals will occur before the next run-through, otherwise the same issues and mistakes are likely to occur once again.

Dress rehearsals

A dress rehearsal is a special type of run-through where the actors wear and rehearse in the costumes that they will use in performance. The initial dress rehearsal is the first time the costumes and the dramatic action are put together, and thus it's the first time everyone gets to test out how they work and to get a feel for what the real performance will be like. They ensure the costumes work properly on stage and look the way the designer wanted them to. Actors get the chance not only to practise acting in their costumes, but also changing in and out of them between scenes, including any quick changes. They may need to adapt some of their movement because of restrictions in the costume mobility or adjust some of their stage business because their accessories get in the way.

Quick change

Where an actor switches rapidly from one costume to another.

Sometimes it is the costumes that will be slightly adjusted post-dress rehearsal, rather than the physicalisation of an actor, to make them work effectively on stage.

Although it should be avoided if in any way possible, sometimes at this late stage major changes may need to be made to a costume or, even worse, an entirely new one created. This is costly, time consuming and stressful, not to mention sometimes having a damaging impact on the relationships between the costume designer and the other practitioners involved. In reality it's rare that a whole costume is abandoned at this point in preproduction. More likely is that only one item within a costume, such as a shirt or a hat, might be replaced with something else. Sometimes it only becomes apparent at the dress rehearsal stage that particular costume parts don't work or don't work the way the designer was hoping they would.



Sitzprobe

If there's singing in the production, such as in opera, musical theatre and other drama works with music, then a sitzprobe will occur. Similarly to the initial dress rehearsal being the first time the acting and the costumes are put together, a sitzprobe is the first time the orchestra musicians and the singers come together.



In this session the performers do not physically enact the show. This rehearsal is about the *music*; the combination of instrumentalists and vocalists, of getting cues for songs right, making sure the tempos (speeds) are correct, working out the number of turn-around bars that might be needed for some dramatic action or a scene change to occur and so on.

Sitzprobe

The process of integrating the actors (singers) with the musicians during a stand-and-sing rehearsal.

Turn-around bar

A very small section of music that is played repeatedly to allow dialogue, costume changes or scene changes to be completed.

Scene-change

The movement of set and props between two sections of a performance.

Technical rehearsals

More commonly known as *tech runs*, these occur in the playing space in theatre venue once the technical scenography, lighting and sound components have been bumped-in and plotted. The actors will run the show, in costume, whilst the stage manager, board operators and other crew members practise cueing and changing the lighting and sound states, as well as the set pieces, at the correct times. The designers may also make some adjustments to the states to make sure the desired effect is achieved. The actors may be given instructions about how they need to use the playing space in order to make the design and technical components work. For example, an actor may be told where exactly they need to stand on the stage at a particular point to be correctly in the light.

Sometimes if time is short, technical rehearsals may not include a full run of the show. Instead the practitioners will do a top-and-tail stop-start run. This is when after the first cue has been called and the corresponding technical lighting/sound/set transition completed, the stage manager may ask the actors to skip lines and jump forward to just before the next cue point. The actors will pick up the action and run the scene from the requested place allowing the stage manager and their team to practise the new cue and transition.

Technical rehearsals ultimately are *not* about the actor. In fact, actors can often find these type of rehearsals rather boring and time-consuming. It's likely they may have to repeat the same cue line several times, or that they will have to do a lot of waiting around on stage or in the wings whilst the crew sort out technical issues. Unfortunately for the actors, it needs to be a silent and still type of waiting, often in the dark. Whilst the actors are waiting, the crew are working extremely hard to make the design components of the production work and overcome the technical issues that have arisen.

Plotting

The process of hanging each fixture in its correct location with the correct accessories.

Cue

A signal to change the lighting, sound, AV or set during a performance.

Top-and-tail rehearsal

A rehearsal where only the sections of the production that include cue lines for and changes of lighting, sound, AV or set are run.

Final dress rehearsals

After the technical rehearsal one, or if it's a large-scale production, two or three, final dress rehearsals occur. These run like real performances, except that the auditorium is empty of audience members. Every aspect of the production, from the acting to the costumes, sound to lighting, set to props, will run as if an audience is watching. The director and stage manager will take notes during the rehearsal and discuss these with the performers and crew directly after the run. This is also the last chance for the actors and crew members to ask questions or discuss issues with members of the creative and production teams before the performance period begins.



Curtain call

One of the last things to prepare before performance is the curtain call. This is when the actors will take a bow and show the audience that they appreciate their attention, support and applause. After a first bow the actors will often gesture to the control room, showing their thanks for the hard work of the unseen crew and indicating to the audience to also applaud them.



The bows are called a curtain call because in traditional proscenium arch theatres the actors would be called to assemble in a line behind the closed curtains at the end of the play. They would then wait until the curtains opened again to take their bow in front of the audience. Despite that many venues today do not have a proscenium arch, nor any curtains, the practice is still referred to as a curtain call. It needs to be planned and rehearsed, including with lighting and sometimes sound, to make sure it, just like all aspects of the production, are ready for performance.

Internet exploration

Watch a time-lapse of a bump-in, technical and dress rehearsal of a musical at WAAPA at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLud2Yi9BH0

Performance

After much hard and creative work, the company will arrive at the beginning of their performance season. This period usually includes:

- **Preview:** a performance before the official opening night to test the show on a real audience. Sometimes there are several previews in large scale big-budget productions.
- **Opening night:** this is the first official public performance.
- **The run:** performances are given daily, or even twice-daily, during the production season.
- **Closing night:** this is the last official public performance.

Company

All practitioners, cast and crew, who are part of a performance. Also a commercial business entity producing a dramatic work.

Season

All the performances of a single production. Also the collective productions within a finite period, usually a year, of a particular theatre company.

Previews

Previews are, in fact, fully-fledged performances. The only difference between a preview and a regular performance is that the ticket prices might be slightly cheaper and the audience is more likely to be patient if a mistake occurs during the performance. Members of the press are often invited in the hope they will review the show. From an acting and crew perspective it's the last chance to get things right before the official audience. A preview allows the performers to work out how long an audience needs to react to something such as a joke or a tension-filled moment. Plus it also gives them the opportunity to get a sense of when the audience is engaged and when they're not.

An engaged audience is likely to be laughing, making non-verbal sounds or even clapping at various points in a comedy or highly presentational piece of drama. In a more serious or representational drama if it's not appropriate for the audience to make non-verbal sounds during the performance, however engaged they may be, then it's likely they will be absolutely silent. A disengaged audience by comparison might keep moving or shifting in their seats, they may whisper inappropriately, or not laugh, clap, sigh or gasp at the moments the actors expect them to. By learning what a preview audience reacts to and in what way they react, the actors and director can make adjustments to accommodate this before the opening night performance. It is also the last official chance that the stage manager, operators and crew get to create a smooth, technically-accurate show.

Opening night

Important members of the producing theatre company, sponsors and special guests are invited to attend the first official performance of the production. After the show finishes there's an opening night party where the cast, crew, creative and production teams celebrate their achievements with members of the producing company and the special invited guests. If the press did not attend during the previews they may be invited to opening night.

Once the play does reach performance, the stage manager steps up and takes control in managing the production. The director needs to let go and hand over the show to the stage manager, cast and crew, trusting that the ensemble will effectively continue

the play's journey. This doesn't mean the actors and stage manager will necessarily consciously change anything, but instead will embrace organic, justified developments if and when they occur. Occasionally a director may give one or two notes after opening night, or a subsequent performance during the run, just to make sure things are on track.

The run

The run follows opening night and in a professional production there are usually eight shows per week; six evening shows and two matinees. In Australia the matinees are usually on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. The cast and crew will have just one day off to rest during the performance run.

During the run it's important the cast and crew don't become complacent simply because opening night was a success. Sometimes during the second or third performance, when the ensemble know that they can do the show and do it well, they can easily lose focus and energy. Actors and crew need to conserve their energy and physically look after themselves, especially when a run includes two shows in a single day. If they don't get enough sleep and don't eat well, they're more likely to become unfocused or undisciplined on stage, causing the performance to suffer.



Closing night

Finally the last performance of a run is closing night. This can be a show of mixed emotions with people feeling happy that their schedule will free up, but disappointed their creativity and hard work will come to an end. Friendships are often forged when working on a show and it can be difficult to say either say goodbye or to maintain them longer term when working on different projects.

Most importantly the cast and crew must stay one hundred percent focused throughout the closing night performance. They need to be in the moment, allowing themselves to be the best they can be on stage and behind the scenes, and save their emotion and fun for the celebrations once the final curtain goes down.

CHAPTER 15

Society, Form and Style

Key Concepts

- ☛ Society, form and style
- ☛ Drama form
 - Tragedy
 - Comedy
 - Drama with music
- ☛ Historical drama style
 - Representational drama
 - Presentational drama
- ☛ Ancient Roman drama
- ☛ Late-Renaissance Europe
 - Elizabethan theatre
 - Christopher Marlow and William Shakespeare
 - Theatre audience
 - English Restoration drama
 - Women and the stage
 - The birth of theatre criticism
- ☛ 17th and 18th century European drama
 - Jean Baptiste Molière
 - Carlo Goldoni
- ☛ 19th, Early- and Mid-20th century drama
 - Drawing room comedies and Oscar Wilde
 - Melodrama
 - Science and reason
 - Realism
 - Henrik Ibsen
 - French novelists and naturalism
 - Naturalism in drama
 - August Strindberg
 - Anton Chekhov
 - Konstantin Stanislavski
 - Understanding Stanislavski's System
 - Expressionism
 - Eugene O'Neill
 - Bertolt Brecht
 - Theatre of cruelty
 - Post-war realism
 - Contemporary musical theatre
 - Jerzy Grotowski
 - Peter Brook

SOCIETY, FORM AND STYLE

For centuries, millenniums in fact, drama has been used by different cultures in unique ways to help them make sense of the world around them, and also to sustain and preserve that world. Drama reflects the values and beliefs of the society that creates it, and the norms that that society lives by. A norm is a pattern of living that a particular culture has; a generally accepted guideline for a community of people about how to behave, including how interact

Culture

The collective beliefs, customs, behaviours of a particular community of people.

with one another, that supports the group's values and beliefs. Drama either reflects the group norms, sustaining the underlying values and beliefs, or it attempts to disrupt the norms, disputing the values and beliefs. Sometimes a dramatic work can do both. When creating or studying drama it's therefore crucial to understand the society in which it is being, or was, created.

Drama works can be categorised into different clusters, called forms, where each cluster has a set of characteristics demonstrated by the works that belong to it. Forms are delineated by sets of general nature characteristics and basic structural types. Within each form there can be different styles of drama. Style usually refers to an even more unique set of characteristics of a subset of plays within the same form. When referring to style in this sense, it's most accurate to use the term *Historical Style*.

Belief

The faith or acceptance that something is true or in existence, often without tangible, measurable or scientifically reliable proof.

Value

The principles that a group of people (or an individual) live by, including the creation of norms, guidelines and standards of behaviour that reinforce these principles.

Form

A dramatic category that groups works together that share similar general characteristics or structures.

Historical style

The drama developed by a particular culture at a specific period in time, which has a set of unique characteristics.

DRAMA FORM

There are too many forms in drama to be covered in this chapter. It is important, however, to consider some of the most popular forms including tragedy, comedy and drama with music. The two masks, one of a frowning face and one of a smiling face, have become symbols of not merely theatre, but also the Tragedy and Comedy forms that have made up much of Western theatre for over two thousand years. The masks were first used by the Ancient Greeks and worn by their Chorus members during performances. In tragic plays, the Chorus would wear masks with a kind of frowning or concerned expression, while in comedies they would wear masks that were smiling or laughing.

While at a very surface level the masks might signify sadness and happiness, they also indicate the constant tension in life that a person experiences between doing what is right, according to their community's moral values as well as their own personal beliefs, and what is not right. This tension is almost always, at least in some way, part of every drama.

Tragedy

Plays where the protagonist puts into action a series of events that inevitably lead to disaster by the end of the drama are tragedies. These plays typically end in death, imprisonment, abandonment, or some kind of grave physical or psychological damage to the protagonist themselves or other important characters.

Protagonist

The leading soloist in a drama who goes on a journey of change.

The impending negative outcome is unavoidable once the protagonist does a single important action early in the play. This action then sets off a chain reaction as the dramatic action unfolds. Their initial action could be made in error, due to some humanistic flaw in their character. Or it could be an event they accidentally take part in or a character that unexpectedly crosses their path, which triggers the later events. In tragedies, it can even be both of these things.

