

Unit 32: Developing Physical Theatre

Unit code:	K/502/5123
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

In this unit learners will gain an understanding of the skills and techniques of physical theatre, its key practitioners and styles and their role in contemporary performing arts.

● Unit introduction

All live theatre is physical in some way but theatre which accentuates image and the physicality of the performer can create a vibrant and exciting style. While physical theatre be seen as an art form in its own right, the skills developed through its study can enhance and enrich the skills and range of all performers. This unit introduces learners to physical theatre as a unique form.

The ability to create a sense of place and action without the necessity of settings, props and costume promotes a form where the actor is the centre of all stage effects. While setting, costume, props, lighting and all the other supportive elements that contribute to the concept of theatre have their undeniable uses, without the performer there can be no theatre.

Throughout its history theatre has produced performers whose prime asset is their physical presence. In this unit learners will explore key practitioners who have influenced physical theatre. They will develop physical theatre skills and techniques as well as create physical theatre performance work from a range of stimuli. Learners will investigate physical techniques through workshop participation and performance creation, with specific reference to, and analysis of, contemporary practitioners.

Learners will also expand their skills in, for example, acting and dance.

Learners will have opportunities to try out different styles of physical theatre, to interpret both contemporary and traditional texts. For example there are many plays by Shakespeare that have been wholly or partially interpreted through physical theatre. They will learn how to create appropriate work for different kinds of audiences; for instance pieces made specifically for children and young people, based on fairy tales, contemporary issues and themes. However, the main feature of this unit will be the exploration and acquisition of the very broad range of skills that help a performer work in this field.

Learners must take part in two physical theatre demonstrations, each lasting a minimum of five minutes.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Understand key influences in physical theatre
- 2 Be able to develop skills and techniques associated with physical theatre
- 3 Be able to select, develop and refine materials.

Unit content

1 Understand key influences in physical theatre

Historic practice and practitioners: eg ancient Greece, ancient Rome, Commedia dell'Arte, Jacques LeCoq, Jerzy Grotowski, Antonin Artaud, Kathakali

Contemporary practice and practitioners: eg Steven Berkoff, Pina Bausch, V-Tol, Sankai Juku, Robert LePage, Complicité, Candoco Dance Company, Common Ground Sign Dance Theatre, Volcano, Frantic Assembly, Trestle Theatre Company, Physical Approaches, DV8, Eugenio Barba, Cirque du Soleil, Stomp

2 Be able to develop skills and techniques associated with physical theatre

Physical: muscle strength; physical control; balance; breathing; lifting and catching; taking and placing weight; use of levels and height; stamina

Vocal: breath control; projection; vocal range; creating and physicalising sound; use of vocal dynamics

Acting: character; rhythm; dynamics; tableaux; interaction; physical comedy; mime; spontaneity; improvisation; spatial awareness; timing; style

Physical ensemble: trust; teamwork; cooperation; use of contact improvisation; lifting and catching; interaction

Dynamic quality: speed; flow; direction; use of contrasts; emotional quality; sense of performance

3 Be able to select, develop and refine materials

Stimulus: eg text, props, pictures, found objects, music, voice, song, words, stories, themes/issues, masks, costume, poetry, paintings, sculpture, architecture

Manipulation: use of words; action and movement combined; tempo; space; performance dynamics; use of theatre technology; other media eg live sound, recorded sound, multimedia

Development: motifs; themes; physical style

Effectiveness of the work: individual performance; production values; meeting original objective; group coherence; performance dynamics

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 explain contemporary developments of physical theatre recognising key features, influences and working methods [RL]	M1 explain contemporary developments of physical theatre making clear and considered judgements about key features, influences, and working methods	D1 analyse contemporary developments of physical theatre fully justifying all judgements concerning key features, influences and working methods
P2 demonstrate the use of physical theatre skills in performance [EP, SM]	M2 apply physical theatre skills with confidence and style in performance	D2 apply physical theatre skills with ease, confidence and fluency in performance
P3 respond to stimulus material, recognising performance possibilities [RL, CT]	M3 demonstrate considered responses to stimulus material, recognising performance possibilities	D3 demonstrate responses to stimulus material, showing insight and full awareness of performance possibilities
P4 use ideas, resources, research and materials to find and shape an appropriate form. [CT, IE, TW]	M4 develop ideas, resources, research and materials, imaginatively shaping them in an appropriate form.	D4 develop ideas, resources, research and materials indicating the possibilities for performance, in a perceptive and comprehensive manner.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

This unit should be delivered principally through workshops where learners can analyse the key influences of physical theatre practically and create and explore material and subject matter. Learners should have the experience of seeing performances by contemporary practitioners, preferably live, or by watching recordings of artists at work.

