

Introduction to Basic Drama Skills

Autumn Term 1:

1

To successfully represent a character you should be using both physical and vocal skills

Physical skills

- Facial expression: showing emotion of the character through the face
- Body Language: using your body to show the characters emotion
- Physicality: using your body to show the character
- Gesture: a movement of part of the body to show meaning.
- Mannerisms: habitual gesture or way of speaking or behaving in role
- Gait: the way a character walks

Up right	4 Up centre	Up left
Right center	Center	Left center
Down right	Down center	Down left

2

Vocal skills

- Pace: how fast or how slow the character speaks
- Power: how loud or how quiet a character speaks
- Pitch: how high or how low a character speaks
- Pause: moments where the character stops talking
- Tone: shows what the character thinking or how they are feeling

Theatrical skills

3

These skills can be used in a performance to create a story:

- Freeze frame: A frozen moment in time expressing a character / scenario.
- Still image: frozen image that symbolises an idea or relationship
- Thought tracking: a character saying their thoughts aloud
- Hot seating: a character is asked questions and the actor responds in role
- Narration: telling the audience what is happening
- Mime: suggesting action, character, or emotion without words
- Improvisation: creating a scene without a script
- Proxemics: the use of space on stage to create meaning
- Levels: the use of height to show status
- Status: the power one character has over another
- Physical Theatre: creating objects, set or meaning through the use of the body

Year 7 Drama

Autumn Term 2:



Structuring a response:

1. Identify a theatrical skill used in performance
2. Describe how the skill was used including the name of the skill
3. Analyse what meaning this skill help to create for you as an audience member
4. Evaluate if this skill was used in a successful way
5. Link back to the question
6. Repeat the above.

1

Theatrical Skills:

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Tone: shows what the character thinking or how they are feeling

Facial expression: showing emotion of the character through the face

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2

Evaluating THE PERFORMANCES OF OTHERS

1. Introduction: Someone else's: as an audience member what did the performance make you think about? Select one character and write in detail about them

2. Someone else's: Do you think they were able to create a successful performance?

3. Write about the performance as a whole.

Year 7 Drama

What did you learn about the characters and the story from their performance. What do you think the aim was? Was it funny? Sad? Compelling? Unpick the theatrical skills one performer used and think why? What was the purpose? What affect did it have on you?

They were successful why? If you weren't why not? What could they have done differently? What was good about there personal performance and how could they improve?
LINK TO THEATRICAL SKILLS USED THROUGHOUT!

What worked well?
What didn't?
Do you have any ideas about how they might have altered/changed the performance if given more time?

3

Analyse SOMEONE ELSE'S Performance:

1. Space:

- Is there a fourth wall?
- How have THEY used proxemics to show relationships? What relationship was created?
- What is the focus of the audience?
- What did you learn through the skills used?

2. Character:

- How have THEY shown the age of the character?
- How have THEY shown the personality of the audience?
- How has the character helped to create meaning in THEIR performance?

LINK TO THEATRICAL SKILLS THROUGHOUT

3. Analysis of the moment:
Explain in detail the meaning created by the moment, relating to the audience. E.g. how it made the audience understand the character, themes or story, how it created empathy, comedy, tension or communicated a message for the audience etc.
Your personal reaction– how did you: think/feel/react/respond/engage?
What meaning was communicated to you at this point.

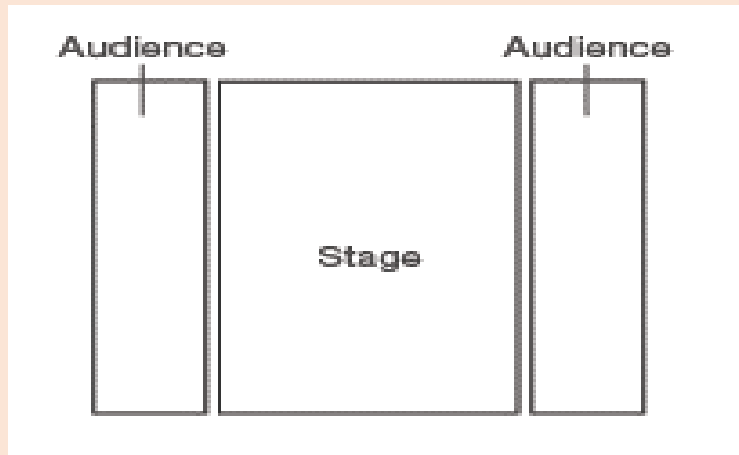
Stage Configurations:



Year 7 Drama:

