

PART ONE



CREATING AND PERFORMING DRAMA



- Chapter 1** The performer's tools: body and voice
- Chapter 2** Improvisation: spontaneous performance
- Chapter 3** The elements of drama: a framework
- Chapter 4** Playbuilding: devised performance



1

THE PERFORMER'S TOOLS: BODY AND VOICE

WHY STUDY BODY AND VOICE?

Theatre communicates meaning in many ways, through language, dramatic action, set, costume and lighting design. The actor or performer is the primary method through which meaning is created. In this chapter you will begin to develop your knowledge, understanding and skills in using body and voice to create character, show character relationships, and establish situation, time and place. You will also begin to make decisions as a director to create and manipulate still and moving images that have a specific point of focus for the audience.

This chapter is divided into the following units:

- 1.1 Warm-ups
- 1.2 Mime: communicating story through the body
- 1.3 Body language: communicating character through facial expression and gesture
- 1.4 Communicating through voice
- 1.5 Performance task: images of Australia

OUTCOMES

In this chapter you will:

- explore and identify the expressive potential of the body and voice to create role and character
- use your skills as a director to manipulate space, spatial arrangements, gesture, contrast and movement to communicate situation and create a point of focus for the dramatic action
- respond by thinking critically about performance work using questions to build understanding and communicate your thinking to others.





1.1 Warm-ups

THE PURPOSE OF WARM-UPS

Warm-ups have several purposes:

- to prevent injury such as strained muscles or ligaments
- to help the performer relax; to relieve mental and physical tension
- to help the performer prepare both mentally and physically for performance work
- to maximise the expressive potential of the body by drawing on the energy of the performer.

The following warm-up exercises will help you prepare for class work and performance work. You do not need to practise all these exercises. You may try only one or two and come back to the others at another time. The exercises are divided into two categories:

- **Physical exercises.** These are good for encouraging alertness, building a sense of working as a team, and creating energy.
- **Centring exercises.** These are good for posture, releasing tension, and developing the ability to create and sustain concentration, belief and focus.

EXERCISE

PHYSICAL EXERCISES

1 Stretch

Stretch different parts of your body by trying the following exercises. For each exercise you must stretch as hard as you can, without straining yourself.

- Stand between two imaginary pillars and try to push them over.
- Reach for a \$50 note stuck to the ceiling. Imagine that your feet are glued to the floor.
- Lie on the floor. Imagine you have ropes tied to your wrists and ankles, and you are being stretched in four directions.
- Hug yourself as hard as you can.

2 Roll, stretch, jump and electric shock

First, the class practises each of the following movements: a roll, a stretch, a jump and an 'electric shock' which involves you pretending your body has been given a blast of electricity. On the signal from the teacher, the class begins to walk through the space, maintaining an equal distance between group members.

The group explores different ways of moving through the space; for example, on toes, backward, sideways or leaping. At any point the teacher may call 'roll', 'stretch', 'jump' or 'electric shock'. The group responds instantly to the request and then returns to moving through the room, maintaining an equal distance between group members. You can play this as an elimination game in which the last person to complete either a roll, stretch, jump or electric shock is required to sit down.





3 Everybody do this!

Each person in the group takes a turn at giving the group a warm-up exercise. For example, a student may run backward or perform a stretch or star jumps. As they perform their exercise the student calls out 'Everybody do this!' and the remainder of the group copies that person.

4 Move as though ...

Find a place in the room to stand on your own. Your teacher will call out the following instructions. You are to respond to the instructions as quickly as you can. Don't interact with others.

- Move as though you are made of jelly.
- Move as though you are made of molten metal.
- Move as though you are made of crystal.
- Move as though you are made of snow.
- Move as though you are made of fire.
- Move as though you are made of sloppy mud.
- Move as though you are made of mist.
- Move as though you are made of brittle twigs.

