

# Practitioner Guide

**GCE Drama and Theatre**

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## Antonin Artaud

### Aims and Intentions:

Though Artaud coined the phrase '**Theatre of Cruelty**', he did not live long enough to appreciate it (and his) significance on theatre. A troubled man, he spent much of his latter years in and out of asylums, and struggled with an addiction to Opium. This angst and turmoil is reflected in his practice. He was influenced by the Surrealism movement and was a member at one time. He felt the world and theatre were in need of change, and he sought to affect this through his art. He wrote manifestos, though they are almost incomprehensible. It is clear that he viewed humanity as sick and rotten, and wanted to use theatre to cure it.

A largely **movement** based technique, Theatre of Cruelty looks to assault the senses of the audience, often evoking strong emotions through violent and striking images. Text was used far less than in conventional theatre, and Artaud wished to create a new mostly non-verbal language for theatre. He had been inspired by a group of Balinese dancers in 1931, and felt that through movement a performer was able to engage with the audience on a deeper level of consciousness. He would develop ritualistic movements as a key element of his work, often replacing verbal language as a form of communication.

Many of his performances were staged with the **audience** in the centre and the action around them. In this manner he felt the audience were trapped by the drama. It also meant that the audience were in a weaker and more vulnerable position. He continually experimented with the relationship between audience and performer, seeking to make it an intimate one. Bright stage lighting and loud sound effects were also used to impose the effect onto the audience. These productions would play out as hellish nightmares. He used oversized puppets and props, dwarfing the actors and audience, though rarely used any scenery.

Much of his **style** works in direct opposition to other practitioners and techniques. The actors were encouraged to openly use emotions, as opposed to in Brechtian theatre, though there was no emphasis on the individuals in a play, such as in Stanislavski's method. Where other techniques may have looked to create realism, or present abstracted views of society, he looked to impress a feeling on the audience that would change them, almost as in an exorcism.

### Key Features of Artaud's Methodology:

- Largely movement based
- Little recognisable use of vocal language, more groans and incomprehensible screams
- Relationship between performer and audience an intimate one, often with audience at the centre to place them in a weaker position
- Aimed to change society
- Created a nightmarish and often hypnotic effect
- Bold sound and lighting effects
- Oversized props and puppets

- Little or no set and scenery
- Artaudian theatre rooted in ritual and ceremony

### **Practical Approaches to Artaud. Thoughts for Teachers and Students:**

- Though it may initially seem as though Theatre of Cruelty is rather one dimensional in it's approach, remember that Artaud himself felt theatre and society needed to change. When approaching work with a view to Theatre of Cruelty, it is worth focusing on Artaud's principles and concerns first, to avoid your performance becoming merely a pastiche. It is worth finding the thing that drives the piece; what about society does it look to change and how?
- Though much of Artaud's work placed the audience in the centre with the performers surrounding them, can a similar effect be achieved by another method?
- It is worth remembering that although he created abstract languages from physical movement and non-verbal rituals, they were a language, so to avoid movements being for the sake of movement try to form a language as a company. A potential exercise to explore this would be to break an encounter down to the raw emotions, then to give each emotion a movement. Can you then communicate using these bold and abstracted gestures?

### **Additional Resources:**

#### **Literary Criticism:**

The Theatre and its Double, by Antonin Artaud 978-1847493323

Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings 978-0520064430

Artaud's Theatre Of Cruelty by Albert Bermel 978-0413766601

#### **Online resources:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yn-IvqV36jg>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/antonin-artaud>

<http://www.nouse.co.uk/2013/03/05/the-movements-the-theatre-of-cruelty/>

## Steven Berkoff

### Aims and Intentions:

Steven Berkoff is one of the most influential figures in British Theatre practice. He is an actor, playwright and director. In every sense of the word he is a theatre-maker. Berkoff works in both a poetic and heightened performance style. His use of voice and physicality is pushed to an extreme, often a '**grotesque**' level. There is little room for subtlety in a Berkoff production and this is largely due to his reaction against naturalism and the need for audiences to become immersed in the world of his imagination. Berkoff believes that theatre should be symbolic, in a way which television and film could not reproduce.