The incidents that the protagonist, and the other characters around them, experience evoke pity from the watching audience. The audience can typically see or suspect the impending doom before the characters do. They are likely to feel concern or fear for the characters as the inevitable comes closer during the play's progression. This mounting tension that both the characters and the audience experience will reach a peak, the climax of the play, and then a cathartic emotional release will occur. The great Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle first identified catharsis as an integral element to tragedy in his book *Poetics* written in 335 BC.

Catharsis

Release of built-up restrained or repressed emotions.

Aristotle

An Ancient Greek philosopher, scientist and literature specialist (384 BC to 322 BC).

Comedy

In Ancient Greece comedies competed, like the plays of the tragedy form, at festivals, such as the annual March Festival of Dionysus. There were typically three to five comedies as part of a festival. Where playwrights could enter four tragedies, they were only allowed to submit one comedy in the competition. At a similar time the Ancient Romans were adapting Greek scripts for their own entertainment, or borrowing the conventions of the Greeks to write comedies of their own. Whilst these may not have been as sophisticated as the Greeks in wit, character depth or unfolding plot, they certainly provided great entertainment for the Ancient Roman upper classes.

Since ancient times dramatic comedy has involved poking fun at or criticising the watching audience or the wider community that they're a part of. This lampooning process is often aimed at the establishment and those in authority. The idea is that the audience will laugh at themselves, their rituals and beliefs, as well as the figures that govern them, the governments and authorities. In *Poetics* when writing about character, Aristotle discussed that in comedies humans are shown as worse than they are in real life, whereas in tragedies they're depicted as being better than in real life. Comedy of this period relies heavily on stereotyping for its characters; they are far more two-dimensional than those of tragedy and their performance delivery style is often more exaggerated and physical.

Lampooning

To criticise a person, collective group or entity by public displays of sarcasm, irony, ridicule, teasing or parody.

The practice of the Ancient Greek and Roman playwrights writing tragedies and comedies, continued in later theatre traditions such as those of Renaissance Europe. In contemporary drama the line between the two forms is less distinct than it was hundreds (and thousands) of years ago. This is especially true of last century with audiences seeking drama, even when set in mythical locations with unreal characters, to be as true to life as possible.

Drama with music

Of all the drama forms, one of the most popular across the ages and the world, is Drama with Music. Almost every culture, whether in the east or the west, at some point in time, has created drama that uses music. Music in drama is where instrumental and/or vocal sounds (including speech) are produced utilising the musical elements, such as pitch and rhythm, to create sound and dramatic meaning.

The first cultures to use music in drama in the west were the Ancient Greeks in 6th century BC. Passages of dramatic text were sung to the accompaniment of instruments such as stringed lyres or wooden flutes. India Sanskrit drama, such as Koodiyattam, has been performed using music for two thousand years. The performers dance and act to the beat of percussive drums, symbols and flutes.

In some cultures music is a continuous accompaniment, for example the wayang kulit of Indonesia, the bunraku of Japan or the kathakali of India. In other cultures music is an integrated part of both creating and communicating dramatic action throughout the play, such as in European and Chinese opera. Today some contemporary Musical Theatre, such as *Les Misérables* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, follow the through-composed structure of classical and romantic European opera by having the characters sing every line of dramatic text. Before European opera, in the early Medieval period, some of the morality plays were entirely sung. In fact medieval liturgical drama was the seed of European opera in the 1500s.

Music

Sounds made by the voice, instruments, objects or all three to create audible pitch and rhythmic patterns.

Accompaniment

Instrumental music that supports vocalists or instrumental soloists.

Liturgical music

Religious songs, chanting or instrumental works that are part of the rituals of a particular faith.

STYLE

Because different cultures at different points across history have made dramatic works borrowing and building on conventions of cultures past, there have been many types of drama that share the same form, yet are quite different to each other. Of course there are also some stand alone unique historical styles of drama too. Historical style should not be confused with performance style.

There are two broad categories of performance style:

- **Presentational drama**
- **Representational drama**

Historical style

The drama developed by a particular culture at a specific period in time, which has a set of unique characteristics.

Presentation style

Drama that shows itself as a theatrical experience to the audience whilst the dramatic action unfolds. Because it focuses on the communication of ideas or the offering of a theatrical experience it often makes contact with the audience during performance.

Representational style

Drama that imitates life as it explores human psychology by placing characters in life-like situations and relationships on stage. Because it's an imitation of life the characters don't know the audience is there.

Representational drama

This type of performance aims to literally represent real life or, at least, a version of real life. The characters on stage, the way they think and feel, how they speak to and behave towards each other, the problems they find themselves experiencing and the way they experience them, remind the audience, if not of their own lives, of the lives of living people.

Because this style seeks to reflect reality, during performance the characters are so engrossed in what they're doing and who they're doing it with on stage, that they seem to ignore the audience. In fact, in most types of representational theatre, the characters don't even know the audience is there at all. Yet as they feel, emote and react on stage, the audience hopefully will feel too. As the characters discover more about themselves, their thoughts, emotions and psychology, the audience is likely to discover more too.

Hint

One of the reasons representational theatre is so popular today is because of the inventions of film and television. The ability to record the real has increased demand for the real in our on-screen dramas. Even science fiction, which most people believe is not true in real life, must be realistic on screen. The general public is used to seeing realistic acting every time they turn on their screens.

The advent of reality TV has only increased the popularity of representational drama. Reality TV turns real life into entertainment and therefore changes what viewers are used to and shifts what they expect. By exposing people to reality TV and documentaries, they want their dramas on screen and on stage to be the same; just like real life.

Presentation style

Where representational drama aims to imitate real life on stage, presentation style drama aims instead to present ideas on stage. Never does this style of theatre expect the audience to forget they're watching a play. In fact, often it requires the audience to contribute, even in a small way, to the performance. This could be as simple as making eye contact with the performers on stage, such as sometimes is the case in Ancient Roman drama, Elizabethan drama or holy theatre.

Eye contact, facing out to the audience and exchanging facial expressions are small, but important, ways to develop the actor-audience relationship in presentational theatre.

In other types of presentational drama audiences are more participative in the dramatic action, such in epic theatre where the actors might sit amongst or chat with the audience or in improvisation comedy where they might call out suggestions to the actors. This interactivity helps to develop the actor-audience relationship that is so important in presentational performance drama.

Personal style

A practitioner's particular method of working that results in unique work with characteristics distinct to that of others.

Hint

Over the years some practitioners and theatre ensembles have developed specific ways to work that are different to the techniques, processes and methods of others. These unique approaches might have an impact on that artist's (or group of artists') scriptwriting practice, the play's structure, production and design elements, and/or performance delivery. The specific way of working, and the work that results from it, is referred to as personal style.

Hint

If you're worried your meaning won't carry across to the listener or reader, don't just say 'style'. Try using the correct adjective in front of the word 'style,' to be more specific; performance, historical or personal.

ANCIENT ROMAN DRAMA

One of the earliest historical styles of presentational drama in the Western world is that of Ancient Rome. The period from 240-100 BC is known as the Roman Literary period, a time when playwrights wrote scripts to be performed by ensembles of actors for the entertainment of its citizens. Most of the plays during this period were adaptations or at least inspirations from their neighbours the Greeks, who had a highly developed cultural arts scene. The Ancient Greeks held annual drama festivals, such as the famous Festival of Dionysis where Greek playwrights competed. They entered performances of their new plays in hope of being awarded the best comedy or best tragedy prize.

Although there were performance in the Ancient Roman Empire prior to 240 BC, these tended to be comedic farces called **Atellanae** (named after the town where they first originated), tragic parodies called **Hilarotragodia**, plays enacting gossips and intrigues called **Phlyaces**, or a collection of songs, semi-enacted poems and masked dances. It wasn't until some Roman dramatists adapted the more dramatically complex Greek plays, often in their own Latin language, that the Romans took any real interest in sophisticated forms of drama. These new Roman plays were known as **Fabulae Palliatae**.

Ancient Greek drama

The dramatic works created and first performed in Ancient Greece from the 8th to 2nd century BC.

Fabulae Palliatae

Ancient Roman plot-driven plays written between 240-120 BC that were largely adaptations of Ancient Greek works. The term translates as pallium-wearing, or Greek-attired.

Hint

Although serious drama works were being written and performed from 240-100 BC, the first record of a permanent theatrical venue inside the city of Rome isn't until 55 BC. The rest of the Empire did construct theatres to house the new types of plays, but Rome itself is said to remain wary of the innovative style. In the central city actors performed during this period instead on wooden stages, many of which were temporary.

Two of the most famous Ancient Roman playwrights are Plautus (254-184 BC) and Publius Terentius Afer, known as Terence (195-159 BC). Plautus, considered the greatest playwright of Ancient Rome, wrote in a style that managed to be as appealing as the lighter, less-substantial works that the general public had been used to, with frequent inclusions of adventures and quests to keep audiences interested. Whilst he borrowed characters and events from Greek plays, his Latin scripts were not merely copies, but creative adaptations.

Terence wrote six comedies, all of which have survived to this day. He wrote not in Latin, but in Greek. Terence's comedies were considered highly influential on the Comedy of Manners plays written during the Restoration Period in Renaissance England. For more information on this historical style, see the next section.



Theater-Pompeii by an unknown artist
Photograph of work by Michael Grant

Internet exploration

Find out about the development of drama from Ancient drama, including the development from Greek to Roman theatre at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRy6KmOvZfU

LATE RENAISSANCE EUROPE

Over a millennium and a half later drama and the cultural arts were quite different in Europe to those of Ancient Rome and Greece. The term *renaissance* means rebirth and this is an apt term for the period in time it refers to, from late in the 14th to the end of the 17th centuries, given the vast amount of visual and performance artworks that were created during this time.

The Renaissance

A period in European history from late-14-16th centuries that included a resurgence in the value of literature, architecture, visual and performing arts.

Not only were there a large number of works created, but many new artistic techniques and conventions were developed during this time, such as the birth of the theatre company. There were many scientific discoveries that helped in the progress of the arts, such as the invention of the printing press, enabling scripts to be printed and plays publicised in posters. There were manufacturing developments, such as the creation of the slitting mill enabling the nails needed in theatre venues and set construction to be manufactured.

Elizabethan theatre

The drama created and performed during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I in England, from 1558 to 1603, is referred to as Elizabethan Theatre. Queen Elizabeth was a great lover of the arts and as such drama, poetry and music flourished while she was on the throne. Professional companies of actors, called players, would perform plays for her at Court, as well as at other houses of the nobility. Theatre companies needed to be supported, both visibly and financially, by members of the aristocracy, called patrons, in order to survive.

Queen Elizabeth I
The English and Irish Queen
from 1558 until 1603.

The construction of buildings specifically design to be theatres, or playhouses as they were then known, began in the second half of the 1500s in London. The first of these was James Burbage's The Theatre in 1576. This playhouse, and all the venues of the period, followed the same design; they were three storeys high and built in a circular shape around an open courtyard space, which had a raised stage on one side.

The number of roles in a play often exceeded the number of players (actors), available to play them. This meant that they often played multiple parts within the same performance. The design components of Elizabethan theatre were relatively simple. Sets consisted of either very realistic or highly symbolic furniture pieces, which were changed between the scenes. For example a double bed could appear in one scene literally as a bed, while in the next scene several wooden crates might be used to form the wall of a castle, followed by a third scene using a living potted tree to represent a forest. Actors wore the regular dress of the day and added symbolic extra pieces, such as hats, wigs and cloaks to represent a particular character, another culture or past time period. Elizabethans adored sound effects which were, wherever possible, real. For example real guns, loaded without bullets, would be fired when the characters shot pistols. Real thunder would be duplicated by waving a sheet of thin metal. In the public playing houses lighting, however, was not used. This is because the playing house venue was open to the sky. Performances took place in the early afternoon, when the natural sunlight that streamed in from above was at its best.

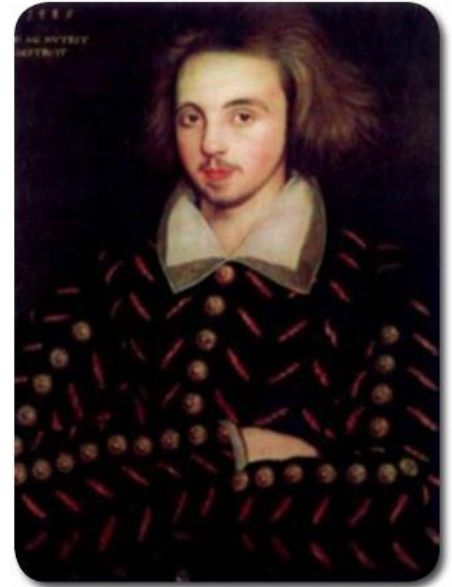
Players
The name for actors in
England from 12th century
through to mid-17th century.