1

Traverse



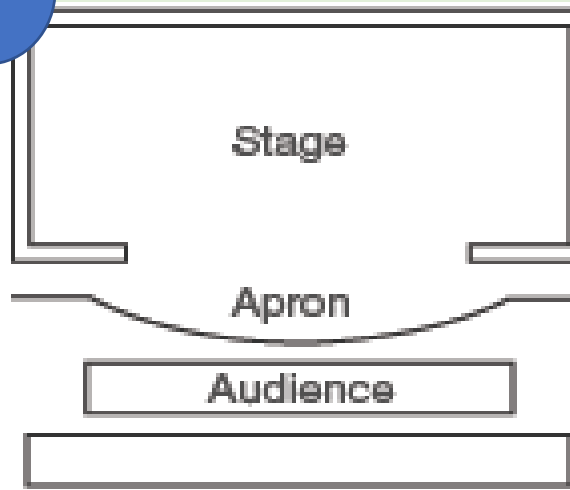
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Promenade Theatre



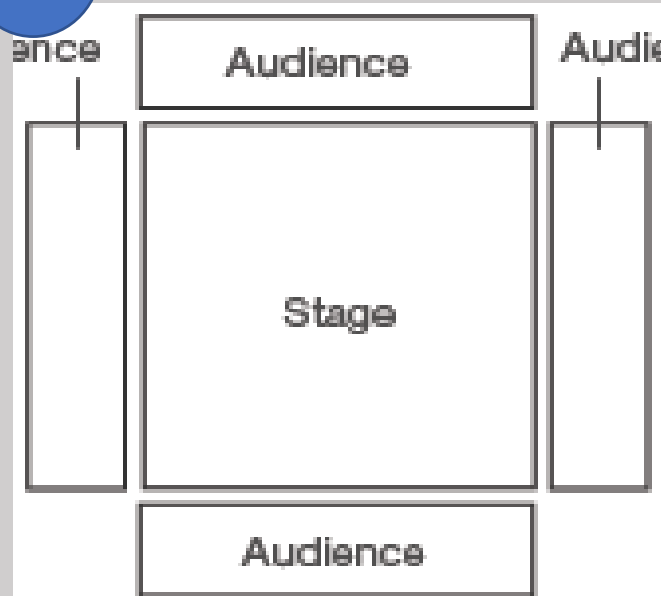
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Proscenium arch



4

Theatre in the Round



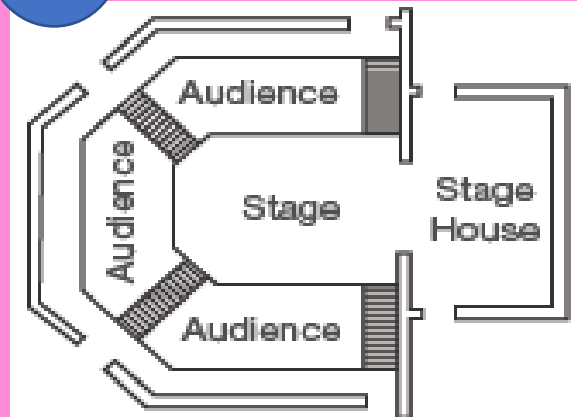
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Stage Positioning:

Up right	Up centre	Up left
Right center	Center	Left center
Down right	Down center	Down left

6

Thrust stage



Roles and responsibilities in the theatre :

1. Theatre Maker:

Understudy

1

What they do:

Learning a part, including lines and movements, so they are able to take over a role for someone if needed when there is a planned or unexpected absence.

2. Theatre Maker:

Playwright

2

What they do:

Writing the script of the play, including the dialogue and stage direction

3. Theatre Maker:

Puppet Designer

3

What they do:

Designing the puppets for a production, taking into account the style of puppets and how they will be operated.

4. Theatre Maker:

Costume Designer

4

What they do:

Designing what the actors wear on stage. Making sure that costumes are appropriate for the style and period of the piece. Ensuring the costumes fit the audience.

5. Theatre Maker:

Theatre Manager

5

What they do:

Running the theatre building, including overseeing the front of house staff (ushers) and the box office staff who sell tickets.

6. Theatre Maker:

Director

6

What they do:

Overseeing the creative aspects of the production. Developing a 'concept' or central unifying idea for the production. Liaising with designers, rehearsing the actors and ensuring that all technical elements of the play are ready. Giving 'notes' to the actors to help improve their performances and agreeing the blocking (or movement) of the actors

7. Theatre Maker:

Technician

7

What they do:

Operating the technical equipment, such as the lighting and sound boards, during the performance.

8. Theatre Maker:

Performer

8

What they do:

Appearing in a production, for example by acting, dancing or singing. Creating a performance or assuming a role on stage in front of the audience.

9. Theatre Maker:

Sound Designer

9

What they do:

Designing the sound required for the performance, which may include music and sound effects. Considering if amplification, such as the use of microphones, is needed, and creating a sound plot.

10. Theatre Maker:

Set Designer

10

What they do:

Designing the set of the play and the set dressing (objects placed on the stage). Providing sketches and other design materials before overseeing the creation of the set.

