

Unit 33: Applying Physical Theatre

Unit code:	Y/502/5120
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

Learners will explore and develop physical theatre forms and techniques, applying them in a performance to an audience.

● Unit introduction

If it can be said that traditional theatre appeals on both cerebral and emotional levels, physical theatre also embraces the physical and visual. Physical theatre adds another dimension to performance and aims to provide a more immediate and complete theatre experience. That is not to say the traditional actor is devoid of physicality, rather that physical theatre adds a further dimension. Physical theatre performers always aim to provide a more immediate and encompassing theatre experience.

Performing physical theatre gives performers the opportunity to use and combine many techniques; to express themselves, not solely through acting or dance, but through a diverse range of art forms. This is a multi-layered genre that includes movement, mime, acrobatics and clowning, as well as all the more traditional forms of acting.

The term 'physical theatre' is relatively new, but the inherent skills, style and genre have a long and far-reaching history. Physical theatre has developed in many different places and from many traditional performing art forms. Essentially physical theatre is a form of presentation that will not deny any kind of performance skill.

As well as considering physical theatre as a unique form, the performer in training will find its demanding discipline will enrich their performance work in more traditional contexts. Acquiring and developing skills in physicalisation are, after all, an issue for the most naturalistic actor. These can be applied to devised work, as well as to play texts that were initially designed for other forms of presentation. There are several renowned theatre companies that deploy skills in physical theatre to explore and express traditional texts; well-known examples are Kneehigh and their performance of *Oedipus* and Frantic Assembly's *Othello*.

Whatever the context in which physical theatre is applied, it is a rewarding and often informative and challenging experience; because it can be devised around fresh and new approaches to the exploration of a text, or indeed a multiplicity of texts, it is bound to produce work that will be unique.

Learners must present a finished piece lasting a minimum of 20 minutes.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Be able to explore text using physical theatre skills
- 2 Be able to use physical theatre skills to develop a role/character in rehearsal
- 3 Be able to perform role/character using physical theatre skills.

Unit content

1 Be able to explore text using physical theatre skills

Source material: stimuli eg issues, themes, stories, image, textual extracts, poems, newspaper articles, magazines, novels, scripts, any play script suitable for interpretation through physical theatre skills

Process: experiment; test ideas; explore appropriate physical skills

Creative: ideas; concepts; application of physical skills

2 Be able to use physical theatre skills to develop a role/character in rehearsal

Developing role and character: adapting and developing personal technique; repetition of exercises; accurate recreation of movement, voice and action over time; accepting criticism and moving forward; self-appraisal and objectivity; character or role embodiment; working with costume, props and set

Developing performance presence: spatial awareness; use of space; solos; working with others, partners, small groups

Rehearsal: rehearsal schedules; rehearsal discipline; physical and vocal warm-ups; focus; concentration

Performance space: using the performance space; scenic elements; entrances and exits; use of resources eg props, lighting, sound, costume; effects

Personal: ideas sharing; response to others; time management; personal organisation; group organisation; goal setting; physical preparation; mental preparation; technical rehearsal; dress rehearsal

3 Be able to perform role/character using physical theatre skills

Perform: eg acting, movement, dance, acrobatics, use of body, use of voice

Communicate: with other performers; with audience; character; visual qualities; vocal qualities; content of piece eg meaning, story, theme, ideas

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 use physical theatre skills to explore text for performance [IE, CT, TW]	M1 use physical theatre skills imaginatively to explore text for performance	D1 use and experiment with physical theatre skills to fully explore text for performance
P2 apply physical theatre skills in rehearsal to develop a role/character [TW, CT, RL, EP]	M2 apply physical theatre skills in rehearsal to develop a role/character with sensitivity, creativity and commitment	D2 apply physical theatre skills in rehearsal to develop a role/character with sensitivity, highly developed creativity and imagination
P3 perform a physical theatre role/character that communicates an appropriate interpretation to an audience. [EP, TW]	M3 perform a physical theatre role/character that fully communicates the intentions of the interpretation.	D3 perform a physical theatre role/character that makes a significant and imaginative contribution to the interpretation.