Hint

Players did not only perform in the public houses, but also in the private homes of their patrons. Queen Elizabeth I frequently was entertained by performances that were given specifically for her and, if she so desired, her court. These performances took place inside and thus made use of burning candles for lighting.

Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare

Two of the most famous Elizabethan drama practitioners were Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare. Marlowe, born in 1564, was a Cambridge-educated poet and playwright who wrote one of the first English plays in the language form that was to become synonymous with the period; blank verse. The play for which he is most well known today is the tragedy *Doctor Faustus*. Although written in the Elizabethan period, this play had many of the characteristics of Jacobean tragedy, a style of tragedy that was to become popular with the general public early in 17th century under the reign of James II. In particular the tormented protagonist, the frequent violence, the passionate anger and other heightened emotions are prevalent in the script. Perhaps there would be more scripts to add to the list of popular plays by Marlowe, including his *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris*, should he have not been killed in a tavern brawl at such a young age in 1593.



Blank verse

Non-rhyming poetic text written in iambic pentameter.

Jacobean era

The period of time in Scotland when King James VI ruled. This King also succeeded Queen Elizabeth I and became King of England, as James I.

James II of England

The King of England, Ireland and Scotland (as James VII) until he was forcibly removed and stripped of his sovereignty in 1688.

Shakespeare, another poet, playwright and actor born in 1564, lived to a relatively old age for the time period, dying in 1616. In 1594 he became one of the players of the Lord Chamberlain's Men and then in 1599 became a chief shareholder in that company. Being a shareholder meant he could share in any profits the company made from their drama and poetic entertainment. He was instrumental not only in developing the Elizabethan style of play through his writing, but also in helping to establish theatre as a valid industry, with professional practitioners, for the first time in English history.



Theatre audience

Because the first London playing houses (since Ancient Greek and Roman times) were built during the Elizabethan period specifically for the purpose of staging drama works, this was when the first English public audiences were also born. Whilst skits, poems, mini-dramas and songs had been played out in taverns across the country for decades, they were only one part

Pageant wagon

A wooden cart that carried props, costumes, set piece, performers and a stage from village to village in the Middle Ages.

of the entertainment provided by public houses. Alcohol, food and lodging were instead the core business of these pubs. Similarly since Medieval times, traveling troupes of players moved from location to location, bringing their dramas with them to play out in village squares. They enacted their plays on the boards of the pageant wagon stages which they used to transport themselves, their props and costumes, as well as their own clothing, blankets and cooking pots across the country. This certainly provided the general population with access to dramatic entertainment, but only if the players went *to* the public. The public weren't able to go to the players until the theatres were built in the 1570s in London. Thus only then did theatre-going public begin to develop.

Inside a typical London theatre there could be more than 1500 people. There also might be another thousand in the street outside trying to hear the play, to sneak in or wait for another showing. The commoners, the lowest working class citizens, stood on the dirt in the area surrounding the stage. Because they were on the ground, exposed to the rain, hail or sunshine through the open roof, standing in amongst rotting rubbish and excrement, they were referred to as groundlings or stinkards. For putting a penny into the entrance box they received the privilege of being able to stand in the pit and look up at the players on the raised stage during the performance. By contrast the noblemen and women, those with money, would pay to sit on cushioned tiered benches in the covered areas of the gallery (balcony). At each gallery level, starting with the ground floor, an audience member would need to place another penny in the box to enter that space. Thus the most expensive seats, the ones with a clear view of the stage, were those in the third level.



Hint

The term box office where modern audiences buy or collect their tickets comes originally from the Elizabethan practice of paying a penny into the box at the theatre entrance.

English Restoration drama

By 1622, despite the massive growth period that England enjoyed under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, there were only four major theatre companies: the King's, the Prince's, the Palgrave's and the Queen of Bohemia's. The early 17th century saw the advancement of the Puritans in England who believed a playhouse to be a cesspit of evil and debauchery.

Puritans

A group of highly religious Protestant English who believed in strict piety and simple, unadorned, dedicated, authentic Christian worship. They were intolerant of activities and behaviours which they considered prevented living a worship-based life, such as non-religious poetry, music and theatre.

For them plays were distractions luring people away from hard, honest work and meaningful prayer, and players were little more than vagabonds and philanderers. The political pressure exerted by the Puritans and their courtly allies on King Charles I led to the closing of the theatres in 1642 and the ceasing of all dramatic entertainment for two decades. There were harsh punishments, including imprisonment, for a player or any person, carrying out dramatic activities.

The theatres remained closed for eighteen years, firstly whilst King Charles I reigned and then during the English Interregnum when the country was effectively governed by the Puritan Oliver Cromwell. After his death in 1658, King Charles I's son could return to England and be restored to the crown, and his coronation took place in 1661. Not only was there a restoration of the monarchy that year, but also the new king reopened the English playing houses and restored the English stage.

Interestingly the plays written during this renewal period can be seen to be far more immodest, provocative and daring in their content topics, themes and character relationships than many of those written prior to the closing of the English stages in 1642, which was exactly what the Puritans were afraid of. Restoration Comedy is also known as the Comedy of Manners.

King Charles I

The King of England, Ireland and Scotland until he was executed ending the English Civil War in 1649.

Oliver Cromwell

A highly religious Puritan, military man and politician, who was a leader in the anti-Catholic laws passed during his time and the execution of King Charles I. Soon after the King's death, he became the first Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland 1653.

King Charles II

The King of England, Scotland and Ireland restored to the crown after downfall of Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans in 1661. He is responsible for the restoration of the English theatres in 1660 and the legalisation of women playing female roles soon after.

Comedy of manners

The name given to the witty comedy of the Restoration period that explored and exploited the highly intricate and sophisticated social behaviours and expectations of the day. It was also far more flirtatious, decadent and provocative than drama had been before it, largely due to the allowance of women in the female roles.

Women and the stage

The first time women appeared professionally on the stage was in Spain in the early 1500s. In France it was in the middle of that century and in Italy during the second half. Elsewhere in the Western world in the 16th century, the female parts in a play were acted by men, typically boys or adolescent youths who were apprentices being trained by the older men of a theatre company. It was believed at the time that to have females on stage would both immoral and unwomanly.

In England, however, the very first time women appeared on stage playing the female roles was as part of a tour from France in 1629. Perhaps this tour was permitted by the regulating bodies in London because the acting troupe was under the patronage of the French monarch Queen Henrietta Maria, who was also married to Charles I, King of England, Scotland and Ireland.

Queen Henrietta Maria

The Queen Consort of England, Scotland and Ireland as wife of King Charles I, who was French by birth.

Whilst some of the audience might have appreciated the fact that women were acting the female parts, by comparison many of the acting groups, who were men, felt threatened by it. They did not want their profession to be disrupted and only have access to half the amount of parts.

Patronage

Financial and public support of a wealthy or noble person to an artist.

It wasn't until the second half of the century that the English began to see women appearing regularly on stage, such as in the 1656 production of *Siege of Rhodes* at Rutland House where Ianthe was played by a Mrs Coleman, or the 1660 Vere Street theatre showing of *Othello* where a woman played Desdemona. Although there's been much speculation as to whether that actress was a Mrs Hughes, it is certain that the theatre owner, Tom Killigrew added a prologue by a playwright of the time, Thomas Jordan. Parts of the prologue were recorded in the 1872 publication *Historia Histrionica: An account of the English stage shewing the ancient use, improvement, and perfection of dramattick representations in this nation* by James Wright, including these excerpts:

But to the point: in this reforming age
We have intent to civilise the stage.
Our women are defective, and so sized
You'd think they were some of the guard disguised;
For, to speak truth, men act, that are between
Forty and fifty, wenches of fifteen:
With bones so large and nerve so incompilant,
When you call Desdemona, *enter* giant...

I come, unknown to any of the rest.
To tell the news; I saw the lady dressed—
The woman plays to-day; mistake me not,
No man in gown or page in petticoat.

This post-Puritan period of great change led not only to women acting on the stage, but it also gave birth to the first English professional female playwright, Aphra Behn. Her first play to be staged was *The Forced Marriage* in 1670. This was not nearly as popular as her later plays, such as *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* and *The Rover*.

Internet exploration

Hear from a university professor about drama in the Renaissance period at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpqBxjdaD0c&list=PLSKWkOzESk1oEHzNFJAP8RIT0NDLXmBIF

Activity 15.1: Investigating 17th century English society

1. Read the excerpt below from the pamphlet by Jeremy Collier published in 1690 called 'A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage'.

'Obscenity in any Company is a rustick uncreditable Talent; but among Women 'tis particularly rude. Such Talk would be very affrontive in Conversation, and not endur'd by any Lady of Reputation. Whence then comes it to Pass that those Liberties which disoblige so much in Conversation, should entertain upon the Stage. Do the Women leave all the regards to Decency and Conscience behind them when they come to the Play-House? ...

In fine; Modesty is the distinguishing Vertue of that Sex, and serves both for Ornament and Defence: Modesty was design'd by Providence as a Guard to Virtue; And that it might be always at Hand, 'tis wrought into the Mechanism of the Body. 'Tis likewise proportioned to the occasions of Life, and strongest in Youth when Passion is so too. 'Tis a Quality as true to Innocence, as the Sences are to Health; whatever is ungrateful to the first, is prejudicial to the latter.'

2. Consider what this excerpt reveals about the society of the time, keeping in mind that women were acting on the English stage for the first time in history.

Activity 15.2: Comparing 17th century scripts

1. Read the two excerpts below written by two English playwrights a century apart:
 - *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare – 1599/1600
 - *Love for Love* by William Congreve – 1695
2. Both scenes include flirtations between male and female characters. In the first the female characters would have been played by men, in the second the female characters by women. Consider and compare in what way *who* was playing each female part (an actor or an actress) influenced how each playwright crafted their play. You could pay particular attention to each of the dramatic elements
3. Write a report that captures your analysis. Be sure to use quotes to justify your ideas.



As you like It
By William Shakespeare

- ROSALIND** Farewell, Monsieur Traveller: look you lisp and wear strange suits, disable all the benefits of your own country, be out of love with your nativity and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are, or I will scarce think you have swam in a gondola. Why, how now, Orlando! where have you been all this while? You a lover! An you serve me such another trick, never come in my sight more.
- ORLANDO** My fair Rosalind, I come within an hour of my promise.
- ROSALIND** Break an hour's promise in love! He that will divide a minute into a thousand parts and break but a part of the thousandth part of a minute in the affairs of love, it may be said of him that Cupid hath clapped him o' the shoulder, but I'll warrant him heart-whole.
- ORLANDO** Pardon me, dear Rosalind.
- ROSALIND** Nay, an you be so tardy, come no more in my sight: I had as lief be wooed of a snail.
- ORLANDO** Of a snail?
- ROSALIND** Ay, of a snail; for though he comes slowly, he carries his house on his head; a better jointure, I think, than you make a woman: besides he brings his destiny with him.
- ORLANDO** What's that?
- ROSALIND** Why, horns, which such as you are fain to be beholding to your wives for: but he comes armed in his fortune and prevents the slander of his wife.
- ORLANDO** Virtue is no horn-maker; and my Rosalind is virtuous.
- ROSALIND** And I am your Rosalind.
- CELIA** It pleases him to call you so; but he hath a Rosalind of a better leer than you.
- ROSALIND** Come, woo me, woo me, for now I am in a holiday humour and like enough to consent. What would you say to me now, an I were your very very Rosalind?
- ORLANDO** I would kiss before I spoke.
- ROSALIND** Nay, you were better speak first, and when you were gravelled for lack of matter, you might take occasion to kiss. Very good orators, when they are out, they will spit; and for lovers lacking—God warn us!--matter, the cleanliest shift is to kiss.
- ORLANDO** How if the kiss be denied?
- ROSALIND** Then she puts you to entreaty, and there begins new matter.
- ORLANDO** Who could be out, being before his beloved mistress?
- ROSALIND** Marry, that should you, if I were your mistress, or I should think my honesty ranker than my wit.
- ORLANDO** What, of my suit?
- ROSALIND** Not out of your apparel, and yet out of your suit. Am not I your Rosalind?
- ORLANDO** I take some joy to say you are, because I would be talking of her.
- ROSALIND** Well in her person I say I will not have you.
- ORLANDO** Then in mine own person I die.