11. Theatre Maker:

Stage Manager

11

What they do:

Running the backstage elements of the play and supervising the backstage crew. Organising the rehearsal schedule and keeping lists of props and other technical needs. Creating a prompt book and calling the cues for the performance.

12. Theatre Maker:

Lighting Designer


12

What they do:

Designing the lighting states and effects that will be used in a performance. Understanding the technical capabilities of the theatre and creating a lighting plot.

Year 7 Drama:




Biographical information		1
1	'Animal Farm' was written in 1945.	
2	It was written by George Orwell.	
3	Orwell was born in 1903.	
4	'Animal Farm' was influenced by the events of World War II.	
5	Orwell wanted to write about the cruel leaders of Europe during World War II.	
6	'Animal Farm' is an allegory for the events of the Russian Revolution.	

Year 7 Drama:

Spring Term 1:

Chapter breakdown		2
1	The animals gather to listen to old Major. He gives them a vision of a life without man.	
2	The animals rebel and overthrow Jones. The commandments are written.	
3	The animals' first harvest is a success. The pigs keep the milk and apples to themselves.	
4	The Battle of the Cowshed: Jones attempts to reclaim the farm.	
5	Snowball and Napoleon debate the windmill. Napoleon uses dogs to chase Snowball from the farm. Napoleon makes himself leader.	
6	Work begins on the windmill. The pigs move into the farmhouse. Winds destroy the windmill.	
7	Work on the windmill starts again. Napoleon demands eggs from the hens. Napoleon slaughters animals at the show trials.	
8	Napoleon betrays Mr. Pilkington and sells timber to Mr. Frederick. Frederick attacks the farm. The animals suffer losses in the Battle of the Windmill. The windmill is destroyed.	
9	Boxer is sold to the knacker's yard.	
10	The pigs are leaders on the farm. They start walking on two legs and carrying whips. There is no difference between the pigs and the humans they sought to overthrow at the start of the novel.	

Characters		3
Napoleon	'a large, rather fierce-looking Berkshire boar, the only Berkshire on the farm, not much of a talker, but with a reputation for getting his own way.'	
Snowball	'a more vivacious pig than Napoleon, quicker in speech and more inventive, but was not considered to have the same depth of character.'	
Squealer	'with very round cheeks, twinkling eyes, nimble movements, and a shrill voice. He was a brilliant talker, and when he was arguing some difficult point he had a way of skipping from side to side and whisking his tail which was somehow very persuasive. The others said of Squealer that he could turn black into white.'	
Boxer	'an enormous beast, nearly eighteen hands high, and as strong as any two ordinary horses put together... in fact he was not of first-rate intelligence, but he was universally respected for his steadiness of character and tremendous powers of work.'	

Themes		4
Leadership		
Corruption		
Control over the intellectually inferior		
Lies and deceit		
Foolishness and naivety		
Violence		
Pride and ceremony		
Dreams and hope		

Key words		5
allegory – a story with two meanings. It has a literal meaning, which is what actually happens in the story. But it also has a deeper meaning. The deeper meaning is often a moral. It teaches you a lesson about life.		
tyrant – someone who has total power and uses it in a cruel and unfair way. A tyranny is a situation in which a leader or government has too much power and uses that power in a cruel and unfair way.		
rebellion – a rebellion is a situation in which people fight against those who are in charge of them.		
harvest – the time when crops are cut and collected from fields.		
corrupt – when people use their power in a dishonest way order to make life better for themselves.		
propaganda – Information that is meant to make people think a certain way. The information may not be true.		
cult of personality – a cult of personality is where a leader convinces people to worship him or her, and treat them like a god.		
treacherous – If you betray someone who trusts you, you could be described as treacherous .		

The seven commandments		6
1	Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.	
2	Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.	
3	No animal shall wear clothes.	
4	No animal shall sleep in a bed.	
5	No animal shall drink alcohol.	
6	No animal shall kill any other animal.	
7	All animals are equal.	





1

Key Terms:

Exaggeration: To magnify (make bigger, more over the top, a performance skill)

Clocking the audience: a moment when a character breaks the fourth wall and looks at the audience.

Point of focus: creating a moment where the audiences focus is on a characters or a point on stage

Mime: suggesting action, character, or emotion without words

Steps to Building a Character:

1. Copy exaggerated facial expression of the mask
2. Develop exaggerated body language to suit the character
3. Develop an exaggerated walk to suit the character

2

Stock Characters

Protagonist. Handsome, strong, brave, honest and reliable. Status: Middle class or higher

Damsel in Distress. Beautiful, courageous, innocent and vulnerable. Status: Middle class or higher

Antagonist. Cunning, without morals, dishonest, cruel and evil. Status: Middle class or higher

Comedy duo this is usually two people who make the audience laugh, they are often joined at the hip

4

Masks in Theatre

The rules of mask:

1. Never put the mask on / take it off in front of the audience
2. Never touch, reposition your mask
3. Don't talk whilst wearing the mask
4. Ensure that you face the front, as much as possible, whilst performing.