5 No walking

In this exercise you have to find ways of moving through the room without walking. Once you have tried ways of moving through the room on your own, find a partner and explore how two people can work together to move through the room without walking. Some ways of moving include crawling, sliding, tiptoeing, running, rolling, leaping, spinning and jumping.



CHALLENGE

In groups of four, five or six, continue to explore moving through the room without walking. Create a way of moving from one side of the room to the other by combining a series of different ways of moving.

Developing skills to work as an ensemble

When working in rehearsals, it is important to develop a strong collaborative relationship among group members. This will help make all aspects of the performance more effective. By undertaking lots of improvisation work and practical activities together, you will learn to collaborate and establish a strong ensemble.

EXERCISE

ESTABLISHING ENSEMBLE FOCUS

1 The first step

As a group, spread out evenly around the space. The whole group is to take a first step together at the same time. There are no cues or signals for this. Try to focus on sensing the exact moment for taking the step.

2 Controlling pace

As a group, spread out evenly around the space. As in the previous exercise, the group is to take a first step together. The group continues walking and builds pace until everyone breaks into a run. The group then reduces the pace until reaching a standstill all at the same time.





3 Rhythm and peripheral cues

Imagine a public location that will allow each member of the class to have a specific role. Each performer creates a character to suit the location. Each character has their own private activity that will move them from one point in the space to another. All characters start performing their activities at the same time. The activities start slowly, with a low level of energy, then build in intensity and pace, and finally slow until the performers all freeze at the same time. Try the following variations:

- Each person in the group is given a number. The characters start performing their activities as their number is called, either in sequence or randomly. Repeat.
- Individual characters choose when to start and finish.

4 Three up, two down

Five performers stand in a line, leaving a gap between each person. Each performer remains focused throughout the exercise—finding a spot to look at can help establish this. When the exercise commences, any person can crouch down or stand when they feel the impulse to. There can be only three people standing and two crouching at any moment. Try not to develop a pattern or pre-empt what the group is going to do. Remain focused, trust your instincts and respond accordingly.



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 What benefit do you feel the warm-ups have in preparing you for drama work?
- 2 Write down one or two other exercises that you think would be beneficial in preparing a performer for physical work. Explain why.
- 3 Make up your own warm-up activity. Your activity can be for an individual, a small group or the whole class. Describe your warm-up in your logbook and justify its purpose and benefits. Be prepared to teach it to your class.
- 4 How can groups of performers develop their ensemble skills? Why are these skills important?

EXERCISE

CENTRING EXERCISES

Centring involves aligning the posture of the body so that we are standing straight and feel balanced. We all have our own personal way of standing that makes us feel comfortable. It may be putting our weight on one leg or folding our arms across our chest. In performance, because we are pretending to be other people and things, we need to be able to find a starting point that prepares us for performing. Centring helps our bodies to obtain a neutral starting point for acting work. It also creates a sense of stability because our weight is balanced over a central point. Once we are centred we are:

- physically prepared for any movement work
- mentally prepared because we are more focused, which allows us to be more engaged with the character and the performance.



HINT

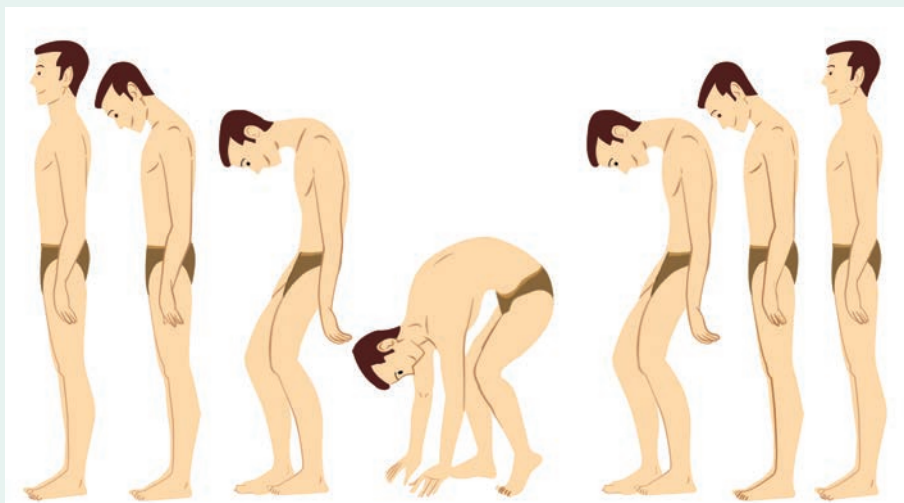
Being focused means we are able to concentrate without being distracted.