End of Excerpt





Love for love
by William Congreve

- Angelica** You can't accuse me of inconstancy; I never told you that I loved you.
- Valentine** But I can accuse you of uncertainty, for not telling me whether you did or not.
- Angelica** You mistake indifference for uncertainty; I never had concern enough to ask myself the question.
- Scandal** Nor good-nature enough to answer him that did ask you; I'll say that for you, madam.
- Angelica** What, are you setting up for good-nature?
- Scandal** Only for the affectation of it, as the women do for ill- nature.
- Angelica** Persuade your friend that it is all affectation.
- Scandal** I shall receive no benefit from the opinion; for I know no effectual difference between continued affectation and reality.
- Tattle** [coming up]. Scandal, are you in private discourse?
Anything of secrecy? [Aside to SCANDAL.]
- Scandal** Yes, but I dare trust you; we were talking of Angelica's love to Valentine. You won't speak of it.
- Tattle** No, no, not a syllable. I know that's a secret, for it's whispered everywhere.
- Scandal** Ha, ha, ha!
- Angelica** What is, Mr Tattle? I heard you say something was whispered everywhere.
- Scandal** Your love of Valentine.
- Angelica** How!
- Tattle** No, madam, his love for your ladyship. Gad take me, I beg your pardon,—for I never heard a word of your ladyship's passion till this instant.
- Angelica** My passion! And who told you of my passion, pray sir?
- Scandal** Why, is the devil in you? Did not I tell it you for a secret?
- Tattle** Gadso; but I thought she might have been trusted with her own affairs.
- Scandal** Is that your discretion? Trust a woman with herself?
- Tattle** You say true, I beg your pardon. I'll bring all off. It was impossible, madam, for me to imagine that a person of your ladyship's wit and gallantry could have so long received the passionate addresses of the accomplished Valentine, and yet remain insensible; therefore you will pardon me, if, from a just weight of his merit, with your ladyship's good judgment, I formed the balance of a reciprocal affection.

End of Excerpt

The birth of theatre criticism

With the introduction of the theatre venue as a space dedicated to staging performances, and the rise of the non-court (general public) theatre audiences that went with it, it's hardly surprising that theatrical criticism too was born. In its early form those critiquing drama works tended to focus on two things: the work of the poet (playwright) and the work of the players (actors).

Theatre criticism

A type of review or commentary where the writer critiques a dramatic production. Professional criticism is published through media channels.

Some of the earliest pamphlets criticising theatre were circulated in the late 1500s in Europe. The first known published theatre critique was in France by Francois Hédelin, the Abbé d'Aubignac in his book *Pratique du theatre* of 1657. The work is most famous for its capturing of the then expected script writing conventions, as well as accepted methods for realising these in performance. Although this book was meant at the time as a guide for dramatic actors, playwrights and theatre managers, attending audiences began to compare the theatrical productions they saw with the guidelines in the book. Some of these comparisons were published in pamphlet form and, as such, theatre criticism was formally born.

Journalistic coverage did not begin in England, however, until the very late 17th century. Whilst it's certainly true that in London people, especially members of the aristocracy, had been criticising drama for centuries, their criticism was mostly made in discussion and debate at court or at private banquets among the upper classes. Occasionally, if the person writing them was famous, influential or rich enough to warrant the printing expense and effort, comments were printed in leaflets to be circulated among nobles.

At the beginning of the 18th century theatrical criticism shifted from amateur to professional journalistic articles with the first tabloids, such as *The Tatler* in 1709 and *The Spectator* in 1711. Admittedly these tabloids initially focused on gossip and speculative information about the performers, writers and theatre houses, (as well as the scandals of the attending general public audiences that took place in them), rather than objective criticism. Over time, more formal articles that actually discussed a particular production from a dramatic view point, began to be included. Whole books critiquing a play or the work of a dramatist also began to be published. One of these first authors was Thomas Rymer. He, together with like-minded bohemian peers, reviewed the way in which playwrights and producing houses followed certain dramatic codes and practices (conventions) or not. These typically low-paid writers became known as the Grub Street pedants.

In his book *A Short View of Tragedy* published in 1693, Thomas Rymer critiqued the play *Othello* by William Shakespeare. In his critique, he included a section that summarised the plot:

Othello, a Blackmoor Captain, by talking of his Prowess and Feats of War, makes Desdemona a Senator's Daughter to be in love with him; and to be married to him, without her Parents knowledge; And having preferred Cassio, to be his Lieutenant, (a place which his Ensign Jago sued for) Jago in revenge, works the Moor into a Jealousy that Cassio Cuckolds him: which he effects by stealing and conveying a certain Handkerchief, which had, at the Wedding, been by the Moor presented to his Bride. Hereupon, Othello and Jago plot the Deaths of Desdemona and Cassio, Othello Murders her, and soon after is convinced of her Innocence. And as he is about to be carried to Prison, in order to be punish'd for the Murder, He kills himself.

Activity 15.3: Theatre criticism analysis

- Below is an excerpt of an article by a theatre critic published in the *Westminster Gazette's* 1910 by a writer who calls himself EFS.

'We have to accept great responsibilities. Some people measure the greatness of the responsibilities by the amount of money involved in theatrical enterprises; it is hardly necessary to discuss seriously this point of view. Nevertheless the fact remains that the voice of the critics has some effect upon the fortunes of ventures involving large sums of money and the employment of many people.

... The critic is not superior to the amateur judge by reason of a greater natural aptitude for judging, but because he has a larger stock of knowledge on which to base his judgments, possesses a wider basis for comparison--the foundation of all opinion--and has trained his natural aptitudes; consequently, whilst his criticism necessarily, like that of the Man in the Street, is relative, not absolute, is after all merely an *'ipse dixit'*, it is the personal view of the better-trained person.

... The title is the Duty--not the duties--of a dramatic critic--the latter would be too large a subject. Obviously his duty is to tell the truth. How easy it sounds! How difficult it is to tell even the relative truth; the absolute is out of the question. Suppose that the critic has come to the conclusion that he knows the truth about a play, with what is he to tell it? With language, of course--an appallingly bad piece of machinery, which grows worse and worse every day. When a number of critics have formed the same opinion about a piece, and all wish to say that it is good--a very bad term to employ--one will call it good, another very good; a third, exceedingly good; a fourth, great; a fifth, splendid, a sixth, superb; and so on till some reckless language-monger uses the state-occasion term--a "work of genius." How is the reader to guess that they all mean the same thing? Moreover, if they were to use identical words every reader would put a somewhat different meaning upon them.'

- Read the excerpt from the newspaper on being a theatre critic.
- Use the excerpt to create a list of guidelines for theatre critics writing today.
- Select a review of a theatrical production that's been written recently by a professional reviewer and published in a reputable newspaper.
- How successfully (or not) does the reviewer follow your guidelines? Be sure to give quotes and justify each point.
- Give at least three specific examples of how the reviewer's critique might influence the newspaper reader.
- Discuss in what way this influence might have an impact on the production's success (or not).
- Select another review of a theatrical production that's been written recently, one by a blogger which has been published on a private website online. Answer questions (a), (b) and (c) for this blog posting.

17th AND 18th CENTURY EUROPEAN DRAMA

One of the most popular types of drama in Western Europe during the Renaissance period was *Commedia dell'Arte*. An Italian improvised comedy style, it was heavily reliant on stock characters, simplistic plots and slapstick humour. It's thought to have started in the 1300s, evolving and changing over several hundreds, celebrating its highest popularity in the 16th and 17th centuries. Sometime during the 14th century the use of the masked two-dimensional characters for the servants, old men and women we know today, became formalised. It was also during this period that the convention of including slightly more realistic innocent, young lovers, usually in a male-female pair, became popular.

Improvised comedy

Very short dramatic works that aim to entertain and provoke laughter, that are unscripted and unrehearsed.

Slapstick

Comedy created by physicalisation, rather than vocalisation, including slapping, bumping and tumbling by the actors. Also two narrow pieces of wood bound together at one end, that make a loud clap sound when struck.

Stock characters

A fictional character or a role based on a known stereotype that is used by different playwrights.

For the first few hundred years, this style was called many different things, such as *commedia all'improviso* or *commedia alla maschera*. It's thought that that the playwright Carlo Goldoni in the early 18th century gave the style its name to distinguish between amateur and the professional artists. The Italian word 'arte' translates not only as 'the art of', but also as 'job' or 'work', hence *commedia dell'arte* being an appropriate name for a group of working comedy actors. The style uses improvisation with the actors devising the dialogue and the actions as the drama unfolds in performance. *Commedia* troupes work with a predetermined plot skeleton, based on an Aristotelean narrative structure, and a scene summary as their guideline for the performance.

Aristotelean narrative

A literary structure first identified by Aristotle in 335 BC where tension rises and time progresses forward as a series of related events unfold culminating in a climax.

Jean Baptiste Molière

During the 1600s, in France, a creative practitioner called Jean Baptiste Molière (born Jean Baptiste Poquelin) successfully drew from many of the conventions of Italian improvised comedy to become one of the most well-known playwrights in French theatre history. Molière was also a famous actor and director, gifted in his ability of comic timing and audience engagement. In his earlier years Molière adapted many of the *commedia dell'arte* scenarios and often used their stock characters as inspiration for his comedies. No doubt he was influenced by his travels across Europe and also when working in Paris alongside his friend Tiberio Fiorilli, the well-known Italian actor and creator of the famous *Scaramouche* character, for several years. Not only did Molière draw from *commedia dell'arte* but he, especially in his later years, crafted entirely new plays, some of which are among his most famous, including *Tartuffe*, *The Miser* and *The Imaginary Invalid*.

One of the reasons Molière is well-known is for his command of the French language. He was gifted in writing in verse and made great use of the alexandrine metre. This type of rhythm has twelve syllables in a line, with the major stress on the sixth and the twelfth beats. A master of language, Molière was also famous for his dialogical interchanges between characters, using sophisticated wit and clever repartee. Molière's satires were so clever, laced with double meanings and challenging subtext, that he was not liked by some governing bodies at the time, including the Catholic Church.

The alexandrine

Rhythmic verse constructed of twelve syllables with the strongest being the sixth and twelfth in a line.

Satire

The humorous use of ridicule, exaggeration or irony to celebrate, criticise or expose society's foolishness or unethical behaviour.

Hint

Molière is as famous in France as Shakespeare is in England. His works are also as durable and are performed frequently today.

Carlo Goldoni

In Italy, during the 1700s, another extremely famous playwright was creating drama works. Carlo Goldoni is not only credited with naming the improvised comedy style *commedia dell'arte*, he's also considered seminal in the creation of written Italian dramatic comedy. Goldoni's view of the old popular *commedia dell'arte* was that it was overly simplistic, too predictable and rather vulgar. When creating the characters for his plays, by comparison, Goldoni didn't rely on mimicking the behaviour of community figures, nor telling jokes referencing local gossip. Whilst still simple, his characters were more well-rounded and with subtle differences to the well-known two-dimensional *commedia dell'arte* stock characters. Goldoni's cleverly constructed plots were relatively complex and yet were also tightly knit, in comparison to *Commedia dell'arte*'s almost non-existent plots and repetitious events. He even replaced the slapstick-driven predictable farce with clever wit and sophisticated language. Most importantly, Goldoni wrote his plays down; he created a physical script that was then to be performed with accuracy and attention to detail by actors only after they'd conducted rehearsals and preparation.

Hint

Goldoni is said to have learnt French in order to read and study the plays of Molière in their original language.

Internet exploration

Take a sneak peak at a preview of a production of Goldoni's *The Venetian Twins* at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhygKU0ign4

19th, EARLY- AND MID-20th CENTURY DRAMA

The 1800s saw the rise of the theatrical entrepreneur, the impresario. These people, who were often men, produced drama and performance works, ran theatrical and musical venues, and generally looked for ways to make a profit from the performing arts industries. Many impresarios started out their careers as performers and, after becoming famous and sought after by the general public, had the financial and influential means to create and manage dramatic works. These 19th century entrepreneurs were called actor-managers.

Actor-manager

A well-known actor takes on a venue or theatre company management role as a vehicle for their work or the work of those they support.