Berkoff's work and style is influenced by a number of different practices. Greek theatre, Japanese Noh/Kabuki, Shakespeare, Punch & Judy, Brecht, East End Music Hall, Artaud, Kafka and Grotowski. However, the two most significant influences on his work are his Jewish heritage and his early training with Lecoq. As a result of this eclectic mix, his own work is often referred to as '**Total Theatre**'.

Berkoffian/Berkovian productions often use a minimalist set, non-naturalistic design elements and place the skills and imagination of the actor at the forefront of the performance. His characters often speak using poetic language, sometimes Shakespearean, often visceral, guttural/muscular in presentation.

As a playwright and director, Berkoff often explores themes and ideas that consider isolation, alienation, loneliness, fear, corruption of the upper classes, greed, dysfunctional families, poverty, the struggle of the working class, racism, social inequality, apathy and waste. These powerful themes provide us with some understanding of the physical, aggressive and presentational approach to his theatrical style.

### Key Features of Berkoff's Methodology:

- Emphasis on the actor and a heightened 'visual language' / 'externalisation'
- Heightened use of facial expression/body language/athletic actors
- Grotesque/stylized use of gesture/movement – merging the influence of Brecht's gestic acting and Kabuki theatre's use of 'mie' (a picturesque pose) to establish character
- Exaggerated mime and the replacement of props and furniture with what can be personified/created by the actors bodies
- Exaggerated use of voice, pitch/pace/intonation, vocal placement explored to an extreme
- Use of direct-address/asides/breaking the fourth wall
- Use of the still image/freeze/mirror technique
- Slow motion
- Scenery often significant by its absence. Berkoff's style relies heavily upon the actors skills and mime and upon the audience's ability to recognise and understand signs/symbols.

- Use of caricatures and social types often parodied in performance/comic characters
- Comedy often used to juxtapose intense/tragic moments
- Acting space predominantly front/centre stage
- Influence of Greek chorus/ensemble

### **Practical Approaches to Berkoff. Thoughts for Teachers and Students:**

- Stage key scenes from your chosen set text without any set. Only the actors can create the setting. **Use personification mime** to create a sense of setting or location. How does this non-naturalistic approach impact on your audience? Various Berkoff productions have used actors as the environment of a scene e.g. The Trial. The visual effect is often highly theatrical.
- Consider exploring key moments from your chosen text in **slow motion**. This will exaggerate and heighten the body language and physicality of your performers. What is the overall visual effect? Does the slow motion effect help to punctuate a particular themes, emotion or relationship? Did it help to create comedy at an appropriate or inappropriate moment? What is the impact on the actor/audience/meaning of the scene when you apply this physical technique?
- Consider using multi-role as a convention in your set text and use a small number of actors to portray each 'type'. Remember **Berkoffian/Berkovian acting is about exaggerated caricatures**. Explore a specific movement and vocal quality for each role and then ask your actors to quickly move from character to character. You may wish to apply an exaggeration scale of 1-10 to ensure your actors find the heightened and intense level of performance that is required. This is often referred to as Berkoff's Levels of Grotesque.

### **Additional Resources:**

#### **Literary Criticism:**

Steven Berkoff: The Theatre of Steven Berkoff Methuen Drama ISBN 9780413673404

Richard Eyre: Talking Theatre Nick Hern Books ISBN 9781848421387

Robert Cross: Steven Berkoff and the Theatre of Self-Performance Manchester University Press ISBN 9780719062544

#### **Online resources:**

<https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/steven-berkoff>

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2001/aug/23/edinburghfestival2001.edinburg>  
[h](#)

<http://www.iainfisher.com/berkoff/index.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzkgAAMwyIE> – 5 minute interview! Great introduction

## Bertolt Brecht

### Aims and Intentions:

Bertolt Brecht saw Theatre an active instrument for social and political change. Brechtian theatre aims to instruct and educate. Brecht was a poet, director and playwright and through his theatre practice he wanted to encourage audiences to reject the idea that their lives were predetermined and impossible to improve.

Brecht evolved what became known as 'epic theatre' and this style of performance was in ideological opposition to the theatre of emotion under Stanislavskian rule. Brecht wanted the audience to *question* and become *critical observers* rather than passive audience members. His intention was to *destroy illusion* and reveal truth through action. Brecht often referred to his audience as 'jury-like' as he wanted his audience consider, reflect and make judgements. One of the main ways in which he made this possible for audiences was by interrupting the action and developing a sense of empathy for characters and their situations.

Brechtian theatre aims to distance the audience. It uses non-naturalistic theatrical conventions to create what he referred to as the 'Verfremdungseffekt.' Often referred to as 'distancing' or 'to make strange'. Brecht wanted his audiences to 'look again' at something familiar and therefore juxtaposition, contradiction and montage were often at the heart of his productions. Through distancing his audiences, Brecht was able to get his audiences to both watch, understand and think. He also wanted to make his audiences laugh and saw Spass (fun) as a great tool to make his audience critical.

Brecht reminded the audience the performance that they were viewing was a construct, not a reality, and that as with reality, it is open to change. As a result he was keen to show the 'mechanics of theatre' to his audiences.

### Key Features of Brechtian Methodology:

- Stage pictures clearly communicate characters/themes/situation
- Contradiction/Juxtaposition/Dialectical approach to distance the audience
- Episodic / non-linear / use of montage
- Character names often reflect status / social type
- Use of third person speak/use of narration to distance the emotion of the scene
- 'Dual capacity' – actors and characters are revealed to the audience
- Use of music / song / cabaret / spass (fun)
- Use of a 'half curtain' / actors change costume on stage / machinery on display
- Interrupting the narrative / fluidity of the production /
- Minimal set design / use of placards and signs
- Adapted parables/stories to explore political/ social contemporary issues
- Gestic acting style / presentation acting / multi-role characterisation
- Costume as representative / visual shortcuts to characterisation/attitude

## Practical Approaches to Brecht. Thoughts for Teachers and Students:

- Consider **restructuring key scenes** or repeating key moments from your set text for added emphasis. What dramatic effect does structural change have on your chosen audience? Does it make a difference to start with the end or create a flashback effect? Does your chosen text include a prologue or epilogue? How does playing around with episodes or scenes make your audience more critical of the themes/idea/situation and characters?
- Consider using multi-role as a convention in your set text and use a small number of actors to portray each social or political 'type'. Remember **gestic acting** is about exaggerated social types. Often for comic effect! Movement is often used to quickly 'present' the character attitude to the audience. What would be an appropriate gestus/gestic action for each character in your chosen text? Once this has been explored, consider giving each character a gestic prop or costume to visually reinforce the attitude of the role.
- Consider finding key phrases or lines from the play to create a series of **placards**. These might be used to introduce each scene or key moment. How could your designer present these placards? On cardboard/digitally/through newspaper headlines? What impact does the use of placards have on your intended audience? What is the theatrical effect?

## Additional Resources:

### Literary Criticism:

David Barnett: [Brecht in Practice](#) Methuen Drama ISBN 9781408185032

Stephen Unwin: [The Complete Brecht Toolkit](#) Nick Hern Books ISBN 9781854595508

Bertolt Brecht: [Brecht On Theatre](#) Bloomsbury Methuen Drama ISBN 9781408145456

Mitter/Shevtsova: [Fifty Key Theatre Directors](#) Routledge ISBN 9780412187329

### Online resources:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-A8mCjRu5g> – Why is Brecht still relevant today?

<http://www.thedramateacher.com/epic-theatre-conventions/>

<http://essentialdrama.com/practitioners/brecht/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-828KqtTkA> NT Introduction to Brecht



## Theatre de Complicité

### Aims and Intentions:

It is difficult to define Theatre de Complicité when the the company itself aspires to create a theatre language that is always changing, and transforming. As the name suggests the company seeks to create complicity from the audience.

Complicité was co-founded in 1983 by Simon McBurney, Annabel Arden and Marcello Magni. The company has produced over 30 years of work and is led by Artistic Director, Simon McBurney. Complicité employ a collaborative devising process, bringing together performers, designers, artists, and specialists from a range of fields in the development of their work.

Complicité productions often explore the relationship between physical dexterity and darkly comic inventiveness. As a company they seek to navigate the divide between avant-garde, experimental theatre and a popular mainstream.

McBurney states that his aim as a director is to create a 'playground' in rehearsal for his actors to "flex and tone the muscle of the imagination". Other influences on the company come from the European dance-theatre of Pina Bausch, and Lecoq.

### Key Features of Complicité Methodology:

- Adaptations of classic texts and contemporary fiction / devised theatre
- Physical theatre dominates the work of the company
- Manipulation of objects, personification mime, use of puppetry
- Gestures, Nonverbal communication, Dance and movement motif
- Visual storytelling at the heart of the company
- Multilingual influences on the company and their practice
- Use of digital, aural and visual technology, microphones, projection and video work
- Use of screens to reveal and 'disappear' / choreographic transitions
- Choral work, morphing and use of an ensemble narrative
- Distinct sense of play '*le jeu*' in both rehearsal and performance style
- Use of music, actor-musician, soundtrack
- Multi-role characterisation
- Overlapping language and dialogue

### Practical Approaches to Complicité. Thoughts for Teachers and Students:

- Consider staging key scenes from your chosen set text without any set. **Use props or personification mime** to create a sense of setting or location. How does this non-naturalistic approach to the scene impact on your audience?

Various Complicité productions have used actors as bridges, books as birds. The visual effect is often highly theatrical.

- Consider exploring key scenes from your chosen set texts and perform them using Lecoq's **Seven Dramatic Levels of Tension**.

Complicité regularly visit this technique in both rehearsal and performance to explore tension and psychological 'gear changes' between characters. How does the conflict/tension change when two characters start on the same level/different levels/extreme levels? What is the impact on the actor/audience/meaning of the scene when you apply this technique?

- Consider replacing dialogue with movement. **Explore a movement motif** that expresses the emotion of the language. You might find it useful to develop the movement from head to toe. Start with the head and then add in the rest of the body for a gradual movement motif. Try key scenes as non-verbal expressions. Start small and then add in movement, music and dance.

Complicité often use physical theatre and dance-theatre sequences to express the meaning of character or situation. Gather feedback from your audience to consider how a physical interpretation of a scene might enhance or develop a directorial concept/meaning.

### **Additional Resources:**

#### **Literary Criticism:**

Richard Eyre: Talking Theatre Nick Hern Books ISBN 9781848421387

Mitter/Shevtsova: Fifty Key Theatre Directors Routledge ISBN 9780412187329

Giannachi & Lukhurst: On Directing Faber & Faber ISBN 9780571191499

Graham Saunders: British Theatre Companies Bloomsbury ISBN 978-1408175484

#### **Online resources:**

[www.essentialdrama.com](http://www.essentialdrama.com) – useful videos on this site!

[www.complicite.org](http://www.complicite.org)

[www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/jul/24/simon-mcburney-actor-director-portrait](http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/jul/24/simon-mcburney-actor-director-portrait)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uba-qzbZsV8> – Complicite showreel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnbPAGeA6Ec>

## Joan Littlewood

### Aims and Intentions:

A self-professed '*vulgar woman of the people*', Joan Littlewood was one of the founders of Theatre Workshop after the war. The group of actors were committed to a left-wing ideology, and the plays they commissioned were by and about the British working classes.

At the heart of her work was **collaboration**. When Theatre Workshop moved into the derelict Theatre Royal in Stratford East, London, the actors lived in the dressing room and redecorated the theatre in between rehearsals. She drew influences from many varying forms of theatre, but many of her practices came from classic theatre, such as Commedia delle'arte and Ancient Greek theatre. These were forms that put the collective at the heart, and Littlewood sought to preserve the individual whilst working in collaboration. She believed the work of an individual writer, director, actor or any practitioner was worth nothing unless it was as part of a collective.

She believed that theatre must stand up to the problems of its time; that it should represent the hopes, fears, struggles and triumphs of the people. She also felt that popular theatre was dead, and had been since the Jacobean era. She hated the thought that the few people who frequented the theatre were from the middle classes, and she wanted to populate the theatre with the working classes, and to make the theatre a place that drives social change.

Littlewood was always very politically involved, and was banned from broadcasting on the BBC for a period of time due to links with the communist party. She drew on the influence of Agitprop in her work. Agitprop had been a tool used by the Soviet Union in order to communicate their political message; a mixture of agitation and propaganda. This provided the framework of Living Newspaper, a technique she employed which presented facts and events of the time, rejecting conventional methods of fourth wall in favour of addressing real issues directly to the audience.

It is very hard to pin down a clear set of practices and methods used by Littlewood, as she worked with anarchy and improvisation at the heart of the work. She drew influences from Stanislavski. She employed the techniques used in his book 'An Actor Prepares' to strive for naturalism with her actors. She combined these practices with those of Laban technique and Dalcroze, looking to the more experimental and bold visual styles of Europe Theatre. However, her rehearsal rooms were always open spaces where dynamic new ideas were welcomed, and this melting pot of different ideas formed the basis of her methodology.

### Key Features of Littlewood's Methodology:

- Collaboration; everyone involved in the process is important and has a voice
- Popular Theatre; the work should be for and about the working classes, and easily accessible.

- A rehearsal room is a dynamic place in which new ideas should be cherished
- Living Newspaper; turning fact into theatre
- Laban; the 8 basic efforts which explore movement and voice
- Stanislavski; actioning scenes

### **Practical Approaches to Littlewood. Thoughts for Teachers and Students:**

- **Living Newspaper.** Take a story from today's newspaper and devise a way of delivering it to communicate the story directly to an audience in an attention-grabbing way. Break the fourth wall. How might you do this same exercise in the street with an unsuspecting audience?
- **Collaborate.** Collaborate. Collaborate. If you, as an individual, always lead, take a step back into the pack and allow the group to guide the devising. Listen to everyone's ideas. If you normally work from text that you write first, how might it be different if you have a designer describe their vision for the piece and devise from there?
- Explore the **Laban** efforts of pressing, flicking, wringing, dabbing, slashing, gliding, punching and floating. How can these efforts inform your character's movement and vocalicity?

### **Additional Resources:**

#### **Literary Criticism:**

- Clive Barker, 'Joan Littlewood' in Alison Hodge (ed) Twentieth Century Actor Training (London: Routledge, 2000) ISBN: 978-0415194525
- Joan Littlewood, Joan's Book: Joan Littlewood's Peculiar History as She Tells It (London: Methuen, 1994) ISBN: 978-0413773180
- Nadine Holdsworth, Joan Littlewood (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2006) ISBN: 978-0415338875
- Constantin Stanislavski, 'An Actor Prepares'. Bloomsbury · ISBN 1780938438

#### **Online resources:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8A9MSpZnS70>–Short biog video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cczYbr79GMs>- Barbara Windsor appealing for a sculpture to Joan

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6DJSNpwlts&list=PLtXuL1JagPIcSXxAut8dqwegTIFri9\\_pe](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6DJSNpwlts&list=PLtXuL1JagPIcSXxAut8dqwegTIFri9_pe) -Laban Efforts

## **Kneehigh**

### **Aims and Intentions:**

Kneehigh are an ensemble theatre company based out of Cornwall but with international renown. They devise and rehearse as a company from their barns on the Cornish coast, with the collective at the heart of their work.

Structurally, although the company has core members who work repeatedly with them, there is a freedom to their involvement. Former artistic director, Emma Rice (recently of Shakespeare's Globe) revealed in an interview in 'The Contemporary Ensemble' that she didn't like to tie artists down to long contracts, preferring for actors and makers to come back of their own accord. This principle is at the heart of their work in the rehearsal room too.

Rice said of the actors, that she doesn't like to impose any judgement at the beginning of rehearsals, and that everyone must feel safe and not that they have to be immediately brilliant. At the start of the day, the company run together, sing together and play games together. The barns where they rehearse are very remote, with no phone signal and nowhere to eat but the barns themselves. This means the company spend all of their time together, becoming comfortable living together in order to play and make together. The ensemble must change as a group, for change is the only thing that is certain.

Much of their work comprises of adaptations of films. They do not consider this too pastiche, and wish to honour the original work, so that the play can stand side by side with the film and not take anything away from it. It is for this reason that they do not use scripts at first, instead exploring the stimulus as a *story*.

Another key feature of their work is music. Singing together to start the day is a way of connecting as an ensemble, but it also is an integral part of their shows. Rather than asking a musical director to create vignettes to accompany scene changes, they have musicians in the rehearsal room from day one to compose a score that sits alongside the entire piece.

### **Key Features of Kneehigh's Methodology:**

- Honour the story
- The company to be driven by passion for the work
- Created as part of the creative process as a collective
- Must change as a group
- No judgement at the start of the rehearsal process
- Live and work together
- Music as part of the work, not a separate entity, live on stage
- Company members who can come and go over time
- Not pastiche
- Visually stimulating
- Do not have gender barriers
- Use of levels; i.e climbing structures
- Dance

## Practical Approaches to Kneehigh. Thoughts for Teachers and Students:

- Try devising with **music** as an integral part of the process. If you have musicians in the group then try to assemble as many instruments as possible to have on hand. When working on a scene, try underscoring it live. Even if you don't have any instrumentalists in the company you can try using voices to create soundscapes. Sing songs together as a warm up to begin as this helps build an ensemble feel.
- **Play**, play, play. Play lots of games. Kneehigh can spend hours playing games such as Keepy-uppy, Volleyball, Blind Man's Buff and Grandmother's Footsteps. Not only does this create a feeling of togetherness, but it will enable you to sharpen your senses before devising work together.
- **Emotional Recall**. A Stanislavski technique and the basis for method acting, Emma Rice uses this to help her actors discover things about their characters.
- **Foundations of Why?** Ask each member of the company to write down answers to fundamental questions about the story. For example:
  - 'What's your first instinct about the story?'
  - 'Write down the themes'
  - 'What are the key moments?'
  - 'How does it make you feel?'
  - 'What are your favourite bits?'

Put up the answers to these questions around the rehearsal room. Later in the process these answers may help you. If you hit a snag and, for instance, you are struggling to realise a particular moment, you might look at the wall and see that everyone's favourite moment was the moment after this, so you might be focusing your efforts on the wrong moment.

## Additional Resources:

### Literary Criticism:

The Contemporary Ensemble: Interviews with Theatre-Makers. Duska Radosavljevic

ISBN 978-0415535304

### Online resources:

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2004/jul/19/theatre>

It is well worth signing up (for free) to Kneehigh's Cookbook, which is a brilliant resource for studying their work, with videos and blogs and much more to explore:

<https://kneehighcookbook.co.uk/cookbook/>

<http://www.kneehigh.co.uk/>

## Punchdrunk

### Aims and Intentions:

Punchdrunk are an **immersive / site-sympathetic theatre company**. 'Immersive Theatre' allows the audience to freely roam-around and experience epic storytelling inside sensory theatrical worlds. Punchdrunk use space as a starting point for narrative and devising, non-verbal storytelling and audience interaction. ([www.punchdrunk.com](http://www.punchdrunk.com))

Punchdrunk often **reimagine 'classic' texts** and present them through physical and extreme visual performance methods. The company use design installations and non-traditional performance sites to **challenge audiences** and the passivity usually expected of them in main stream theatre.

Punchdrunk productions focus as much on the audience and the performance space as on the performers and narrative. Inspired designers occupy deserted buildings and aim to apply a **cinematic level of detail** to immerse the audience in the world of the show.

Lines between spaces, performer and spectator blur to create an intimate and intense experience. In a Punchdrunk production the audience become the participant, the hunter, an active assembler.

Punchdrunk aims to reinvent the theatre experience for young audiences who are often 'turned off' by traditional theatre and words. Punchdrunk are appealing to a video-gaming generation with their multi-sensory and interactive approach.

### Key Features of Punchdrunk Methodology:

- Immersive theatre experience for the audience
- Multi-sensory production values – visual/aura/spatial elements dominate audience experience
- Nonverbal language, gesture, movement motif / physical theatre used
- Audience are often invited into a scene to experience a 'real moment'. Props and costumes are often highly detailed and realistic. Audience are encouraged to 'handle' the scene
- Mood & Atmosphere central to audience experience
- Productions are set in large, unusual and unconventional spaces – warehouses, post-offices, gardens, hotels, tunnels etc.
- Audience free to wander through a theatrical 'maze'
- Productions are often based upon/inspired by classical texts. Punchdrunk theatrically 'vandalise' the text to create an original audience experience
- Audience members wear masks

## Practical Approaches to Punchdrunk. Thoughts for Teachers and Students:

- Consider staging key scenes from your chosen set text in a variety of different performance 'sites'. **Avoid traditional performance spaces.** Consider using classrooms/corridors/hallways/small/large spaces/open spaces/outside spaces.
  - How does the intention of the scene change when you change the space?
  - How does it change when you use a space that people associate with something specific?
  - How does the change in mood and atmosphere contribute to the content of the scene?
- Consider staging key scenes in a more **open format/structure** that allow the audience to freely explore different scenes in their own time. *How does this open structure begin to shape a directorial concept?*
- Consider placing your **audience in masks** or costume. In one Punchdrunk production the audience wore masks and capes. Consider using costume accessories so that your audience can witness scenes in an interactive and intimate manner. Gather feedback from your audience to consider how they felt and how this might enhance or develop a directorial concept.

## Additional Resources:

- **News Report / Video:** [www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/entertainment-arts-13167360/dark-immersive-macbeth-storms-new-york](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/entertainment-arts-13167360/dark-immersive-macbeth-storms-new-york)
- **Radio Programme:** It's fun...but is it theatre?  
[www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01j5fwn](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01j5fwn)
- **News report/Video** [www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-london-23248548/interactive-theatre-in-disused-paddington-post-office](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-london-23248548/interactive-theatre-in-disused-paddington-post-office)
- **Company Website:** [www.punchdrunk.com](http://www.punchdrunk.com) Tip – read the FAQ section!
- **Article:** [www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2013/jul/14/felix-barrett-punchdrunk-theatre-stage](http://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2013/jul/14/felix-barrett-punchdrunk-theatre-stage)
- **Literary Criticism: Immersive Theatres:** Intimacy & Immediacy in Contemporary Performance, Josephine Machon. ISBN 9781137019837.



## Constantin Stanislavski

### Aims and Intentions:

Before Stanislavski co-founded the Moscow Arts Theatre in 1898, the general style of acting had been demonstrative and over the top. He felt this didn't portray the human condition accurately enough, and dropped out of drama school after only a few weeks. He then developed his own method or technique, which at its heart focused on the actor being able to portray a **believable** and real character in performance.

His technique has influenced many practitioners and is still taught as a significant part of many drama schools' training around the world. The full method is laid out in his book, *An Actor Prepares*, which charts an actor going through the first year of their training.

Though certain aspects of his practice are complex, fundamentally there are seven steps to it:

- Who Am I?
- Where Am I?
- When Is It?
- What Do I Want?
- Why Do I Want It?
- How Will I Get It?
- What Do I Need To Overcome?

These basic questions form the **given circumstances**. By using this method an actor is able to put himself or herself in the situation of the character, whilst carrying all their own experiences and emotions. This ties in with *The Magic If*, a very basic starting point for addressing the given circumstances, for example, 'What would I do **if** I were in this situation?'

Another key feature of the technique is **objectives**. It is a cliché for actors to say 'What's my motivation?' now, but this was a revolutionary way for Stanislavski to approach a text. There are different layers to objectives, what a character wants in a particular scene may be a simple objective, but on a larger scale they have a super objective which is what they want to achieve throughout the arc of the play.

Objectives lead to **obstacles**. These are things that prevent your character from achieving objectives. Stanislavski said that the way in which one deals with these obstacles informs the traits of the character and makes them into a believable being.

Stanislavski was a great people watcher, and believed that **observation** was a trait all actors should have. By observing real life, actors are able to develop an understanding for the way people behave, and increase their empathy, and therefore their art.

He asked actors to draw upon their own experiences to feel what the character feels. He called this **emotional memory**.

### Key Features of Stanislavski's Methodology:

- Given Circumstances
- Magic If
- Observation
- Objectives
- Obstacles
- Emotional Memory

### Practical Approaches to Stanislavski. Thoughts for Teachers and Students:

- Read the script, and then decide what your character's **super objective** is (i.e what is the main thing they want?)
- Chart the **objectives** of your character from moment to moment throughout the play. When something happens to change the objective, mark this a bit (often pronounced 'beat')
- Answer the seven questions (listed above) repeatedly as you work with text to ensure you are working with the given circumstances
- **Observation.** Watch people. Do you know anyone who is like your character? How do they behave differently from you?
- **Emotional Memory.** When your character is experiencing a situation or emotion, try to remember a time when you felt something similar. What was it like? Does it remind you of a smell, or taste, or feeling?

### Additional Resources:

#### Literary Criticism:

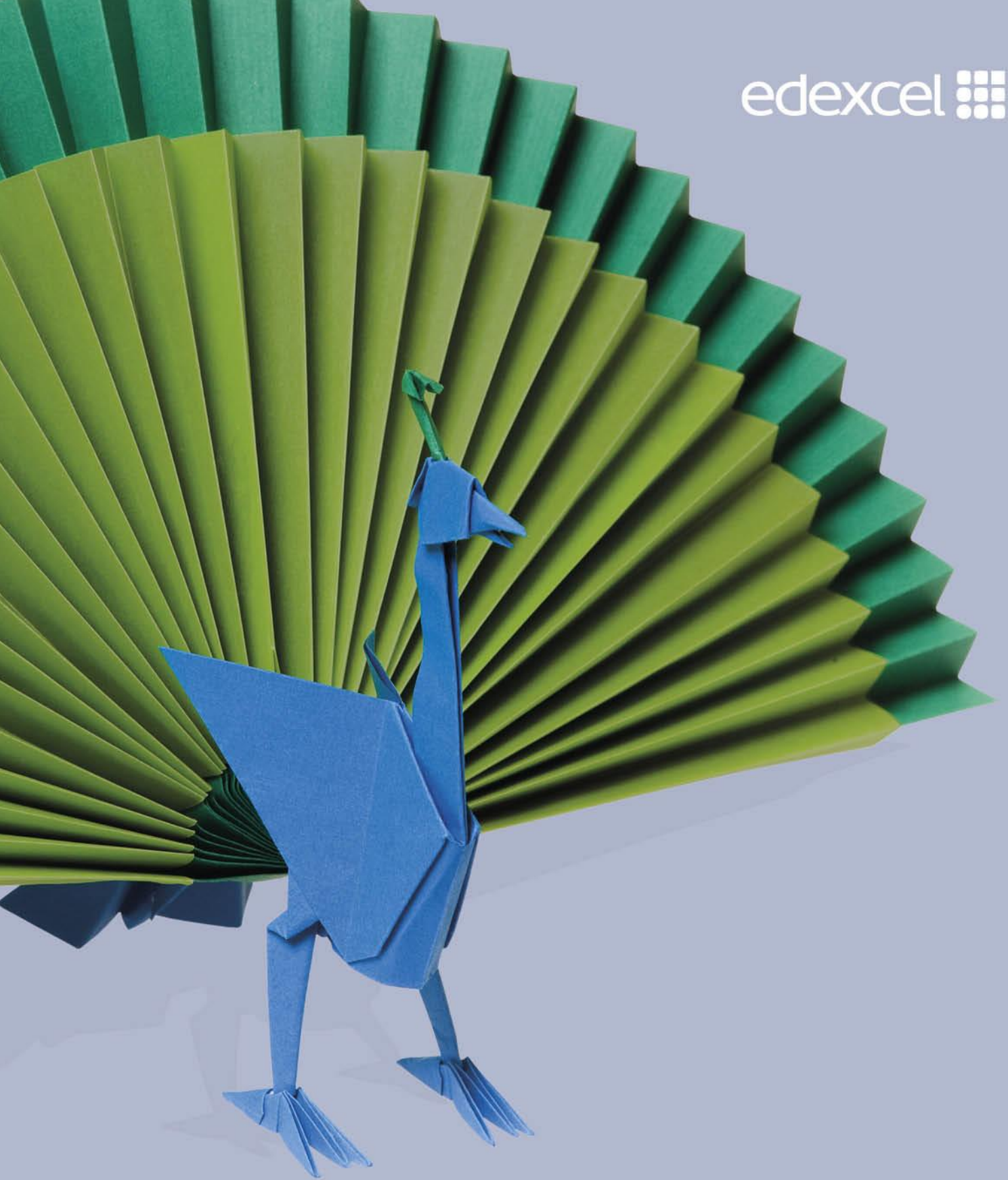
- An Actor Prepares. Constantin Stanislavski. 978-1780938431
- Building a Character. Constantin Stanislavski. 978-1408100059
- Stanislavski in Practice: Exercises for Students. Nick O'Brien. 978-0415568432

#### Online resources:

<http://www.dramaclasses.biz/the-stanislavski-system>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/stanislavsky-system-acting-method-2712987>

edexcel 



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