1 Spine roll

To achieve a sense of 'centre' it is helpful to use the spine as an indicator of where our centre is located. This exercise helps to prepare the performer by removing tension from the neck and shoulders, as well as correcting posture. Unbalanced posture can create unnecessary tension in the body.

The group stands in a circle. Stand with your feet under your hips. Look straight ahead and keep your arms by your sides. Count to seven and, as you do, slowly drop your head forward onto your chest. Feel the weight of your head and allow this weight to 'unroll' your spine as you slowly bend towards the floor. It is very important that you bend your knees when you are halfway down so that you don't strain your lower back. Once you have reached the hanging position, swing your torso gently from side to side to make sure your neck, head and arms are completely relaxed.

Once you have checked how relaxed you are, reverse the process and roll upwards, starting with the tailbone of your spine. Your head should remain hanging until your body is in a standing position. Then, let your head drift up over seven counts. Once you come to a standing position, hold this final position before you relax.



2 Pendulum

Stand with your feet slightly apart and with your arms hanging by your sides. Begin a very gentle rocking motion. Rock forward onto your toes and backward onto your heels. It is important that you only rock forward and backward as far as is comfortable without stumbling or falling. Increase the size of the forward and backward rocking motion. Once you reach a comfortable angle, begin to reduce the size of the rocking motion until the movement has almost stopped. It is useful to close your eyes at this point to gain a sense of where your centre of balance is. Once you come to a complete stop, hold the stillness for a moment.



CHALLENGE

Stand in a circle as a group. Stand in the way you feel most comfortable. Close your eyes and make mental notes regarding the way you stand. Complete the 'spine roll' exercise. When finished, hold the final position. Make mental notes and compare the differences between your own way of standing and the way you stand once you have completed a spine roll.

1.2 Mime: communicating story through the body

The ultimate goal of performers' movement training is the integration of mind, body and spirit.

Jean Sabatine – Dance and movement teacher



WikiHow – How to Mime
The Art of Mime – Skills and Techniques
BBC Bitesize – Movement, Mime and Gesture
Rowan Atkinson – The Invisible Drum Kit (Mime)
ET the Mime – The Car (Mime)

WHAT IS MIME?

Mime is a form of performance that uses body language, gesture and movement to create the illusion of objects, people and locations in an empty space. It is usually performed without the use of voice. A mime artist may train solely in the art form of mime for several years, developing skills that help their ability to create illusion.

EXERCISE

MIME

The following exercises explore some of the basic skills of effective mime. When practising mime, be aware of maintaining a strong level of focus, energy and control over your movements. This will make your mime work more engaging.

1 Isolation of body parts

In preparation for this exercise it is a good idea to undertake some relaxation and stretching exercises. This exercise involves exploring the movement potential of each body part, including your ability to bend, stretch, rotate and tense.

2 Pulling faces

Facial expression is an important part of communicating in mime. Pull faces and explore the movement potential of your facial muscles. Use your jaw, eyes and eyebrows to create as many expressions as you can. Work with a partner and stand opposite them. Take turns in mirroring each other's facial expressions.

3 Eye-hand coordination

One of the keys to creating the illusion of smaller objects in mime is the use of eye-hand coordination. We tend to look at an object before we pick it up.

Imagine you have a hand-sized object in front of you. Pick up and use the object, imagining its weight, shape and texture. Make sure your hands accurately represent the shape of the object. Imaginary objects you might explore are a matchbox, a yo-yo or a calculator.