It is important that learners understand that whilst the term 'physical theatre' is relatively new forms of physical theatre have been a part of the theatre scene for many centuries and still have an influence on contemporary practice. There are several contemporary artists who use the style and techniques of performers seen through theatre history, such as Lee Evans and performers in *Cirque du Soleil*, and recordings of these artists are readily available as sources of inspiration and technique.

It will be important for learners to acquire and refine the combined elements of movement, voice and acting, in order to appreciate that this trinity of skills forms the core of physical theatre. It is essential that learners appreciate the basics of vocal and physical warming up, trust, giving and taking weight, safety when transferring body weight and 'walking through the floor' to minimise injury.

Learners should come to understand the flexibility that physical theatre offers. Experience of developing work based on stimulus material, themes and ideas might form the core of the work but of equal relevance could be the experience of working on play texts, with a view to interpreting them in physical theatre terms. The plays of Steven Berkoff or *Complicité* could be useful here. Also, work on texts that were not initially designed for physical theatre could be scrutinised with a view to interpretation in a physical style, such as traditional Shakespearean texts and the works of the Greek playwrights.

A combination of observing and analysing professional performances and ideas, then creating work rooted in this, will allow learners to develop a deeper understanding of the role of physical theatre.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to physical theatre, study of practitioners; historic forms/artists, Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski, contemporary practitioners such as Trestle Theatre Company, Pina Bausch, DV8. Study of ideas from theatre reference books and by watching live work on DVD.
Development of skills and resources: two practitioners, one traditional and one contemporary. Movement workshop based on the ideas of DV8: contact improvisation, release. Acting workshop based on the ideas of Berkoff, including vocal workshops, use of voice for effects as well as dialogue. Mime workshop based on the ideas of Kathakali: stylised vocabulary, traditional mime forms.
Assignment 1: What is Physical Theatre? – P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4 In small groups, learners choose one of the workshops undertaken and create a piece of physical theatre that explores a current issue through that style. Devising sessions. Refinement of material. Performances, assessments, evaluations.
Assignment 2: Exploring New Ideas – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3 Contemporary practitioners such as DV8, Pina Bausch, Frantic. Detailed look at the work of practitioners; movement workshops, giving and taking weight, safe landings, balance, spatial awareness, proxemics.
Assignment 3: Creating and Performing Physical Theatre Based on Text – P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4 Development of performance materials, workshop in chosen form. Application to text: tell the story and create a piece of theatre for young people exploring a contemporary theme, based on a section of a traditional text such as <i>The Bacchae</i> by Euripides. Devise work in the studio. Cast and rehearse. Perform and evaluate.

Assessment

The understanding of the key influences in physical theatre for learning outcome 1 will come about through research, carried out through workshop and discussion, with the tutor, and through personal research by learners. Learners should analyse working and training methods, aesthetics, style and the theme and content of the practitioners' and artists' work in relation to relevant social, cultural, political, historical and economic conditions and present these in the form of a portfolio, lecture, workshop presentation or workshop exploration for peers.

The form of the presentation is less important than the content. Where learners have skills and confidence in presenting and leading work, they might, for example, lead a workshop exploring ideas of one or more practitioners. A group might divide the work of several practitioners between them to ensure a wide and challenging spread of ideas and understanding. This work can also contribute to assessment of learning outcome 2.

Alternatively learners may produce written evidence alone of research in their portfolio; they might deliver a short talk about their chosen artist, or deliver a PowerPoint presentation. However, this is a practical unit where the focus of the learning is the acquisition of skills in physical theatre, so the emphasis must be placed on the practical understanding of the work of these practitioners.

Physical, acting and vocal skills that contribute to learning outcome 2 should be assessed through observation of learners' improvement in these skills and demonstration or performance in at least two workshops. Learners should have a sustained involvement of at least five minutes in these demonstrations or performances. A range of assessment strategies, including video/DVD evidence, tutor observations and peer assessments will provide good evidence of development of these skills.

Demonstrations and performances, for LO3, should come about through the exploration of a broad range of stimulus material. The learner's response to the stimuli and the development of the work for demonstration or performance can be recorded in tutor observations, a working log, video/DVD recordings and ongoing self, peer and tutor feedback.

To achieve P1, learners will show understanding of the key influences in physical theatre with reference to the working methods of both traditional and contemporary artists. For P2, learners will be able to demonstrate the use of appropriate physical theatre skills in performance, either in workshop situations or performance to an invited audience. Learners who achieve P3 will recognise and realise this potential in the development of physical theatre work and for P4, they will find an appropriate form for, and shape work in response to research and discussion using physical theatre forms that engender this.

To achieve a merit for the first criterion, learners will clearly and with consideration explain how key practitioners' work influences contemporary work. They may exhibit this in their practical and in their workshops and research. For M2, performances and demonstrations will be confident, realising key features of particular styles. To achieve M3, learners will show recognition of the performance possibilities of stimulus materials through responses which are considered. For M4, material will be shaped imaginatively, using the form that best suits the exploration or performance of the stimulus.

Learners who achieve D1 will have fully explored the form and structure of the work of several practitioners, making links between their ideas, training and work. They will link contemporary developments back to the work of previous artists. For D2, these learners will link that research and understanding of working methods and techniques with their own practical performance, both in the workshop and in staged performances. They will not be afraid of taking risks, extending their own skills and will perform physical theatre skills with ease and fluidity. For D3, learners will be finding and exploring material with a view to fully investigating and realising its performance possibilities and aesthetic qualities. For D4, learners will develop ideas and material for performance in a way that shows they have fully explored the performance potential, with insight and imagination in shaping material to produce work which has an effect on, and creates meaning for the audience.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4	What is Physical Theatre? Group activity to bring together introduction to the work of physical theatre practitioners.	In small groups, prepare two pieces of physical theatre workshop performance that use contrasting styles.	A portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tutor observations workshop activities rehearsal log performance evaluations.
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3	Exploring New Ideas Group ideas brought together in a devised and delivered workshop, learner led for their peers.	You are investigating contemporary physical theatre practitioners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using the ideas of one, create a workshop that explores these ideas in detail; base your work on a current theme or issue. 	A portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tutor observations practitioner research demonstrated practically and in learner portfolio workshop planning activities rehearsal log performance workshop participant evaluations.
P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4	Creating and Performing Physical Theatre Based on Text	As a small touring physical theatre company, you have been tasked with creating and performing a piece for young people; use a short section of traditional text as the backbone of the exploration, eg a scene from <i>The Bacchae</i> , by Euripides.	A portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tutor observations workshop activities rehearsal log performance evaluations.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Exploring Acting Skills	Acting Skills and Techniques	Applying Physical Theatre
	Developing Physical Theatre Performance	Developing Movement Skills
		Contemporary Theatre Performance

Essential resources

A suitable space, preferably with a sprung floor, is required for this unit. Sound equipment, a video camera and video/DVD playback facilities will also be required. It is essential for learners to have access to video/DVD and live performances by physical theatre practitioners. Learners will require appropriate rehearsal clothing, which might include elbow and knee pads, and safety mats for exploration and experimentation are desirable.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Local universities and training providers are good sources of information about further training, and as venues for experiencing the live work of artists and companies. Other schools and education providers make good venues for performances and workshops and centres should make links with such bodies.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