One of the most famous of these was John Philip Kemble. Born into a family of performers he, like his sister Sarah Siddons, his brother Charles Kemble and Charles' daughter Fanny Kemble, were stars of the English stage at the turn of the 19th century. In 1803, John Kemble became the manager of the Covent Garden Theatre. In 1808 the venue unfortunately burnt down and needed to be rebuilt. To finance the new build the following year, Kemble raised the prices of theatre tickets, which in turn led to what is now known as the Old Price Riots. So important was going to the theatre in the daily lives of people during the 19th century that they not only rioted when the price of a seat was raised, but they rioted for three months. In the end Kemble was forced to retract the price rise and formally apologise to the general public.



An artist's impression of John Kemble trying to act on stage to an angry audience during the Old Price Riots.

Hint

During the 19th century the London Fire Code mandated that theatre venues keep blankets soaked in water in the wings on either side of the stage to be used if one of the burning candles or something else alight suddenly caused an accidental fire. The term wet blanket used to indicate someone who is not taking part in a fun activity or is trying to stop others from enjoying themselves in some way comes from this fire prevention practice.

Eliza Vestris was the first female actor-manager, taking over the Olympic Theatre in 1830. A singer, dancer and burlesque performer, she became known not only for her beautiful dancing legs but also for her insistence on using costumes and scenography that were historically accurate for the inner world of the play. Her frequent use of the box set for realistic drawing room dramas helped to popularise the staging convention.

Burlesque

A presentational genre of performance typically involving a collection of (rather than one) highly physical comedy sketches, songs, dances, acrobatics and other variety acts that aim to entertain the audience. Partial nudity is relatively common.

Another famous actor-manager of the second half of the 19th century was Henry Irving, managing the Lyceum Theatre for several decades from 1871. With his co-star Ellen Terry, Irving staged primarily Shakespearean plays and then-contemporary melodramas. Not only an extraordinarily talented actor and successful entrepreneur, Irving drastically improved the working conditions, including the pay, of actors and other theatrical practitioners during the late 1800s. In 1895 he received a knighthood and was the first actor to do so.

Drawing room comedies and Oscar Wilde

A room within a British house to where the ladies would withdraw during the day to either spend some time alone or to receive callers (visitors) was originally named a *withdrawing room*, but by the 18th century it had become firmly known as the *drawing room*. In the evening, before dinner, the gentlemen of the house (husbands, sons and so on) would join the ladies in the drawing room, together with any guests for pre-dinner conversation. In the 19th century it was popular for playwrights to write scripts, particularly comedies, that set majority of their play, if not all of it, within a drawing room.

One of the most famous playwrights of English drawing-room comedies, was Oscar Wilde. Not merely a playwright, he was also a novelist, poet, lecturer, essayist and editor. Wilde was an advocate of the Aesthetic Movement in that he believed art should be for art's sake, not as a vehicle for espousing political views or educating audiences about social norms.

Aesthetic movement

The pursuit of beauty for its own sake in the literary, performance and visual art forms.

Wilde's pursuit of beauty in art is clearly evident in his writing style. Whilst he cleverly makes use of all the dramatic elements within a well-structured traditional Aristotelean narrative, it is his use of language, symbol and metaphor that is particularly sophisticated. On one hand his characters, their plights and interactions with each other are very realistic, at the same time Wilde manages to include witty interchanges, that often the characters are themselves not aware of, infused with decorative imagery and heightened emotions.

Although Oscar Wilde was a prolific writer, he is most famous for his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the plays *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*.



Statue of Oscar Wilde in Merion Park Ireland,
Photograph by Sandro Schachner

Melodrama

Although Melodrama was a style of drama very popular in 19th century Europe, its origins in England can be traced back to late 1600s. On the English stage, when performing plays was first banned by the Puritans and then the performing of tragedies was made difficult to stage by Charles II during the Restoration period, the English innovatively found ways to get around these restrictions. Many venues borrowed from the French practice of underscoring sections of their tragedies with music, by underscoring entire English plays and calling them melodramas. This technique enabled the venues to stage tragedies and other serious heavy dramas, without terming them so.

This practice became extremely popular in the 19th century, not because it had to, but because the musical underscoring heightened the sense of drama and the theatricality of the event, something that many audiences loved.

Science and realism

In the 19th century major scientific developments in psychology, sociology and biology would come to have great impacts on the development of Western drama, in particular the shift away from the until-then popular presentational styles of drama to more life-like representational styles. Two of the major scientific influencers were the naturalist Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and the sociologist August Comte (1798-1857).

August Comte, considered by many to be the Father of Sociology, advocated in his Theory of Positivism that understanding humankind could only be gained through meticulous observation of people. Real or accurate truth is accessible through detailed, thorough and consistent scientific study, including the gathering of data about people through the senses (sight, sound, smell, taste and touch). Comte believed that a new form of science, one he termed sociology, with its bringing together many other sciences, allowed for new and holistic ideas about humankind, and the world that humans live in, to be uncovered. This concept of studying people to gain an accurate understanding about them, is at the core of representational drama forms.

Sociology

The scientific study of human behaviour.

Charles Darwin's scientific research lead him to propose the 'survival of the fittest' theory in the 'Evolution of humankind'. He first published this in 1859 in his book *The Origin of Species*, which astonished and outraged many peoples across the world. That humankind should have descended from primates, changed across time and shaped in response to the world around then, rather than to be delivered as whole beings on earth by a supreme being, such as the Christian God, was believed, at first, impossible. Darwinism, as his theories became known, lead to the *Theory of Determinism*; that people are shaped by their circumstances and controlled by external forces. This environmental-response focus became one of the primary driving forces behind realism and naturalism later that century.

Naturalist

Someone who believes that living creatures are shaped both by their natural properties (now called genes) and the world they live in, and studies people, plants or animals to find out the extent to which they are shaped.

Realism

Throughout the 19th century, reflective of the developments in science and also as a reaction against the exaggerated, heightened and non-realistic productions that had dominated the performing arts industries for centuries, some writers began to create plays that tried to be relatively authentic reflections of real life. Whilst the characters, events and settings of these plays were life-like, they didn't necessarily imitate every exact detail and accurate nuance of real life. The realistic plays of the 19th and early 20th centuries were true to life, without being exact replicas of reality.

By placing three-dimensional characters together within a given set of realistic circumstances at a particular time (century, season, month, date and time of day) and space (geography, culture, society, environment, location) playwrights are realistically able to explore the human condition. An audience too, watching a production of one of these plays, is also therefore able to understand more about the human condition. Because the emotions of the characters, the moods and atmospheres on stage, audiences too are able to experience similar, or at least associated, feelings to the people they're witnessing. By understanding literally what they're seeing and emotionally what they're feeling an audience of a realistic play is ideally able to understand more about themselves and the world they live in.

Henrik Ibsen

One of the most famous playwrights in dramatic history to create representational drama works is the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906). Ibsen was one of the first playwrights to break away from the declamatory style of speaking in drama popular during the 19th century. His characters spoke instead using everyday speech, talking about everyday occurrences, even in the midst of slightly extraordinary circumstances.

Ibsen is renowned for writing plays that seem to put a microscope over society to study human behaviour, a convention appropriate to the science of naturalism. Many of his plays explore the impact of societal norms, and their effect on and expectations from the human beings who form that community. Ibsen also looks at the ramifications both on those who don't fit within these norms, and those who challenge the norms. He was one of the first playwrights to closely examine the range of feelings of individuals when faced with obstacles on stage.

At the time Ibsen was writing, the mirror that he held up to society in his plays, often caused outrage amongst the public, especially the authorities. Because of the backlash, Ibsen spent three decades writing in exile from Italy and Germany. It was whilst he was abroad that Ibsen wrote many of his best-known plays. This includes works that are still frequently performed today, such as *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of The People* and *Hedda Gabler*.



Henrik Ibsen (NFB-19778)
Photograph by Gustav Borgen

Hint

Ibsen also wrote some historical plays, one of the most well-known being *Peer Gynt*. Because these plays are epic in nature and written in highly poetic verse, emphasise the recounting of history rather than the enactment of it, they can not be considered naturalistic, nor representational at all, in style.

French novelists and naturalism

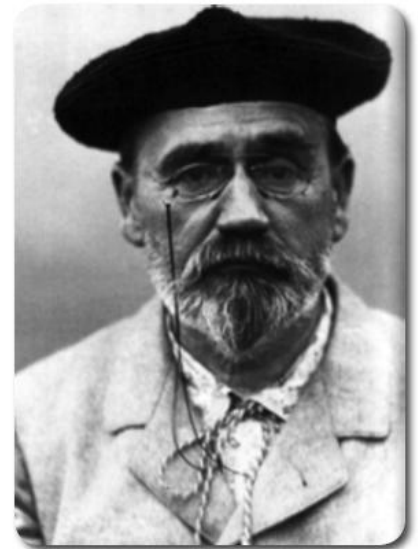
In the late 1800s many novelists had shifted away from the popular writing style of earlier in the century where unrealistic plots, exaggerated characters and overly-heightened emotions were prevalent. Instead writing almost became a way to explore the human condition. Novelists took a combined approach in their writing of giving both a scientific-like examination of regular human beings and society, with artistic and fictional licence. The characters in these works of fiction were often driven by particular desires and objectives, yet these desires were also tempered or constrained by the society that they were a part of and the everyday business of living.

By 1880 a book that was to become seminal in literary development called *Les Soirées de Médan* was first published. It contained the short stories of the writers Paul Alexis, Léon Hennique, Henry Cár, Joris-Karl Huysmans, Guy de Maupassant and, the most famous of them all, Émile Zola. The six stories, set within the Franco-Prussian War, did not focus on glorifying heroes nor on nostalgic loss, despite that these would have been popular with many readers of the 19th century. Instead the stories told tales of anti-heroism, harsh realities and complex, even somewhat contradictory, characters, all whilst questioning the expectations of society and the morality of human beings.

Not only a writer of fictional works, Zola also wrote about literature, including about plays. Among his non-fiction essays where he discussed the new science-arts balance that was gaining popularity were 'The Experimental Novel' and 'Naturalism on the Stage'. Zola, and his colleagues, are credited with the entry of the term *naturalism* into language. Interestingly Zola himself pointed out that they had invented nothing new in their naturalistic writing style. Instead they were merely attempting to write in a way that truly captured human beings and the reality of their lives just as had others, such as Aristotle and Homer, had done centuries before them.

I am simply an observer, who states facts ... My roles as critic [fiction writer] consists in studying from whence we come and our present state. When I venture to foretell where we are going it is purely speculation on my part, a purely logical conclusion. By what has been, and by what is, I think I am able to say what will be.

From 'Naturalism on the Stage' (1880) Émile Zola



ZOLA 1902B
An auto-portrait by Émile Zola

This quote suggests Zola's belief that taking a scientific approach to creating a fictional piece of literature is valid. Zola was twice nominated during his lifetime for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Naturalism in drama

Theatre offers an exceptionally good vehicle for the creative study of human beings that naturalism demands. Naturalistic playwrights will give each of their characters a specific

physiological makeup (now called genetics) and then place them within a certain set of environmental conditions. After this they then explore not only how their characters cope with these conditions, but also how they are shaped by them.

In a naturalistic play through the characters' words and actions, a version of reality is provided for the audience. This version is the basic measurable text (script) and it typically offers an overt, immediate, simple, clear or surface level understanding of reality. Yet through the characters' behaviours when they speak and carry out activities, including in the subtleties of their vocal and physical communication delivery, the audience is able to have a deeper understanding of reality. This deeper level is often referred to as the subtext, and includes the thoughts they don't say or the actions they don't do as much as what is said and done by them. Subtext is typically internally-driven, reflecting individual's and society's values and beliefs. It can be contradictory, complex and open to many different interpretations.

Subtext

Underlying meaning or theme in a section or entire literary work.

A naturalistic playwright writes on both a textual and a subtextual level. They strive to imitate the real world in every way they can on stage, so much so that a naturalistic play becomes more than an imitation, replica or reflection of real life, but it almost becomes real itself. Time within the play typically unfolds in real time. For example an hour within the play, takes up an hour of real time. Leaps in time, other than perhaps when characters are sleeping, don't usually occur. Every character could be alive in the real world; every word and action they make, and everything they want and try to do is life-like. Every part of the setting, every minute detail and historical or societal reference is accurate. Because of this, a representational performance style, one that is believable and lifelike, where actors create three-dimensional psychologically-driven characters, is needed to effectively prepare this type of drama for the stage.

Hint

Realism is similar to naturalism in that it has believable characters in life-like situations. It differs from naturalism in that it does not attempt to imitate real life with 100% accuracy. Nor does it take as extreme a scientific approach to observing human kind in order to understand it better.