Year 7 Drama:

Spring Term 2:

3



Year 7 Drama:

Summer Term 1:

The characters in Commedia never learn from their mistakes

Physicality

- The actors wore masks
- They had to show emotions through their body.
- They would have big gestures.
- The longer the nose on the mask, the more stupid the character

1

Key Terms:

2

Lazzi: a basic outline for a scene, which is then improvised by the actors

Status: power difference in the relationship between two characters

Clocking the audience: a character breaks the fourth wall

Point of focus: a moment where the audiences focus is on a characters or a point on stage

3

History Commedia Del'Arte is a type of improvised play. They knew the scenario and then improvised.

It originated in Italy in the 16th Century.

Commedia Del'Arte (roughly translated) means 'Comedy of the profession'.

Style

The form of Theatre came after the 'Black Death/Plague' so most of the storylines are based around themes from that time:

Greed, Hunger, Death and Love.

4

Commedia characters:

Zanni: Physicality:

Leads with his nose, his legs and arms are forward
He gazes up and looks at everything in wonder
He arches his back when he walks

Pantalone: Physicality:

Leads with his head.

Walks with a crooked back, with one hand in front of him (ready to steal something!) and the other behind his back

Shuffles with legs bent.

He pretends he is fragile with old age and then moves very fast when stealing.

Moves his hand a lot

Il Dottore (The Doctor): Physicality:

He is extremely fat, and moves very slowly. He often holds his belly and runs out of breath very easily!

The Doctor is usually drunk.

His belly sticks out and he leans back on his feet.

Il Capitano: Physicality:

Talks in loud voice to be the center of attention.

When he gets scared he screams really loud!

He walks with his head held high, nose in the air and should back... because he thinks he's very important.

Leads from the chest.

Magnifico: Physicality:

Leads with his head, like an eagle.

He looks down on everything

He walks and stands with his hands behind his back

Swishes his cloak around him when he turns and stop



Frantic Assembly:

Summer Term 2:

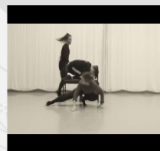
Devising in the style of Frantic Assembly:

- Frantic Assembly is a theatre company that uses a techniques called contact improvisation – a way of improvising that requires the performers to use physical contact with others as the starting point for their own movements.

1

Chair Duets

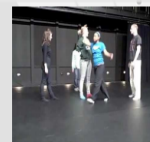
This is a challenge created by Frantic Assembly for a dramatic effect within a piece of drama, which involves the use of communication between the partners and physical theater (performed by the upper body) to convey a range of different emotions between the two participants involved. Due to restrictive nature of sitting down, it demands you explore and experiment with different movements to make the most of the body parts that are available. The idea of 'Chair Duets' is to build a story through movement and ultimately create a working scene from it. According to Frantic Assembly, a story will naturally develop after adding meaning to the movement.



2

Round-By-Through

- This puts the 3 individual movements of 'round' , 'by' and 'through' into one piece to convey a storyline or emotion/theme towards the audience
- Round- This is the movement in which consists you to 'literally' go round a part of your partners body as a basis for the entire piece.
- By- Consists for you to be parallel to your partner
- Through- should be confined to only the use of the upper body/arms.



3

Go,Stop,Clap,Jump

This technique of Frantic's requires the actor/actress to have full attention on what the commander (teacher/director) is directing, through four simple commands and how these movements are portrayed through different paces.However, to further challenge the actor/actress there is a reversal of what each command means, further emphasizing the need for full focus.

4

Mirror and Mirror Variation

- This is a technique in which consists of pairs- yet again- one labeled A and the other B and also relies on the full attention of each partner as each individual has to mirror the specific movement their partner does.
- This technique can be altered in many different ways such as: delayed movement; the pace in which it is does;reversal in the order and also the partners can change, to create a different atmosphere or story.

5

music

- Frantic Assembly has a very interesting way of utilizing music because it really highlights how music performs in the theatre, not just as a theatrical element, but as an entity on stage along with the actors.
- best example of this given is that of pool (no water) where the performers were asked to listen to the silence and stillness of the piece of music before translating that quality into the scene they were working on.

6

Walk the grid

This exercise focuses particularly on listening and looking, encouraging actors to move into certain areas with no verbal communication with other actors. If actors bump into one another, it is obvious they haven't been paying attention. Thus, they fail the activity. This exercise can help actors develop spatial awareness and help them to work with others in unprecedented scenarios.

Year 7 Drama: