

1

Theatrical skills

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 9 Drama specific vocabulary

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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

Intonation: the rise and fall of the voice. For example a clear movement up at the end of a sentence when we ask questions,

intonation also helps us to show what we mean

Accent: people from different countries or areas speak with different accents – this can help communicate the background of a character

3

Physical skills

Facial expression: showing emotion of the character through the face

Body Language: using your body to show the character's 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

Posture: How straight or slouched a character stands

Stillness: lack of movement for a dramatic affect

Timing: exactly when something is done of the stage

Eye contact: looking directly at a character or choosing not to look at them

Spatial Awareness: the ability to be aware of props and other actors around you

Interaction with others: This could include touch or use of close proxemics to show the audience something

Choral movement: where a group of actors move in the same way at the same time (synchronized)

4

A sample of Rehearsal techniques:

Thought tracking: stopping the action at any moment in rehearsal, then characters speak their thoughts

Creating unseen scenes: improvise a scene to see how your character responds. The scene need not be part of the final performance.

Research: you may look at videos, sound clips or other internet research, particularly if you are playing a real person.

Character physicality: walk around the space in neutral. Gradually experiment with your posture until you settle on one which may work for your character. Then your movement. Then your facial expressions – remember if you are multi-rolling each character has to be completely different from one another.

Role on the wall: a stick figure on paper, where you gradually add character information to create a profile (age hobbies, family, background, occupation, personality, significant life events etc) this builds up a well-rounded picture of the character

Levels: create a scene and rehearse through it, each time you repeat the scene you exaggerate the movement and the dialogue to the next level (working on a scale of 1-10)

Command words:

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IDENTIFY

Can you find where in the performance they have used a particular skill?

ANALYSE

Why have they used this technique / skill, what was the effect?

EVALUATE

Were they successful when using this techniques / skill? If so why? If not why not?

Year 9: Roles & Responsibilities:

Theatre Maker:

Understudy

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.

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Theatre Maker:

Costume Designer

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.

4

Theatre Maker:

Technician

What they do:

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

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Theatre Maker:

Set Designer

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.

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Theatre Maker:

Performer

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.

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Theatre Maker:

Theatre Manager

What they do:

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

5

Theatre Maker:

Director

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

6

Theatre Maker:

Sound Designer

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.

9

Theatre Maker:

Stage Manager

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.

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Theatre Maker:

Lighting Designer

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.

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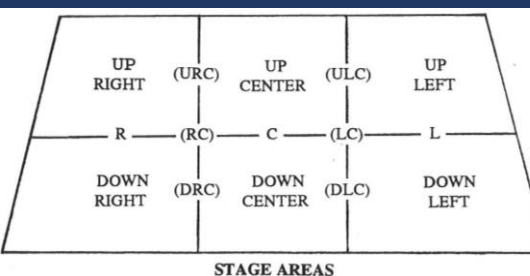
Theatre Maker:

Puppet Designer

What they do:

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

3



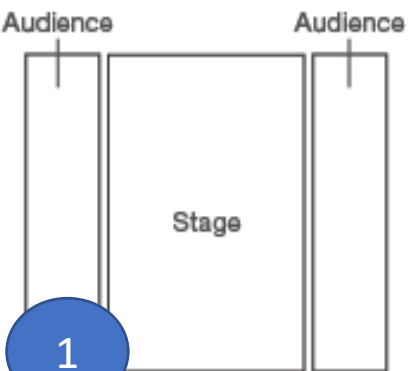
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Stage Positioning:

Year 9: Stage Configurations:

Traverse:

The acting area is a long, central space with the audience seated on either side facing each other



Advantages:

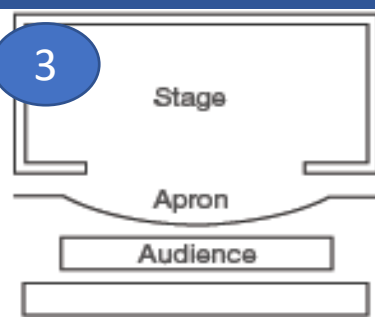
Audience feel close to the stage
They can see the reactions of the other audience members – helping with **audience interaction**

Extreme ends of the stage can be used to create extra acting areas.

Disadvantages:

Big pieces of **scenery, backdrops or set** can block **sightlines**
Blocking can be challenging
Actors can struggle with making themselves visible to both side of the audience
Lighting needs to be carefully designed to avoid shining lights in the audience's eyes.

3



Proscenium arch:

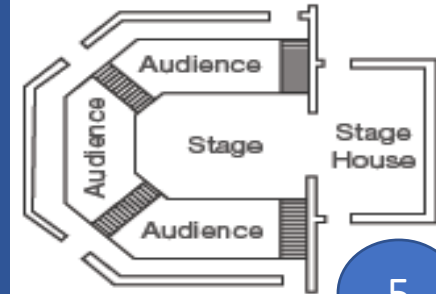
Is a common form of theatre, popular for larger theatres. The proscenium refers to the frame around the stage.

Advantages:

Stage pictures are easily created
Backdrops / scenery can be used
There may be **fly space** and **wing space** for storing scenery
Fourth wall easily created.

Disadvantages:

Some audience members may feel distant from the stage.
The auditorium could seem very formal and rigid.
Audience interaction may be more difficult.



5

Thrust stage:

Protrudes into the auditorium with the audience on three sides.

Advantages:

Combine advantages of proscenium and theatre in the round
Backdrops, flats and large scenery can be used.

Audience may feel closer to the stage

Disadvantages:

Sightlines for those on the extreme sides may be limited or obstructed
The audience on the right and left have each other in their view
Box sets (where three sides of a room are constructed) cannot be used as this would block views for much of the audience

Advantages:

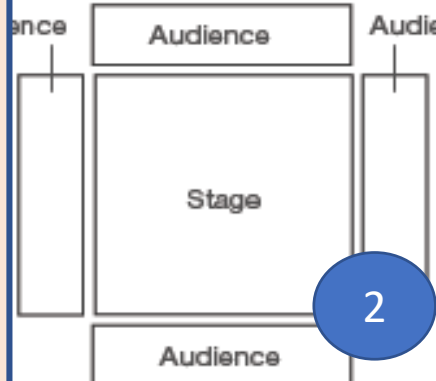
Directors and actors often find it very dynamic, interesting space because the audience is close to the stage
Actors enter and exit through the audience, engaging them
There is no easily achieved 'artificial **fourth wall**' separating the audience from the acting area

Disadvantages:

Cannot use **backdrops** or **flats** that would obscure the view of the audience
Stage furniture has to be chosen carefully so **sightlines** aren't blocked
Actors have to be carefully **blocked** so that audience aren't blocked for extended periods of time.

Theatre in the round:

is a stage configuration when the audience are seated around all sides of the stage



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Advantages:

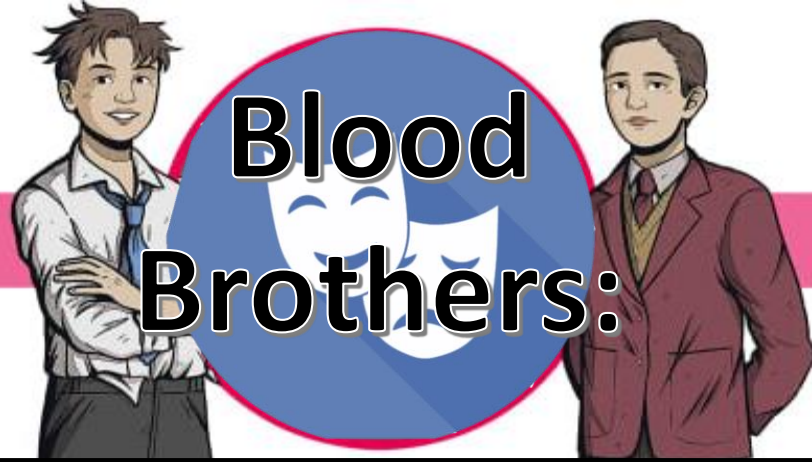
It is interactive and exciting – the audience may feel more involved.

Disadvantages:

The audience moving difficult or get tired of standing
Actors/crew need to be skilled at moving the audience around/controlling their focus

Promenade theatre:

Is when the audience stand or follow the actors through the performance.



Blood Brothers:

Brief plot Summary:

Blood Brothers, a musical by Liverpool playwright Willy Russell, revolves around twin boys (Mickey and Edward) who are separated at birth and brought up in completely different environments in the city. The play, set in the 1960s, is divided into two acts, with songs throughout.

Mickey is brought up with his seven older siblings by his struggling single mother, Mrs Johnstone. His twin brother, Edward, however is brought up as the only child of the wealthy Lyons family, who live nearby, after Mrs Lyons persuaded Mrs Johnstone to hand over one of her twins at birth. Mickey and Edward don't meet each other until they're seven years old, but immediately become best friends and blood brothers. The bond continues when the boys are teenagers and both live in the countryside, despite them both being in love with Mickey's neighbour Linda. However, as they get older, the huge difference in their backgrounds pulls them apart and eventually leads to their tragic deaths.

Contextual information:

- Willy Russell wrote *Blood Brothers* in 1981.
- It was first performed in Liverpool before transferring to the West End.
- It was first performed as a musical in 1983.
- Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was in power at this time.
- There was a very high rate of unemployment at this time.
- The play is set in Liverpool, as areas of high unemployment within the industrial working class.

Stylistic features and symbols:

- Reprise** – a song or part of a song that is repeated. Often it is intermingled with a new song. E.g. Marilyn Monroe.
- Motif** – A dominant or recurring image or idea in a text e.g. the gun.
- Juxtaposition** – Two opposite ideas are near each other in a piece of writing.
- Foreshadowing** – when the author alludes to what is to come in the text.
- Parallel** – two corresponding things that run side by side, e.g. the school scenes.
- Cyclical** – the structure of the play is cyclical as it starts and ends in the same place.
- Soliloquy** – when a character speaks their thoughts aloud, to themselves. It is different to a monologue which is one-character speaking, but in front of others
- Antihero** – a central character in a story, film, or drama who lacks conventional heroic attributes.
- Narrator** – echoes the function of the Greek Chorus, asks the audience to detach and judge.
- Stage Directions** – used prolifically by Russell to describe the movement and actions of characters.

KEY QUOTES:

- 'Y'know the devil's got your number'
- 'And do we blame superstition for what came to pass? Or could it be what we, the English, have come to know as class?'
- 'The welfare have already been onto me'
- 'See this means that we're blood brothers, an' that we always have to stand by each other'

Key characters:

- Narrator** – takes on multiple roles
- Mrs Johnstone** – Mother of the twins, impoverished.
- Mrs Lyons** – takes Eddie, privileged.
- Mickey** – poor twin, frequently downtrodden
- Eddie** – rich twin, not streetwise
- Sammy** - delinquent brother to Mickey
- Linda** – Mickey's girlfriend and Eddie's secret love
- Mr Lyons** – Father of Edward



How to approach question:

- Technical language** – use the accurate terminology to describe each aspect of a production, such as performance skills, design features and stage configurations
- Examples from the play** – include examples (e.g. quotes, context or events) that demonstrate understanding of the play and support the point your making.
- Detailed suggestions** - give specific details on how you would perform, design and direct a production that will help the examiner to visualise your ideas.
- Effect on the audience** – describe the desired effect of a production on the audience., as well as how this effect might be created using theatrical techniques.



Describe: pick out performance skills you see being used by a given actor, describe using the name of these skills what was done, include a quote if you can. Each paragraph should contain **8 skills (The Magic 8)**

Analyse: linking to the skills you have just identified, what did these skills communicate to you as an audience member? What meaning or effects or atmosphere was created through the inclusion of these skills?

Evaluation: was the use of these skills successful, did it clearly create meaning for you as an audience member? If yes how? If not why not?

4. Common feature of a play:

1

Genre: a category of drama, such as historical drama or musical.

Dialogue: what the characters say.

Monologue: a long speech spoken by one character.

Plot: the main events of the play presented in a particular sequence by the playwright.

Dramatic climax: the moment of greatest dramatic tension in a play.

Resolution: the end of the plot when the problems of the play are resolved.

Stage directions: descriptions of aspects of the play not conveyed by the actors' speeches. These may include a description of what the set or characters look like, and the actions of the characters and how certain lines of dialogue are spoken. It may also not pauses, silences or beats to indicate when the characters are not speaking.

Character list: a list of the characters that appear in the play. Some lists include a short description of the characters, such as their age or occupation.

Character: a person or other being (such as a talking animal) in a play, novel or film.

Performance style: the way in which something is performed. A realistic performance has a believable or life-like performance style, or a comedy might feature multi-role or physical comedy as its performance style.



Important things to think about when evaluating a moment:

3

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

Important things to think about when analysing a moment:

4

- 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 opinion– how did you: think/feel/react/respond/engage as an audience member?
- What meaning was communicated to you at this point.



The Lord of the Flies:

Context: 1

Golding's personal experiences of war inspired Lord of the Flies, written in 1954. It explores the idea of human nature and how brutal and uncompromising it can be. Golding is attempting to present a commentary on human struggle between being evil and following rules to acting selfishly and indulging in violence

Main Characters: 2

Ralph: one of the oldest boys; leader of the group, careful/mature. Represents law & order.

Piggy: bullied by the boys due to his weight. Represents science and intellect.

Roger: on the cusp of respectability and savagery. Becomes violent and unrestrained by the end.

Jack: the leader of the second tribe, impulsive, violent. Represents anarchy and human nature.

Sam and Eric: twin boys who do everything together. On the cusp of respectability and savagery.

Simon: hallucinates and thinks he see the Lord of the Flies. Victim of the other boys.

4 mark questions: this question will always be on **design: Lighting design, Costume design, Set design or Sound design.**

You will be given a scene and will have to describe how you would design a given element (1 of the 4 design elements). 3

Answering the 4 mark question:

- You must start with the context of the given scene, what is happening and what you are aiming to achieve through your design
- Provide a detailed description of your design using as many design specific pieces of terminology as possible, these should be linked back to what you are trying to achieve.

8 mark questions: this question will also be about how you would perform a given line from a given scene. You must also provide information surrounding the effects you want to create and how you are going to achieve these.

Answering the 8 mark question: your answer must be written in the 1st person.

- You must start with the context of the given scene, what is happening and the effects you want to create through your performance of the given line
- Complete a magic 8 paragraph: describing 8 theatrical skills in detail, how you would use them and the effects they would have. Linking back to the given character and given line throughout.

Themes: 4

- Peace vs Violence
- Nature vs Nurture
- Democracy
- Rivalry
- Anarchy
- Power



Brief plot summary: 5

A group of boys find themselves alone without any adults on an uninhabited island. Ralph and Piggy find a conch shell and use it to summon all of the other boys on the island together. Ralph is nominated as leader and another boy, Jack, is appointed as the leader of the hunters. Ralph decides that the best action is to light a signal fire on top of the mountains for passing ships. They miss a passing ship because the fire is left unsupervised. Ralph calls a meeting and tried to reinforce the rules. Some of the younger boys share their fear about a beast. A dead parachutist descends on the island. Sam and Eric see the silhouette of the parachute and believe it to be the beast. Jack thinks Ralph is a coward and names himself as the leader of the new tribe of hunters. Simon sees the head of the sow that the tribe hunted and while hallucinating thinks it is Lord of the Flies talking to him. He tells him that the beast is not a real creature, but something that is found in all men. He returns to the camp to tell the others, but they kill him with their hands and teeth. Ralph and Piggy go to talk to Jack but the tribe kill Piggy. Ralph realises that his own life is in danger and hides before being driven down towards the beach where he finds himself at the feet of a British naval officer who is shocked to see the **savages that the children have become.**

Berkoff: 1 'Total theatre is a use of the imagination. Actors express the genius of the body. Express the story without a set'.

2 **Total Theatre:** is a belief that all elements of theatre are EQUAL and have the same value in affecting the audience. Every aspect of theatre must have a purpose with conveying emotion often being at the centre.

3 **Techniques:** Exaggerated & Stylised mime
Physicalisation of objects

Stylised movement/speech patterns (slow motion/ robotic)

Exaggerated facial expression

Rhythm through voice and body

Abstract use of voice and ensemble work

Externalising emotions

Exaggerated vocal work

Body props

Narrative

Tableaux

Gesture / pose

Direct address

Monologue

Aim: To create thrilling, energetic and unforgettable theatre. Their physical style combines, movement, design, music and text. 7



4 **Naturalism** – the performers present the action realistically, using the 4th wall to pretend the audience don't exist and they are merely going about their daily lives.

Stanislavski:

The System: 5

Given Circumstances The information about the character and the play provided through the script, research and context

Emotional memory The actor finds a real past experience where they felt the emotion of their character. They 'borrow' those feeling to bring to the role.

Subtext The script is the text. The subtext is the meaning / motivation behind the lines spoken and the actions taken.

Magic if As an actor ask yourself: what would I do if I was in this situation? You then put yourself into the character's situation making the action more real.

Objective Super-objective Objective = reason for action
Super-objective = over-arching objective, what they want throughout the whole play

Practitioners:



Frantic Assembly:

Techniques: 6

Push Hands: Enhances partnership and teamwork. Actors move together with joined hands (placed palm to palm), the person with their hands on top is 'leader' and should explore space and levels with their partner.

Chair Duets: Physical movement based on and around chairs – includes touches, reaction, embraces, etc

Round-By-Through: A string of movement: **Round** = Any move that involves passing closely around the partner.

By = movement that is neat and efficient. **Through** = Passing through the partner

Walk the grid: Walking in unison, in beats of 5, in a grid sequence

Body as Props: Creating shapes and movements with your body to replicate objects.

Music: used in the devising process to create atmosphere, mood and storylines.

Year 9 Drama

8 **Method:** Never start with a story, start with movement, creativity, interacting and see what happens from there.