August Strindberg

Even more consistently and holistically naturalistic in style than Ibsen, is much of the work the Swedish playwright August Strindberg (1849-1912). This writer created a prolific body of work of more than sixty plays and over thirty works of novels and non-fiction. Some of his plays, particularly his earlier work such as *The Father*, *Miss Julie* and *Creditors*, are considered the epitome of naturalism. One of the reasons is because Strindberg's naturalistic plays are not plot-driven and they don't strictly use an Aristotelean traditional narrative. Instead he focuses more on examining what makes people, his characters, do and say certain things. Strindberg explores their complex psychology, including their

August Strindberg ZG231-MOLLBRINKS
Photograph by Anders Zorn (1860-1920)



subconscious, and how it has an impact on their desires and their relationships with others. As such his naturalistic plays can be considered true studies of human nature and human behaviour.

In his later years, after struggling for a decade with illness during which he hardly wrote, Strindberg's work became far more symbolic than that of earlier in his career. He shifted away from a purely naturalistic exploration of characters, their relationships with each other and the society they lived in, and instead focused much more on mysticism. He merged the spiritual and dream worlds with reality. Because of this, his later works, such as *A Dream Play* and *To Damascus*, are considered the forerunners to Expressionism.

In the Preface to *A Dream Play* Strindberg warns the reader, and the audience member that reality, in his play, is not all it seems:

A REMINDER

As he did in his previous dream play [*To Damascus*], so in this one the author has tried to imitate the disconnected but seemingly logical form of the dream. Anything may happen; everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist. On an insignificant background of reality, imagination designs and embroiders novel patterns: a medley of memories, experiences, free fancies, absurdities and improvisations.

The characters split, double, multiply, vanish, solidify, blur, clarify. But one consciousness reigns above them all—that of the dreamer; and before it there are no secrets, no incongruities, no scruples, no laws. There is neither judgment nor exoneration, but merely narration. And as the dream is mostly painful, rarely pleasant, a note of melancholy and of pity with all living things runs right through the wobbly tale. Sleep, the liberator, plays often a dismal part, but when the pain is at its worst, the awakening comes and reconciles the sufferer with reality, which, however distressing it may be, nevertheless seems happy in comparison with the torments of the dream.

A Dream Play (1902) August Strindberg, Translation Edwin Bjorkman (1912)

Anton Chekhov

Whilst Strindberg was challenging audiences in Western Europe to understand the layers of human beings by dissecting them in his plays, in Eastern Europe Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) was dismantling traditional plots and stretching audiences to understand the layers of human culture. Chekhov's characters were multi-layered and complex, as were the worlds they lived in. Rather than have the events unfold in such a way that the loose ends were neatly wrapped up at the end of a play, Chekhov did not offer his audiences all the answers. Instead through his characters, their behaviour,

experiences and the occurrences that affected them, the playwright posed many questions about life and society. Whilst he asked a lot of questions, he didn't necessarily provide as many solutions.

Culture

The collective beliefs, customs, behaviours of a particular community of people.



Chekhov 1898 by Osip Braz

Born in Russia, Chekhov's early creative work was freelancing as a writer of humorous short stories, many of which were published by various magazines. After his own self-publication (a collection of short-stories that Chekhov himself financed), his next short-stories series was published by a professional publishing house. It was this publication that turned Chekhov's creative career around and from this point on he was recognised as a talented writer. Chekhov stopped writing comedy pieces and started writing serious dramas.

Chekhov's most famous full-length plays include *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*. Among his shorter one-act plays, some of the most well known include *The Bear* and *The Proposal*.

Hint

Rather appropriate to the theatre landscape of the time (the combining of science with art on stage), Chekhov was a doctor of medicine as well as a playwright.

Internet exploration

Hear from an American professor about some of the literary differences between naturalism and realism at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=57Eju4GdZ8Y

Activity 15.4: Societal analysis

1. Analyse the excerpt below of the closing lines of Anton Chekhov's famous play *Uncle Vanya*.
2. Consider in what way this excerpt:
 - reveals insights about Russian society in the early 1900s
 - poses questions to the audience without offering answers
 - reflects the movement of realism
 - suggests a psychologically-rich inner life of the character Sonia.
3. Write a report that captures your analysis. Be sure to justify your reasoning with quotes from the excerpt.

Voitski (*To SONIA, stroking her hair*) Oh, my child, I am miserable; if you only knew how miserable I am!

Sonia What can we do? We must live our lives. (A pause) Yes, we shall live, Uncle Vanya. We shall live through the long procession of days before us, and through the long evenings; we shall patiently bear the trials that fate imposes on us; we shall work for others without rest, both now and when we are old; and when our last hour comes we shall meet it humbly, and there, beyond the grave, we shall say that we have suffered and wept, that our life was bitter, and God will have pity on us. Ah, then dear, dear Uncle, we shall see that bright and beautiful life; we shall rejoice and look back upon our sorrow here; a tender smile—and—we shall rest. I have faith, Uncle, fervent, passionate faith.



*SONIA kneels down before her uncle and lays her head on his hands.
She speaks in a weary voice*

We shall rest. (TELEGIN plays softly on the guitar) We shall rest. We shall hear the angels. We shall see heaven shining like a jewel. We shall see all evil and all our pain sink away in the great compassion that shall enfold the world. Our life will be as peaceful and tender and sweet as a caress. I have faith; I have faith. (She wipes away her tears) My poor, poor Uncle Vanya, you are crying! (Weeping) You have never known what happiness was, but wait, Uncle Vanya, wait! We shall rest. (She embraces him) We shall rest.

The WATCHMAN'S rattle is heard in the garden; TELEGIN plays softly; MME. VOITSKAYA writes something on the margin of her pamphlet; MARINA knits her stocking

We shall rest.

Sourced from Project Gutenberg, project managed by Dr David Widger

Konstantin Stanislavski

The most famous Western acting technique in the history of drama was developed by Konstantin Stanislavski. His process, the System of Acting, enabled himself, his peers and students to meet the rigours of the new representational drama works that were being written by playwrights such as Anton Chekhov. Literary critics might argue that it was Stanislavski's System that also influenced those drama works and assisted in the development of realism.

Stanislavski was born in 1863 to a wealthy Russian family who, despite later opposition to his theatrical pursuits, fostered his dramatic love at a young age. The family had their own amateur theatre in which Stanislavski spent much of his childhood years staging dramas, puppet plays and circus-type performances. In 1881 he studied acting at the Moscow Conservatory; a type of imitative process which he would later rebel against. At twenty-five, after several years of artistic explorations, he founded, studied with and worked at the Society of Art and Literature learning about stagecraft and aesthetics with directors such as Alexander Fedotov.

It was at the Society that Stanislavski first experimented with new dramatic techniques, many of which were to become part of his acting system in later life. These included simple and complex practices, from quiet relaxation exercises through to the observation of real people for character study. Although these practices are commonplace for many actors today, they were revolutionary during the late 1800s. At that time actor preparation focused more on developing the singing, heightened movement and vocal declamation techniques that were necessary for Victorian melodrama, Romantic opera, pantomime, and burlesque and variety acts, that were extremely popular with the general public at the time.

Another major influence on Stanislavski was when he saw the semi-realistic work of Duke Saxe-Meiningen's Touring Company and observed their use of thorough, detailed rehearsal processes, and also their life-like costume, set and props designs. What he observed and learned in that encounter consumed him. It was around this time that Stanislavski spent eighteen hours talking

Moscow Art Theatre

The theatre company founded in by Konstantin Stanislavski and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko to establish a new form of believable, realistic drama.

about his experience, about acting and the theatre in general with Vladimir Meirovich-Danchenko, with whom he went on to start the Moscow Art Theatre.

The pair founded the company in 1898 and over the course of the years that followed, created productions and explored acting techniques and processes that were new at the time. They looked for ways to develop complex, three-dimensional and often contradictory characters as part of believable, life-like dramatic productions. Today actors might take such a realistic approach for granted as it's become the norm in many Western societies, including many of the mainstream arts communities of Australia. But in early 20th century Russia this focus on the representation of real life on stage, where characters had a multi-dimensional internal life based on psychology, personality, desires and needs, was a total innovation.

During the early part of the 21st century Stanislavski developed, extended and perfected the different focus areas, techniques and processes of his modern acting approach. These collectively became known as his System of Acting.



Stanislavski with actors (1922)
Stanislavski studio
Unknown photographer, Sourced from family archive

Understanding Stanislavski's System

The System of Acting was not offered to the world as a stagnant technique; it was not clearly captured in a completed, finite form despite his three technique books of *An actor prepares*, *Building a character* and *Creating a role*. The System was, or is, instead an amalgamation of a lifetime of organic experimentation and disciplined practice. In Stanislavski's early years he was discovering a new process of acting, quite different to the wooden, non-realistic performance style so popular in many parts of 19th century Europe. Because he was investigating what worked and didn't work in developing a believable character, there were times that Stanislavski didn't realise he hadn't yet developed a technique to its fullest, or that he was putting too much importance on one element of acting and not enough on another, nor that he'd completely overlooked a component integral to creating life on stage.

The first two books that Stanislavski did write on the system, were published in 1936 and 1948. These books only included some of his discoveries about acting. Many parts of the system, especially those developed late in his life, weren't shared with the world until the release of his third book, a text patched together from Stanislavski's letters and notes in 1961. The books were originally written in Russian and as such needed to be translated for American, English and other actors across the world to understand them. The first and only translator for many years, Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, was an exceptionally good linguist, but she did not work in the theatre. As such, whilst the first translations are accurate from a literal standpoint, they do not do justice to the subtleties of the acting process, nor the artistic reasoning behind it that is so crucial to working practically with the system from a dramatic perspective. On top of this, across his lifetime whilst Stanislavski took copious notes and made many sketches about each discovery and new development, he did not publish them all. Thus many parts of the system were unknown to the West for decades.

The person responsible for bringing an accurate understanding of the complete system, including all its developments and adaptations, to the West was Jean-Norman Benedetti. An Englishman by birth, as well as being a drama theorist and researcher, Benedetti was a professional actor, director and translator. He recognised that much of Stanislavski's work was being grossly misinterpreted by non-Russian speakers, whilst other parts of it were totally unknown.

Through his rigorous research and investigation, Benedetti brought a more accurate and complete understanding of Stanislavski's system of acting to the world. He published his findings in a series of books, including *My Life in Art* (1974), *Stanislavski: An Introduction* (1982) and *Stanislavski: A Biography* (1988).out

For more information on Stanislaski's work see **Chapters 2: Acting** and **3: Directing**.

Jean Benedetti

An actor, director, translator, teacher and expert on Stanislavski's System of Acting (1930 - 2012), who is largely responsible for sharing a complete and accurate understanding of the acting technique with the world.

Hint

Benedetti was also a translator of French, Italian and German scripts, including many of Bertolt Brecht's plays.

Internet exploration

Check this short clip to explore the transition from Victorian melodrama to realism, from presentational to representational acting:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9NIFpTINaE

Expressionism

In the same way that representational drama was a reaction to melodrama and other exaggerated, non-believable drama works of the 19th century and before, expressionism was a reaction to realism and naturalism.

In the first half of last century, there was an appetite in the West for rapid modernisation. The seeds of today's globalised community were being planted with the advances of the time in science and technology, as well as the increased urbanisation, continued rise of the middle classes, the focus on materialistic acquisitions and the continued disparity between the rich and the poor. The Great War, which has since become known as World War I, highlighted the pointlessness of fighting and made many people question the value and meaning of life. Many artists were among those dissatisfied with the cost of modern progress, and they explored their concerns through drama.

Truthfulness and life-like accuracy are not important to the expressionists. Instead their aim is to explore the internal state of the human being. Thorough investigation of emotion, psychology and spiritual life are considered most important in an expressionist play. Although exploring this inner condition could focus on the state of a particular character, expressionism typically explores the collective feelings, mind and essence of a particular group of people.

Eugene O'Neill

American playwright Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953) was deeply interested in exploring the subconscious of human beings. Like the naturalists before him, he strove to understand the psychology and emotions of people. In his early years he wrote plays that examined, at extremely close range, human nature, such as *Anna Christie* and *Desire Under the Elms*. However by the mid-twenties O'Neill had become increasingly dissatisfied with the subconscious depth to which naturalism could delve. He wanted to dive deeper into the human psyche and he found himself limited by taking a naturalistic approach.

In order to go deeper and broader into understanding human beings, O'Neill began to combine, with increasing frequency, the non-real with the real. He explored dream-like states and worlds, created characters with personified creatures, and set scenes in alternate realities and the after-life. It was only through distorting reality and exaggerating life that O'Neill found a way to truly understand and express what drives human beings. Some of his expressionist plays include *The Great God Brown*, *The Emperor Jones* and, perhaps his most famous play from this period, *The Hairy Ape*.

In later years O'Neill's work became more eclectic in style. Many of his later works are considered realistic because they use three-dimensional characters, placed in life-like situations who deal with believable problems. Yet these same plays draw from many expressionist conventions such as heightened emotions, drug-induced (or other types of) dreams and exaggerated symbolism. This is evident in plays such as *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night*.



Portrait of Eugene O'Neill and Carlotta Monterey O'Neill
Photograph by Carl Van Vechten

Hint

O'Neill was awarded many prizes for his work including the Pulitzer Prize for Drama four times; for *Beyond the Horizon* in 1920, *Anna Christie* in 1922, *Strange Interlude* in 1928, and *Long Day's Journey into Night* after his death in 1957. In 1936 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Internet exploration

Hear from England's National Theatre experts about Eugene O'Neill at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmjj5gqkfw0

Bertolt Brecht

While O'Neill in the States, as well as other Expressionists, were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with realism and naturalism as a means to explore human psychology and understand the environmental impact on human behaviour on stage, in other parts of the world other dramatists were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the popularity of focusing on the subconscious in the first place. A German playwright and director, Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) was one of these.

Brecht was a strong Marxist and his political and social beliefs heavily influenced his work. Brecht believed that the arts had become elitist, merely providing an avenue for the wealthy to be entertained, such as in opera or melodrama, or to allow them the luxury of contemplating people's emotions and desires, such as in naturalism and realism. Brecht advocated instead that it was time to bring the theatre back to the ordinary working class people. Brecht developed a new style of drama called Epic Drama aimed at doing just this. He, together with his peers and contemporaries, such as colleagues at the Berliner Ensemble he established in East Berlin in 1949 with his wife Helene Wiegel, created dramatic works using new stylised script and presentational performance conventions.

An audience member for Brecht was not someone who needed to forget the real world and escape into frivolous fantasy, nor were they someone to draw into the production through emotionality, nostalgia or sentimentality. Brecht believed that if an audience is feeling more than they're thinking, then they're not able to intellectually understand the play, in particular they can't consider the negative social forces affecting the roles and characters. Nor are they able to grasp the level of control that the ruling classes, institutions and governing bodies have over the common person. For Brecht the audience member was a spectator, someone to inform, educate or make aware about the happenings, controls and limitations of society.

Through the creation of epic drama Brecht attempted to stimulate the audience into reflection and ultimately to prompt them into action. This didactic type of theatre provoked a thinking audience through a variety of means including using poetry and music to comment on the action and emotions of the roles, signs and placards to announce upcoming events or major themes, as well as a unique style of acting. He also made use of the *verfremdungseffekt* and historicification conventions.

Marxism

A political, social and economic theory developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels based on a collectivist classless social system.

Epic drama

A presentational movement and style of drama developed in the early 20th century by Bertolt Brecht and other theatre practitioners aimed at teaching the audience.



Didactic drama

Drama that is intended to teach something to the audience.

Verfremdungseffekt

Alienation effect in English. A technique first employed in the West by Bertolt Brecht to distance the audience from the action, allowing them to think about, rather than emote over, the events, as well as their causes and impacts.

Historification

Setting events in another real or fictional time and space in order to distance the audience emotionally, and to thus engage them intellectually.

Although Brecht trained originally in medicine and worked initially in that field, he pursued theatre and other artistic endeavours on the side. His theatrical career was cemented in 1922 when his play *Drums in the Night* won him the prestigious Young Dramatists Kleist award. From this time on Brecht dedicated his life to the theatre and artistic pursuits.

Although interested in his early years in Elizabethan drama, it was during the 20s that his fascination with Asian theatre took hold. Brecht appreciated the anti-mimetic approach of many styles of Asian drama which were presentational by nature. In particular Brecht was drawn to the elegance, simplicity and quiet emotionality of Classical Chinese literature, as well as to Japanese Noh theatre with its pro-diegesis focus, keeping the audience at a distance and creating stylised characters (such as the use of Chorus). He also appreciated the discipline and clarity of Noh theatre.

Anti-mimetic

The dramatisation is a stylised presentation of events and characters, rather than an imitation of emotionally burdened characters caught up in some kind of real-to-life story.

Noh theatre

A style of Japanese drama originating in the 14th century presenting well-known stories using highly stylised controlled slow-moving movement and symbolic poetic language.

Chorus

A group of actors that comment on, summarise, celebrate or take a small part in the dramatic action, while doing the same thing, at the same time, in the same way.

Diegesis

The telling, rather than the showing, of a story.

Many of Brecht's own plays, during his early years, were based on translations of Noh drama. For example *Lehrstück* is an almost word for word translation of Elisabeth Hauptmann's German version of Arthur Waley's English translation of the Noh play *Taniko*. Not only did Brecht's plays from this period use similar dialogue to the Noh play, but so much was his appreciation of the Japanese art-form that he also adopted other conventions from it. This included having the roles introduce themselves to the audience, as well as have them speak about the action taking place or their own emotions, instead of merely taking part in the events or experiencing their feelings. When the roles were not speaking to the audience, but to each other, Brecht adopted the Noh convention of keeping emotions isolated and logically contained. He did this by having the roles speak in the third person or by using other reported speech techniques.

Reported speech

A device to comment on action, thoughts and feelings where the speaker talks about oneself using third person language.

Hint

Brecht's famous play *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is said to have been inspired by the play *Circle of Chalk* by 14th century playwright Li Hsing-tao. This Classical Chinese play was produced in Berlin in 1925 by the famous Austrian stage and film actor and director Max Reinhardt. Reinhardt emigrated to the USA in 1938, escaping persecution from the Nazis for being Jewish.

In Brecht's poem 'Song of the Playwright', he himself discusses his interest in learning from the different styles of theatre from across the world:

I studied the representations of the great feudal figures
Through the English: of rich individuals
Who saw the world as space for their freer development.
I studied the moralizing Spaniards
The Indians, masters of delicate sensations
And the Chinese, who represent the family
And the many-coloured lives in the cities.

Poetry and prose (2003), Bertolt Brecht

Some of Brecht's most well-known plays include *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939), *The Good Person of Szechwan* (1940), *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui* (1942) and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1944).

Hint

Because of his Marxist views and also his creation of drama works that continually questioned and challenged society's norms, Brecht left Germany in 1933 when Hitler's Nazism control came into full effect. After spending time in Denmark, Sweden and Finland, he eventually migrated to the United States in 1941.

Brecht's persecution for his socialist beliefs and practices, however, did not end with his moving to the US. Whilst in his new home he lived through a tumultuous period during the McCarthy communist and socialist 'witch-hunts'. In 1949 Brecht moved back to East Berlin in (then) divided Germany.

Internet exploration

To hear from Helene Wiegel about the work she and Brecht were doing go to:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXyNIQoh6ig

Theatre of cruelty

At the turn and early part of last century, many drama practitioners across Europe were experimenting with presentational drama in vastly different ways. One of these artists was Antonin Artaud (1885-1948). Artaud, a Frenchman, was not interested in working with Aristotelean narrative structures or traditionally interpreted drama scripts, nor in creating drama using regular performance conventions, and especially not in connecting with audiences in an expected, usual way. He believed in and set about developing a new style of drama, one without psychologically-driven characters existing in specific life-like settings (such as realistic or naturalistic plays), and one that did not attempt to stimulate thought and action by educating its audience at a distance (such as in epic theatre). Instead Artaud's drama wanted the audience to be confronted emotionally and physically by experiencing their contained concerns and repressed fears fully realised on stage.

Early in his career Artaud worked closely with the surrealists. He acted in many surrealist plays and often wrote for films directed by the movement's founding figure André Breton. Artaud also acted in more mainstream works such as in Carl Dreyer's *Passion of Joan of Arc*. After being rejected by the surrealists, due largely to disagreements with Breton, Artaud was free to pursue his own beliefs about theatre. Artaud advocated that drama had become a 'spoke piece' for the playwright and that practitioners needed to let go of traditional scripts, or at least of traditional interpretations of scripts, and create independent, innovative drama using more holistic methods, with creative input from every artist involved.

It was in the 1930s that Artaud began to channel his beliefs and dramatic discoveries into a new type of drama that he called the 'Theatre of cruelty'. Artaud didn't include regular performance conventions, but instead used highly energised and extremely stylised voice and movement, which could not be interpreted by the audience in a traditional, rational or empathetic way. He brought the design components to the forefront of the theatrical production, one of the first to truly use the space in a three-dimensional, holistic way. His psychologically confronting, emotion-provoking and physically violent sound, lighting, scenography and costume design enabled him to do this.

Through performance and production elements Artaud strove to incense in audience's shock, extreme emotion, confusion and disorientation during the performance as they uncovered, identified and recognised the true, primitive, terrifying nature of human kind that is buried, contained and controlled under society's cultural conditioning since birth.

His first, and only production as it turns out, in 1935 to embrace these ideas was his *The Cenci*, originally written in 1829 by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Although the contentious production closed in less than a month and did not allow Artaud to completely realise the concept of his new art-form, it did provoke a transformational response in French, and also those of the wider Western world, dramatists and audiences. Later directors and drama practitioners, such as Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brook in the 1960s, adopted some conventions and parts of Artaud's approach to areas of their work.

Surrealism

An artistic movement in the early 1920s founded in France and led by André Breton, which aimed at exploring concepts of reality and nonreality by blurring, challenging and removing the seemingly distinct lines between the two.



Antonin Artaud jeune a SD
Photograph by Agence de Presse Meurisse,
Bibliothèque Nationale de France



A contemporary ensemble performing
theatre of cruelty

Internet exploration

Although provocative and extremely intense, investigate Antonin Artaud's theatre of cruelty at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpfVW6otfyQ

Post-war realism

By the 1940s the advances in global transportation allowed more artists (and audiences) to travel. There was the increased availability of books, journals and publications from other countries (including translations), as well as the migration to America, England and Australia of many Russians at the turn of last century and Europeans in general after both world wars. In this dynamic, vibrant landscape artists were learning many new and different ways to create drama from each other. This resulted in practitioners increasingly borrowing from other drama styles to create new works and new eclectic styles of drama.

It was only by the end of the Second World War that universities in America began to offer their students drama as a field of study, allowing for the legitimate and valued study of theatre, as well as the formal cross-pollination of global ideas for the first time. By this point the States too had embraced European techniques, such as Stanislavski's System of Acting to create believable characters, and the New Stagecraft Design to reduce the clutter of historically accurate sets and use scenography instead to focus on the actor and the play's events, as advocated by Swiss designer Adolphe Appia (1862-1928). Theatre companies were moving away from repertoire dominated by British and European plays and beginning to find a truly American voice of their own.

New stagecraft

A movement in Western drama to eliminate the playing space clutter which had become popular through the naturalism and early realism movements, encouraging instead simplicity of design, focus on the actors and heightened expressiveness in every part of the production.

Adolphe Appia

A theatrical design pioneer of the early 20th century (1862 - 1928), who worked with new lighting technologies to realise and promote the design simplicity that he believed in.

The 1940s, therefore, had the perfect climate to see the rise of the American playwright, which it did. With increasing popularity many American writers focused on creating drama that, whilst stylised in some ways or highly symbolic in others, was largely realistic in nature. Playwrights such as Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) and Arthur Miller (1915-2005) wrote in the 40s and 50s plays about characters torn between personal motivation or individual growth, and the needs of family members or the expectations of society. These realists were exploring through drama what it meant to be a human being, a regular American, living within a modern world.

In Australia playwrights, and the Australian theatre industry at large, didn't begin to truly find their own national voice until the 1950s, largely due to the staging of the 1955 ground-breaking play *Summer of The Seventeenth Doll* by Ray Lawler (born in 1921). Although other plays like *The Touch of Silk* by Betty Roland (1903-1996) in 1928 and *Rusty Bugles* by Sumner Locke Elliott (1917-1991) in 1948 certainly had very localised characters and clearly explored Australian identity, they were not necessarily considered, at the time, as substantial, merit-worthy pieces of drama.

Hint

Rusty Bugles was so colloquially Australian in its language that it received notoriety because the original production was shut down by the NSW Police for profanity.

In the 1940s Australia was suffering from the cultural cringe factor that had dominated the performing arts industry for generations. Theatrical entertainment was still polarised; either local amateur groups were staging classics with varying degrees of success, including Shakespearean plays or the work of local playwrights, or theatre venues were importing larger-scale higher-budgeted international touring shows. Australian audiences were not yet convinced that their own stories, told in their own voices (and accents), that were acted, directed, designed and produced by their own kin, were worthy of being put on the stage. *Summer of the seventeenth doll*, in the mid-50s, changed all that. Following a hugely successful opening production in Melbourne, and a national and regional tour, it became first Australian play to tour overseas. It won the national play competition by the Playwrights Advisory Board and, in London, won the *Evening Standard* Best Play Award in 1957.

Cultural cringe

A belief among Australians prevalent in the first half of the 20th century that foreign artworks were far better in quality, content and execution than local ones. This led to a devaluing of the Australian theatre industry and a lack of professional drama practitioners.

In subsequent years there was an explosion of local dramatic productions, which produced many professional artists for the first time in Australian arts history. This included the playwrights Richard Beynon and Alan Seymour. This period saw performing arts festivals created across the country, such as the Festival of Perth (1953) and the Adelaide Festival of Arts (1960). NIDA, the National Institute of Dramatic Art, was established in 1958 in Sydney. The next decade brought the formation of The Australian Council for the Arts in 1968, which helped to establish many of the state theatre companies and to provide funding for arts groups across the country.

Hint

In 1947 the British director Tyrone Guthrie was brought to Australia by the government of the time to investigate whether Australia was ready to support a national theatre company. Guthrie advised that such a move would be premature.

Far from quelling the proposal, his negative attitude only fuelled the enthusiasm of many practitioners and keen audience members to develop a truly Australian theatrical industry. This event, and others like it, can be seen to have helped prepare the landscape for the nation to be ready to embrace its own dramatic identity when the opportunity eventually arose with Ray Lawler's 1955 play.

Contemporary musical theatre

At the same time that realism was taking a stronghold in the U.S. in the 1940s, the musical theatre genre was maintaining its dominating popularity with much of the general public. Composers such as Irving Berlin (1888-1989), Cole Porter (1891-1964), George Gershwin (1898-1937) and Kurt Weill (1900-1950) had been creating music for dramatic works that were hugely successful across the globe. English composers such as Ivor Novello (1893 – 1951), Noël Coward (1899-1973) and Noel Gay (1898-1954) were also writing entertaining musicals that were extremely popular with the general public.

Composer

An artist who writes music.

Stylistically the American and British musicals of the 1920s and 30s tended to value the craft of singing and dancing somewhat more than that of acting. This can be seen in the incredibly beautiful, witty or crowd pleasing songs that didn't always fit seamlessly into the plot. Perhaps the dominance of the music is because audiences were looking to escape the difficulties of their every-day lives, especially during the Great Depression, and the songs particularly provided them this opportunity. Audiences were looking to be transported to another world where they could be thoroughly entertained and impressed by the talents of the performers. As such, the plots were often far-fetched with events that weren't fluidly structured. The dramatic action can be seen often to be a vehicle for the upcoming song or dance number.

The Great Depression

The severe and lasting economic downturn of the 1930s where millions of people were unemployed across the world.

Hint

Early in Kurt Weill's career in his native Germany, the music he wrote used sophisticated multiplicity in the instrumentation, song structure, melodies and rhythms, as can be seen in his score for *The Threepenny Opera* in 1928, a play that he created with Bertolt Brecht.

In moving to the US in 1935 to escape persecution by the Nazis, Kurt Weill was greatly influenced by the American lyrical melodies and formulaic structures of Broadway and the musical film industries. He adapted his unpredictable, complex European style of composing and found a more melodious, commercial, American sound that brought him huge success.

In 1943 composer Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) and lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II (1895-1960) collaborated for the first time together and in doing so changed the style of musical theatre with their seminal work *Oklahoma!* Never before had a musical begun not with a big showy chorus number, but with a quiet solo of a tenor singing about his emotions and the landscape around him. For the first time the chorus members were as important to the plot as the lead soloists. The songs were natural progressions of the dialogue before them, not merely inserted pieces for the soloists to show off. The music, whether a solo or group number, was to some degree plot-driven. The villain of the story, Jud Fry, was a regular person with whom the audience could empathise despite his dark plans.

Following the success of *Oklahoma!* Rogers and Hammerstein went on to create numerous Broadway hits using, and evolving the new structural and musical formula of their first hit, such as *Carousel* (1945), *South Pacific* (1949), *The King and I* (1951) and *The Sound of Music* (1959). Whilst some writers, such as Cole Porter and Irving Berlin in America, and Sandy Wilson (1924-2014) and Julian Slade (1930-2006) in England, continued to write musicals that were more old-fashioned, many others chose to incorporate

Lyricist

An artist who writes the words for a song.

Solo

A song that is sung by one actor.

Tenor

A light male voice with an extended high range. Other voices include soprano (high female), alto (low female) and bass (low male).

Broadway

The geographical section of New York city between 41st and 54th streets, which houses approximately forty professional drama venues, most of which have more than 499 seats.

consequence-driven plots, relatively three-dimensional characters and songs that sprung out of the action in the 1950s and 60s. This included Frank Loesser (1910-1969) with *Guys and Dolls* (1950), Alan Jay Lerner (1918-1986) and Frederick Loewe (1901-1988) with musicals like *My Fair Lady* (1956), Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) and Stephen Sondheim (born in 1930) with *West Side Story* (1957) in the States.

Hint

Sondheim was mentored in his early years by Hammerstein who taught him not only about what makes a musical great, but also how to build a career in the performing arts industry.

Developments in musical theatre were not limited to America, on the West End in London some writers were increasingly experimenting with stylistic conventions such as Lionel Bart (1930-1999) through psychologically complex characters like Faigen and Bill Sikes in *Oliver!* (1960), or Joan Littlewood's (1914-2002) collective approach to devising *Oh What a Lovely War!* (1963) with the Theatre Workshop Ensemble.

Internet exploration

Watch Hugh Jackman perform the opening song of *Oklahoma!* and reflect on this unusual start to a musical:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNEUtN21cuU

West End

The geographical section of west London mostly around Leicester Square, the Strand and Shaftesbury Avenue, which has about forty professional drama venues, most of which have between 250 to 2000 seats.

Theatre workshop

An ensemble theatre company, established in 1945 and led by Joan Littlewood, who primarily devise new drama works collectively.

Jerzy Grotowski

The innovative drama practitioner Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) grew up in rural Poland, first during the Nazi occupation, then post-war under the early years of Stalinism. Through the eclectic thinking of his mother, a school teacher, he was introduced to books on Hindu mysticism, as well as to the life of Jesus through a New Testament from the village Bishop read secretly in the hayloft of a farm. He was also exposed to ritual and folklore valued by the peasants among whom he grew up. It was here that he experienced a type of spiritual awakening, one that would heavily influence his adult theatrical work.

As he grew Grotowski sought to understand other religious beliefs by reading widely, including the Islamic Koran, the Jewish Zohar and the teachings of the Hindu mystic Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950).

Hinduism

A religion originally from the South-Asiatic region that is built on the principles of karma and dharma.

Vsevolod Meyerhold

A Russian actor, director and producer who developed a highly stylised, physical acting technique called 'biomechanics'.

Stalinism

The period in eastern European history when a type of communist approach to living, focusing on a class-less society, with a centralised power system, highly industrialised capability and collectivist agricultural industry as advocated by Joseph Stalin (1929 - 1953), was enforced.

He also studied the philosophical works of Russian Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) and Jewish Martin Buber (1878-1965). As an adult he began to develop his practical acting craft studying not only in Poland, but also in Russia with artists such as Stanislavski and Meyerhold (1874-1940).

Grotowski's childhood spiritual experiences, adolescent studies and acting tutelage, together with his own artistic investigations and experimentations, lead to him developing a new type of theatre called Poor Theatre. In this style the costumes, set, lighting and other production elements are stripped right back, so that only the parts absolutely necessary to carrying out an action or communicating an idea are utilised. The notion of 'poor' is that the production and especially the actor are exposed and vulnerable to the audience-spectator at all times.

In rehearsal at the Laboratory Theatre actors would wear basic black clothing, a practice which has become a standard for contemporary theatre. Blacks were also often worn in performance, perhaps with the addition of a simple symbolic costume piece to represent a character. Props were used in different ways by the actors to represent different objects. A piece of cloth, for example, in one scene could literally be a blanket, then in another could be bundled up to become a sleeping baby, or in a third scene could be stretched out just above the ground by two actors and shaken to represent a river. This simplicity in the production values was in total contrast to the other highly decorative, cluttered and technically complex performances popular during this time. Grotowski believed these spectacle-driven entertainments keep the actor at a distance from the audience, with their true self masked from the viewers. His aim, instead, was for the audience to experience and engage with challenging and confrontational theatre, drama that pushed the boundaries and promoted societal change, with honest, raw performances by the actors.

Blacks

Black loose-fitting or flexible clothing worn by actors in rehearsal and, in some types of presentational drama, performance.

Laboratory theatre

A presentational ensemble-based theatre company, established in 1962 by Jerzy Grotowski and his colleagues, that created process-driven drama by using the conventions and techniques of poor theatre.

For more information on Grotowski's work see **Chapters 2: Acting** and **3: Directing**.

Internet exploration

Find out how a group of drama students interpret Grotowski's poor theatre concepts at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtRu945WRE&list=PLhrGliJqYmv80Xtm0jpVpYLNtIRGwbXcg&index=4

Peter Brook

British director, Peter Brook (born in 1925) has through the course of his incredible theatrical career, changed the way drama is created today, as well as the way audiences experience it. As a child, in London, he loved learning but didn't necessarily like traditional schooling. He began experimenting with plays at a very young age at home and is said to have created his own four-hour version of *Hamlet* at seven years of age.

Whilst studying at Oxford University Brook also worked professionally writing television commercial scripts and directing several productions, including Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* in London. Despite being only 21, he went on to work at the Stratford Theatre and, soon after, Covent Garden. In 1962 he became one of the prestigious Royal Shakespeare Company's directors.

At the RSC, just as he had when working with other theatre companies, Brook pushed the boundaries of what audiences expected from theatrical productions. This included in 1964 conducting a series of now-renowned workshops exploring Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. Brook went on to direct a particularly experimental season that year at the RSC incorporating, extending and adapting many of Artaud's conventions, shocking London's audiences in the process. He received seven drama awards for his work that year, including London's premier production of the controversial asylum-set play *Marat Sade* written by Peter Weiss.

Over the years that followed Brook continued to push the boundaries of theatre, finding new ways to truly engage with audiences and allow them to understand more about the mysteries of human existence and being alive. Notable productions include *US* in 1966 and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1970. In *US* Brook took a collectivist approach where the company creatively explored the atrocities of the Vietnam War, including investigating death through a series of exploratory activities where the actors each tried to be dead. Grotowski, a practitioner who greatly influenced Brook's work, came to work with him on this production. They found the more that the ensemble understood death the more they felt energetically alive, and that if they could confront the audience with overwhelming death during performance they could then evoke in them an incredible sense of being alive. In the Shakespearean play, by comparison, Brook filled it with acrobatics, juggling, tumbling, trampolining and clowning to bring out and extend the zestfulness of the crazily-passionate-love within the work. He physically heightened the play's sense of magic and frivolity, and invigorated the audience with this sense of energy as they experienced the production.

In 1971 Brook established the International Centre for Theatre Research in Paris to investigate drama from diverse cultures across the world. Experimentation and investigation across a decade eventually lead to what is now considered his most seminal production; *Le Mahabharata* in 1985. This nine-hour drama work took place in an adapted external space (originally in Avignon, southern France), against the backdrop of exposed-rock cliffs, on a playing space of yellow sand with a natural stream and pond.



Le Mahabharata, 1985 Avignon
Photographer Daniel Cande

The primitive landscape was creatively integrated into the production, with the natural elements highlighted and utilised in the unfolding of events of the epic Indian work.

For more information on Brook's works see **Chapter 3: Directing**.

Hint

A director not only of theatre, Brook also directed seven films including the famous adaptation of the book *Lord of the flies* in 1961.

Internet exploration

See Peter Brook being interviewed at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sx2qHHFS5Yk

Adapted space

Also called a found space, a non-purpose built venue used as a performance space.

The Mahabharata

An ancient Indian poem written in Sanskrit 2000 years ago, which is 15 times the length of the Bible, and is made up of 18 volumes and 90,000 couplets. It's a combination of Indian myths, legends, folklore, faith and history.

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