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

Learning will take place in the studio and rehearsal spaces. Performance to an audience may take place in a suitable venue such as a theatre space, or site-specific. Learners must be exposed to the work of different contemporary and historically relevant practitioners, in order to spark imagination and experimentation. Similarly, learners will require a range of stimulus materials and texts from which to develop their performances, explore and refine their ideas.

The work of leading physical performers, such as DV8 Physical Theatre, Kneehigh, Trestle, Frantic Assembly and Pina Bausch are all good places to look for starting points for work. Similarly the mime-based theatre of Lecoq and the routines of Commedia dell'Arte will provide a range of styles that may suit performance projects.

The processes of experimentation form the basis of work for learning outcome 1 and learners must be encouraged to be bold and creative. There could be moments when risks are called for, such as in the lifting and catching of others. Workshops exploring these techniques, safely, will be essential. Depending on the style of theatre chosen, be it more dance or drama based, classes and workshops related to other units of study can be incorporated into this unit. For example, skills associated with devising and improvisation might be taught and developed during this work, also possibly contact improvisation as well as scripted acting.

The development of roles and characters will be inherent in the exploration of texts and stimulus materials. For example, workshops might explore how performers transform from the interpretation of a person, to a place, or an object. The nature of the physical embodiment of characters will be key, including moving with purpose and focus, being in the moment at all times when on stage and the need to think as one with other performers.

Rehearsal techniques, the giving and accepting of objective praise and criticism and planning for improvements through target setting will form the basis of learning outcome 2. Centres should allow for experimentation in a range of performance spaces, where the understanding of space is used to create meaning in performance. For learning outcome 3, learners will perform a character/role in ensemble, or small groups, or as soloists working within a production company or simply alone, as happens in street 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 the unit. Class etiquette and behaviour, including health and safety guidance.
Assignment 1: Text to Physical Theatre – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2 Exploring texts: explore a range of texts, such as magazine and newspaper articles, issues from the news; traditional stories; pictures. Develop a broad range of styles. Explore clowning, accuracy of movement, use of facial expressions, gesture, sound, creating stock characters eg characters from Commedia, role and character defining and development.
Assignment 2: Exploring New Ideas – P1, M1, D1, P1, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3 Site-specific experiments: devise some short contact improvisations, based on previous workshops. Use physical theatre skills that are appropriate to be performed around the site. Observe different issues that relate to the site and health and safety. Exploring a chosen text, such as a play or short story; creating a role for a short piece, in solos and pairs, to learners' choice of text. Performances, assessments and evaluations.
Assignment 3: Explore and Perform an Interpretation of Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe, Using Physical Theatre Skills – P1, M1, D1, P1, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3 This will be a major performance of an interpretation developed by the group and the tutor. Props and costumes workshop; exploring the development of meaning. Learning outcomes 1 and 2. Role/character development, giving and accepting objective criticism. Learning outcomes 2 and 3. Staging issues, lighting and sound. Technical considerations Learning outcomes 2 and 3. Performances, assessments and evaluations. Learning outcomes 3.

Assessment

To achieve learning outcome 1, learners must be challenged with a wide variety of stimulus materials. Play texts are clearly good places to find characters and they also pose the challenge of creating new and exciting forms of interpretation. Ideas, themes, works of art and music are similarly effective starting points.

For learning outcome 2, the development of role/character will occur through taking learning outcome 1 further. Learners could be allowed opportunities to develop a variety of roles that challenge their understanding of how characters and ideas may be brought to life. For example, the interpretation of a Shakespearean role, seen in Frantic Assembly's *Othello*, through the medium of physical theatre, poses problems and opportunities for learners who are prepared to disregard their pre-conceived ideas of what Shakespeare's plays should look like. In a different style, the work of Complicite explores the physical nature of the places their characters inhabit, as well as the characters themselves.

Learners will be assessed on their ability to work within the confines and opportunities of an ensemble. They could be given the opportunity to work with costume, lighting and sound and to enter and leave the performance space effectively. Tutors might choose to explore proxemics and the creating of meaning through the use of space.

For learning outcome 3, performance to an audience in a finished and polished performance is important. Where time and resources allow, it would be advantageous to allow learners the opportunity to perform in different venues, communicating to different types and size of audience.