- Jewers S, Carnaghan C and Webster P – *BTEC National Performing Arts Student Book* (Edexcel, 2010)
ISBN 9781846906787
- Jewers S, Carnaghan C and Webster P – *BTEC National Teacher Resource Pack* (Edexcel, 2010)
ISBN 9781846906794
- Boal A – *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (Routledge, 2002) ISBN 9780415267083
- Callery D – *Through the Body: A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre* (Routledge, 2002) ISBN 9780878301249
- Goldberg R L – *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present, 2nd Edition* (Thames & Hudson, 2001)
ISBN 9780500203392
- Grotowski J – *Towards a Poor Theatre* (Routledge, 2002) ISBN 9780878301553
- Jordan S – *Striding Out: Aspects of Contemporary and New Dance in Britain* (Dance Books, 2005)
ISBN 9781852730321
- Martin J – *Intercultural Performance Handbook* (Routledge, 2003) ISBN 9780415281881
- Murray S – *Jacques Lecoq (Routledge Performance Practitioners)* (Routledge, 2003) ISBN 9780415258821
- Oddey A – *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook* (Routledge, 1996) ISBN 9780415049009
- Pitches J – *Vsevolod Meyerhold (Routledge Performance Practitioners)* (Routledge, 2003)
ISBN 9780415258845
- Richards T – *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* (Routledge, 1995) ISBN 9780415124928
- Robertson A and Hutchence D – *Dance Handbook* (Longman, 1998) ISBN 9780816118298
- Roose-Evans J – *Experimental Theatre: From Stanislavsky to Peter Brook* (Routledge, 1989)
ISBN 9780415009638
- Rudlin J – *Commedia Dell'Arte: An Actor's Handbook* (Routledge) ISBN 9780415047708
- Schechner R and Wolford L (editor) – *The Grotowski Sourcebook* (Routledge, 1997) ISBN 9780415131117
- Servos N – *Pina Bausch: Tanztheater* (Kieser Verlag, 2003) ISBN 9783935456050 (NB: text is in German)
- Tufnell M and Crickmay C – *Body Space Image: Notes Towards Improvisation and Performance* (Dance Books, 2003) ISBN 9781852730413
- Watson I – *Towards a Third Theatre: Eugenio Barba and the Odin Teatret* (Routledge, 1995)
ISBN 9780415127646
- Zarilli P – *Kathakali Dance Drama* (Routledge, 1999) ISBN 9780415192828

Journal

Dance Theatre Journal (Laban Centre, Quarterly)

Videos

Alegria (Columbia Tristar, 1998)

Dralion (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2002)

DV8 Physical Theatre – *Three Ballets by DV8 Physical Theatre: Strange Fish, Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men, Enter Achilles* (Arthaus Musik, 2007)

East (Go Entertain, 2001)

Quidam (ITV DVD, 2007)

Salome (Kultur, 2004)

VTOL – *Without Trace* (www.surrey.ac.uk/NRCD)

V-TOL Dance Company – *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (www.surrey.ac.uk/NRCD)

Websites

www.anglepd.co.uk/vtol

V-TOL Dance company: Retrospective website of the 10 years of V-TOL.

www.dv8.co.uk

Was formed in 1986 by an independent collective of dancers who had become frustrated and disillusioned with the preoccupation and direction of most dance.

www.franticassembly.co.uk

Formed in 1994 by Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett, this company tours widely and provides a year round training programme for students and teachers towards further developing physical performance.

www.iainfisher.com/berkoff

Comprehensive overview of the work of Stephen Berkoff including recorded extracts of performances.

www.surrey.ac.uk/NRCD

The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) is a non-profit national archive and resource provider for dance and movement.

www.vam.ac.uk/collections

The V and A has a huge online collection of historical costumes and works of art relating to the performing arts.

www.vincentdt.com

Vincent Dance Theatre produces high quality work, with an international outlook, in a variety of media and on a variety of scales. Emphasis is placed on gathering together collaborators from a diversity of cultural backgrounds, from a range of countries across the world.

www.volcanotheatre.co.uk

Volcano is a Swansea-based international touring theatre company. They aim to make fearless and inspiring theatre for intelligent, imaginative people of all kinds in Wales, the UK and beyond.

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	using ideas, resources and research to find and shape appropriate forms
Creative thinkers	responding to stimulus material and recognising its performance possibilities
Reflective learners	responding to stimulus material and recognising its performance possibilities
Team workers	using ideas, resources and research to find and shape an appropriate form
Self-managers	demonstrating the use of physical theatre skills in performance.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	carrying out personal research into physical theatre practitioners using skills imaginatively to create work for demonstration and performance
Creative thinkers	exploring new angles on materials using a range of skills to interpret them
Reflective learners	exploring the most effective ways of communicating ideas gleaned from research into practitioners and styles
Team workers	working with others to devise work working with others to perform and demonstrate work
Self-managers	taking risks to improve physical, vocal and mime range and technique
Effective participators	making the most of other learner-led workshops.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	carrying out research into physical theatre practitioners, their styles, working and training methods, history
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	presenting research into practitioners through discussion, workshops, demonstrations
English	
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	researching the work of physical theatre practitioners
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	preparing and giving presentations and demonstrations of research into the work of practitioners.