4 Showing weight and quality

Imagine you have three boxes in front of you. One is neatly packed and filled with clothes; one is badly packed and filled with crystal; and one is falling apart and filled with books. Pick up each box and put it back down again. Make sure you clearly communicate the relative weight and quality of each box.

5 Showing length

Work with a partner. Imagine you are both picking up a lengthy object, such as oars from a rowing shed, or a ladder. With your partner, carry the object around the room. You will need to pay close attention to maintaining the distance between you and your partner to achieve the illusion of a set length.





6 Maintaining the illusion

Whenever you establish an object or item of furniture in mime, remember the position of the object and how it is used.

Establish the positions of the following. Everyone should take a turn using the mimed window and curtains to see if the positions of the objects and how they are used is maintained.

- Mime opening a door that slides to the left, then walk through it and close it behind you.
- Open a set of curtains, and then open the window behind the curtains. Leave the position of the curtains and the window for the next person to adjust. The skill required here is to closely observe the position of the curtains and the window so that when you enter the scene you maintain the illusion.

7 Mime role-plays

Work with a partner and mime the following exercises. Consider how you can manipulate the elements of movement in your mimed role-plays to help achieve effect.

- **Two house painters.** One is on the roof and one is on the ground. A pulley system carries up heavy cans of paint and lowers empty cans of paint.
- **Two landscape gardeners.** You each have a wheelbarrow that you fill with bricks and then push from one end of the garden to the other. The path you use winds and twists.
- **Two kite flyers.** It is a very windy day. The wind threatens to blow the kites away, and eventually they get tangled in the air.
- **Two vets.** You are holding down an angry cat and trying to administer an injection.



HINT

Vocal sound effects can be an entertaining addition to your mime performance.

EXERCISE

MIME ROLE-PLAY

In groups of three, devise your own mime situation to show to the class. This is a good opportunity for you to revise your understanding of the following elements of drama: character/role, situation, space and time. With your group, create original characters, a situation, the place and the time. This is also the first time you are preparing a short scene and it is a good opportunity to talk about one of the key structures of story in drama—the linear narrative.

WHAT IS A NARRATIVE?

A narrative is a story. A simple way of explaining a narrative is to think about what you know of narratives from films, novels and from your study of this text type in English.

Narrative basics:

- All narratives (stories) have a beginning, a middle and an end.
- The action of the narrative changes as a result of the events that happen. As one event happens, this causes another event to happen. This is known as cause and effect.
- Narratives usually introduce characters and situation at the beginning. The middle is when a problem presents itself and the problem usually gets worse. The ending resolves the problem.



HINT

When developing your mime role-play, make sure you include a range of mimed objects that explore your ability to use space, to show size, weight and length, and to maintain the illusion.

Use the following example narrative as a model for developing your mime role-play.
Beginning: The flight attendant welcomes passengers aboard a crowded flight. They close the very full overhead luggage locker for take-off.

Middle: The number of bags in the locker causes it to jam shut. Because it can't be opened, a passenger who urgently needs their relaxation music becomes more anxious.

End: The plane jolts suddenly during turbulence, which causes the locker to open. The passenger gets their bag, takes out their music device, sits down and relaxes.



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Outline the steps that you and your partners took to prepare the mime role-play.
- 2 Evaluate one group's presentation, discussing how they made their story clear through the use of mime.
- 3 Describe how one performer used mime to portray the various qualities of an object such as its size, weight and moving parts. In your description, include examples of how they used movement and facial expression to add and enhance effective communication in mime.
- 4 Evaluate your own performance. Discuss your ability to mime weight and size, and to maintain the illusion.
- 5 Comment on how others in your group assisted you in maintaining the illusion.

1.3

Body language: communicating character through facial expression and gesture

WHAT IS BODY LANGUAGE?

Human communication involves the whole body, not just words. Experts believe that verbal communication accounts for only 25 per cent of communication between humans. The message we give through physical poses, gestures and facial expressions is called 'body language'. A performer's body language not only gives us information about their character's personality, it also provides us with information about their character's relationships with other characters.

A gesture is a significant movement of part of the body, such as a limb, that is intended to gain a response from one or more people. Some gestures have a universal meaning; others have a meaning that is specific to a culture. A single gesture may or may not mean anything—it is the general sequence of signals and the situation in which they occur that is informative.



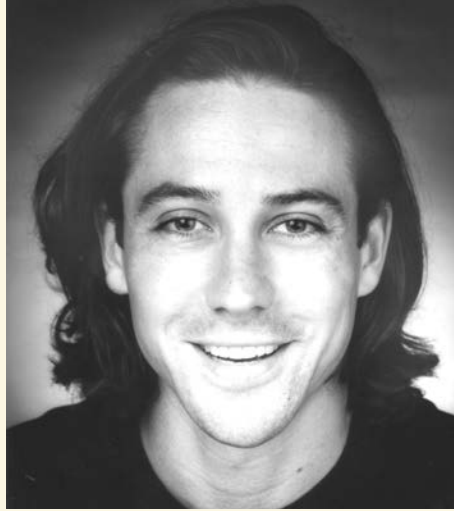
National Theatre –
Movement Direction:
Creating Character
Internationale de
Théâtre – Jacques Lecoq
(subtitled)

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

SHANE ANTHONY

Performer

Shane Anthony is a graduate of the Directing Program at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), studied Screenwriting at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School and has also completed a BA in Theatre Studies at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). He was a company member of Australian Physical Theatre Company Zen Zen Zo from 1999–2008, training extensively in contemporary Asian performing arts. In 2007 Shane travelled to New York to continue training with Anne Bogart and the Saratoga International Theatre Institute in Viewpoints and the Suzuki Method of Actor Training. Shane received a Mike Walsh Fellowship to attend the New York Film Academy in 2012.



Courtesy Shane Anthony

Shane Anthony

Shane says the most arresting and valuable piece of advice he's been given as an artist is to 'Be curious', and he passes this on to any aspiring theatre or filmmaker. Shane writes, 'I firmly believe that the role of an artist in society is an important one that we are forced to fight for to be seen as valid. Artists provide a crucial service; be it to help heal, to uplift, to provide catharsis or to make people laugh. All of these experiences are part of the human experience and so it's important that all artists are curious about the world in which they live, that they are passionately interested to reflect and make their work meaningful and relevant. Be curious!'



BBC Bitesize – Describing
Body Language
Zen Zen Zo

EXERCISE

BODY LANGUAGE

1 Body signals

Find frozen poses and/or gestures to communicate the following emotions:

- boredom
- nervousness
- victory
- confusion.

2 Body messages

Use movements that finish in a frozen position to indicate the meaning of each of the following statements:

- 'Come here quickly.'
- 'Something isn't right.'
- 'I don't know.'
- 'I think I'm lost.'
- 'Get away from me.'
- 'I'm not quite sure, but I think I smell gas.'
- 'Sit next to me.'





3 Creating a point of focus

Work in small groups and create a frozen position to communicate the following characters in the following situations. Choose one group member to act as a director. Their job is to stand outside the image and arrange the group members so that every image has a clear point of focus for the audience to look at.

- A young child looks enviously at another child's toy.
- A scientist makes an amazing breakthrough in the laboratory.
- An Olympic athlete at the end of a sprint realises he or she has just missed out on first place.
- A scuba diver sees a shark in the distance.
- A shop assistant is caught stealing money by the manager.
- A teenager gets on a fast and furious ride at the amusement park.
- The same teenager gets off the ride at the amusement park.
- An elderly person finds their new seedlings have been trampled.
- A teenager pretends to like a disappointing birthday present.



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Using your own words, write a definition of 'body language'.
- 2 Draw or describe what your body language may be if you were feeling a moment of great success.
- 3 Undertake research using your library, the Internet and your family and friends to see if you can find one example of how body language and/or gesture is used to communicate meaning in a culture different to your own.
- 4 Give one example from your class workshop that you thought had a very clear point of focus. In your explanation, describe the positions of the actors and explain how the audience was encouraged to focus on one thing.

EXERCISE

INTERPRETING BODY LANGUAGE

Use the following photo, or a group photo of your own, to prepare a short, mimed role-play in groups. Your performance will show the characters in the moments before the photo was taken. In your preparations, explore the body language of the different characters and the way the characters relate to one another. Your role-play must start with a tableau that you devise. It must finish with a tableau showing the positions of the characters in the photo.



Agefotostock/ Jeff Greenberg



HINT

In a tableau, participants make still images with their bodies to represent a scene. It is arranged in a way that is visually appealing and communicates information about the characters and the story. The plural of the word 'tableau' is 'tableaux'.



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Pick three characters from the photo provided or from your own photo. Interpret the predominant emotion or reaction of each character. Explain how each character's body language and facial expression helped you with your interpretation.
- 2 Describe how you used body language, levels and space to convey your character's relationship to other characters.
- 3 Describe any discoveries you made about the character you played while you explored their way of walking and using gestures.
- 4 Choose one group's tableau. Give your interpretation of two characters and describe their personality types. Base your interpretation on the body language of the characters in the tableau.
- 5 Choose the group that performed the most visually appealing tableau. Discuss how this group used levels and space to make their tableau appealing.
- 6 Complete the following sentence reflecting on your learning about body language and the use of space to create meaning.
'When I heard about body language in acting I used to think _____ but now I think _____.'
Share your sentence with others in the class.



1.4 Communicating through voice

Make what you say remarkable to the hearer.

Cicely Berry – Head of Voice, National Theatre, London

TRAINING THE VOICE

You have completed exercises that focus on the expressive potential of the performer's body, and now you will explore the expressive potential of the voice. Although some of the following exercises will focus purely on warming up the voice and exploring its expressive ability, most will include a combination of the use of movement and vocal dynamics.

There are four areas of vocal dynamics that a performer needs to consider and develop. You can be assessed on these in performance so it is wise to ensure you understand what each involves.

The exercises below will explore each of the following areas:

- **Articulation** – using the mouth, tongue and lips to create and shape sounds; a performer with good articulation speaks clearly and is easily understood
- **Projection** – projecting the voice, without straining, so that you can be heard easily from a distance
- **Delivery** – making your voice varied and expressive
- **Breathing** – the ability to inhale deeply and control exhalation.



HINT

You will explore the area of delivery in chapter 5, p. 120 in the 'building your character' exercise.



Write-Out-Loud – Diction Exercises
National Theatre – Vocal Warm-up #1: Breathing
National Theatre – Vocal Warm-up #4: Articulation

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

KATERINA MORAITIS

Head of Voice, NIDA

Katerina Moraitis is Head of Voice at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in Sydney. Katerina was previously Course Leader of the world-renowned MA Voice Studies course at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London, as well as Head of the International Centre for Voice (ICV), a professional international forum established to serve the development of teachers of voice and speech around the globe. Katerina is an associate editor of *The International Dialects of English Archive (IDEA)*, an online archive of primary source dialect and accent recordings for the performing arts.

Katerina is currently one of the world's leading acting, voice and speech professionals, and has been responsible for training many actors and voice practitioners now working in Europe, Australia and the USA. Graduates of her training are currently working at The Royal Shakespeare Company, Sydney Theatre Company, Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, Guildhall School of the Arts and many more.

Katerina's advice is to put quality first, and everything else will follow. Be aware of the power of language and voice to transform and inspire performance. It is through the integration of voice, speech and movement that communication deepens, including human behaviour and creativity. This connection between voice, language and the imagination creates interesting, expressive and engaging performance.



Courtesy Katerina Moraitis

Katerina Moraitis

EXERCISE

BREATHING

1 Finding the diaphragm muscle

Lie on your back on the floor. Place your hands on your stomach and consciously breathe in to the lowest part of your lungs. Exhale. Breathe in again, and then exhale. See if you can feel your diaphragm muscle working to bring in air and to control the release of air.

2 Controlling the release of breath

Stare at a spot on the ceiling. Take in a deep breath, and then blow a steady stream of air towards that spot. Take another breath. Slowly release air towards the same spot, but see if you can control the release of air over 10 counts.



HINT

If you feel dizzy or lightheaded, rest for a moment—you have probably absorbed too much oxygen too quickly.





By gently pulling in your stomach muscles you will be able to control how quickly your diaphragm relaxes. This allows you to control the release of air.

3 Increasing lung capacity

Stand with your arms in front of you, palms together. Take in a deep breath. Concentrate on drawing air to the very bottom of your lungs. As you inhale, raise both arms out to either side until they are up above your head. Let your arms cross each other and continue down to either side. Exhale as you do this.

PROJECTING, NOT SHOUTING

Developing the ability to project your voice means developing your ability to be heard *without* having to shout. The voice needs a lot of air to create a full sound and to carry a sound for a period of time, so your ability to breathe deeply is very important. This is especially valuable if you need to deliver long sentences and don't want to run out of breath. Projecting the voice involves a combination of:

- thoughts that help you 'send' your voice to the point you wish it to go
- physical exercises that help develop your ability to project
- the use of resonators to help give the voice volume.

EXERCISE

PROJECTION

Exercises 1 and 2 prepare the voice for projection. Exercises 3–5 explore the ability of the voice to project.

1 Bear's yawn and stretch

Imagine you are a huge bear waking from a deep hibernation. Have a yawn and stretch. Yawn and stretch again, but this time exaggerate the stretching and yawning sound.

2 Sighing

- Imagine you are feeling unhappy. Breathe in, and then sigh without using your voice to create a sigh sound. Repeat the sigh, but this time add a little voice to the sigh sound.
- Imagine you have just seen a baby perform a 'cute' trick. Repeat the sigh and add full voice to the sigh sound.
- Imagine you are a wildlife officer demonstrating calls of nocturnal animals. Repeat the full-voiced sigh and make the sigh sound slide up and down in pitch.

3 Projecting to a point

Lie on your back and find a spot on the ceiling on which to focus. Breathe in, and then sigh. Repeat this, adding more sound to each sigh. Imagine the sound you will create is like a torch beam that you will shine on a specific point on the ceiling. Turn the sigh sound into an 'aaah' sound. Always aim your voice at the same spot. With each 'aaah' sound, slide up and down the scale.



CHALLENGE

When your arms are above your head, hold them there for a second and take in a little more air in a couple of breaths. Hold the air for a second and then release the air quickly while lowering your arms to your sides.



HINT

A resonator is a hollow cavity in the body that helps amplify sound such as the nasal cavities and the mouth. Imagine going into a big empty hall and talking—often you will hear your voice echo as the hard surfaces bounce soundwaves back to you. Our resonators use hard surfaces in the body to amplify sound. If we warm up physically, relax, and breathe before voice work, we help open the resonators and encourage better sound quality.



CHALLENGE

Explore different vowel sounds. Time how long you can project each vowel sound before you run out of breath.



HINT

Shouting is NOT projecting. If your throat tickles or is sore during these exercises, you are straining your throat. Stop and check that you are relaxed.



CHALLENGE

The class repeats the 'pillar of sound' exercise but experiments with different pitches to create harmonies. In this exercise, closing your eyes helps you to focus on pitch.



CHALLENGE

On a given signal, turn to a new spot in the room and deliver a different gunshot sound. Repeat this until you have completed a 360-degree turn. Stand in a circle and send gunshots around the circle as quickly as you can. Everyone MUST send sounds to the centre of the circle.



4 Pillar of sound

As a class, stand in a circle and focus all attention on an imaginary cylinder in the centre of the circle that reaches from the floor to the ceiling. All class members will direct any sound towards the cylinder.