The assessment evidence for all the learning outcomes will be built up from tutor observations, learner observations, both self and peer, witness statements, video/DVD recordings, live performances, audience feedback and the performer's logbook.

To achieve P1, learners will show they can explore a range of stimuli, using the relevant physical theatre skills. For P2, they will take those explorations towards the building of roles/characters; they must rehearse using relevant rehearsal and physical theatre skills, giving and accepting criticism, mastering the means to improve and refine their work. They will work cooperatively with the rest of the ensemble and crew. For P3, an appropriate interpretation of the material will be effected through performance.

Learners who achieve M1 will use their imagination in their explorations; they will have started to take risks. For M2, learners' development of role/character will show some sensitivity to the needs of the materials, and the audience for whom it is intended; there will be full cooperation with the ensemble or crew and learners will show full commitment to the journey that the rehearsals are taking. For M3, learners will fully communicate the meaning, style and aesthetic of the performance to the intended audience.

To achieve D1, there will be a clear sense of willingness to experiment with ideas, stimuli and direction towards performance. At D2, the sensitive use of physical theatre skills will result in sensitively interpreted and realised performances; rehearsals will be creative experiences, where risks are common and imagination is allowed to infect the proceedings. Finally for D3, the performance of learners will contribute significantly to the meaning of the whole work and its interpretation.

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
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2	Text to Physical Theatre Group activity: introduction to exploration of text towards performance.	Exploring stimuli: explore a range of texts, such as magazine and newspaper articles, issues from the news; traditional stories; pictures. Develop a broad range of styles. Explore clowning, accuracy of movement, use of facial expressions, gesture, sound, creating stock characters, eg characters from Commedia, role and character defining and development.	A portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tutor observations workshop activities rehearsal log performance evaluations.
P1, M1, D1, P1, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3	Exploring New Ideas Group ideas brought together; devised performances delivered for their peers.	Site-specific experiments: devise some short contact improvisations, based on previous workshops. Use physical theatre skills that are appropriate to be performed around the site. Observe different issues that relate to the site and health and safety.	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.
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3	Creating and Performing Physical Theatre Based on Text	Explore and perform an interpretation of <i>Tell-Tale Heart</i> by Edgar Allan Poe, using physical theatre skills. This will be a major performance of an interpretation developed by the group and the tutor.	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
Preparing Performing Arts Work	Developing Physical Theatre Performance	Auditions for Actors
Presenting Performing Arts Work		Applying Acting Skills
		Drama Improvisation
		The Practice of Directing Theatre
		Developing Physical Theatre
		Circus Acrobatics
		Movement in Performance
		Contact Improvisation
		Developing Styles in Clowning

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

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 learners and tutors 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.volcanothatre.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 physical theatre skills to explore text for performance developing role and character for performance
Creative thinkers	using physical theatre skills to explore text for performance developing role and character for performance
Reflective learners	using physical theatre skills in rehearsal responding to stimulus materials and recognising its performance possibilities
Team workers	using physical theatre skills in rehearsal performing a physical theatre role or character that communicates an appropriate interpretation to an audience
Self-managers	developing role and character for performance demonstrating the use of physical theatre skills in performance
Effective participators	performing a physical theatre role or character that communicates an appropriate interpretation to an audience.

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	using ideas, resources and research to find and shape an appropriate form
Creative thinkers	using ideas, resources and research to find and shape an appropriate form researching new stimulus materials researching the work of practitioners
Reflective learners	planning workshop demonstration planning a suitable and useful rehearsal schedule
Team workers	working in groups and ensembles in the workshop and performance
Self-managers	recording ideas in the performer's logbook responding to criticism from self and others and making plans to improve
Effective participators	helping and supporting others with difficult techniques, such as lifts and falls.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	exploring ideas and stimuli
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	storing ideas and stimulus materials
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	researching practitioners' work writing rehearsal schedules
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	communicating rehearsal schedules to others
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	sharing ideas in the workshop planning workshops, rehearsals and proposing ideas for performances
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	working with written texts
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	writing performance and interpretive treatment ideas.