- The class begins by taking three slow, deep breaths.
- The class takes another breath, and then sighs.
- The class takes a breath, and then begins to hum.
- Concentrate on making the sound resonate on your lips and cheekbones.
- The class finds its own pitch.
- On the given signal from your teacher, all class members drop their jaws open to send an 'aaah' sound to the imaginary cylinder. Imagine that the energy of your voice is rushing up the cylinder to the ceiling. Maintain the sound for a period of three minutes, and then let the class find its own finishing point.

5 Projecting sound

Stand and place your hand on your stomach to detect the movement of the diaphragm muscle as it helps to create this sound. Find a fixed point in the room to which you will 'send' your voice. Practise saying the following sounds but use the 'jumping' action of your diaphragm muscle to help push the sound to a fixed point in the room. The sounds are 'hey', 'ho', 'ha' and 'hee'. Using the 'h' sound also helps to work the diaphragm muscle. Imagine that each sound is like a ball that you throw to a particular point in the room.

ARTICULATION, VOCAL DYNAMICS AND THE SHAPING OF SOUND

Articulation exercises help work the muscles of the mouth, tongue and throat. If these muscles are not strengthened, our ability to articulate is hampered because the voice becomes muffled and unclear. Vocal dynamics can also be manipulated by:

- **pace** – how fast or slow sound is
- **rhythm** – the pattern in which sounds, or qualities of sounds, are repeated
- **pitch** – how high or low sound is
- **volume** – how loud or soft sound is
- **pauses** – breaks or silences between sounds
- **emphasis** – the stress placed on certain words or syllables
- **tone** – the emotion or attitude behind the meaning of words.

EXERCISE

VOICE

1 Mirror facial

Stand opposite a partner and mirror the following:

- Open your mouth as wide as you can.
- Stretch your tongue to your nose, to either side of your mouth and to your chin. See if you can make your tongue touch all four points in a circular motion.
- Stick out your tongue and curl it.





2 Vowels and consonants

- Vowel sounds are created by altering the shape of the mouth. Roll through the vowel sounds in this sequence: 'a', 'e', 'i', 'o' and 'u'. Try each vowel sound and alternate between a short sound and a long sound; for example, 'ah' (short) and 'aaaah' (long).
- Sounds that are created by the lips and by using a push of air are called 'plosives'. Sounds that use the back of the throat are called 'gutturals'. Explore the sounds 'puh', 'buh', 'tuh', 'duh', 'kuh' and 'guh'. Consider how your lips, tongue and teeth are used to create these sounds.

3 Sound and action

As a class, create the following sounds simultaneously. Your teacher will give you the signal to make each sound.

- an explosion
- a motorbike racing
- a clock ticking and then chiming 12
- a modem connecting to a server
- a circular saw cutting through wood
- a respirator or a heart monitor in a hospital.

4 Soundscapes

As a class, create a soundscape of a particular environment. Each member of the class finds somewhere to sit or lie in the space. He or she then contributes sounds to create a particular location or environment. It is helpful to close your eyes for this exercise and listen to the sounds of others. Start with only a few sounds; the group leader may choose individuals one at a time. Other individuals are added as the soundscape takes shape. Some examples of soundscapes are a rainforest, ocean depths, a busy street corner, a farmyard, a building site and an orchestra tuning their instruments before a recital.



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Describe your experiences in trying each of the voice exercises. Identify the exercises you found most challenging. Give reasons for your answer.
- 2 Make four suggestions for how you could improve your use of voice in performance.
- 3 List and explain the seven aspects of vocal dynamics.
- 4 Think of two possible soundscapes you could create; for example, a busy restaurant or the zoo at feeding time. Explain how you could manipulate vocal dynamics to create your soundscape.

EXERCISE

LIVING OBJECTS

An abstract quality is something we cannot feel, see or touch. By heightening the abstract qualities of objects, we are able to make an object more distinctive and interesting in performance. For example, a group of three people may be a couch and use their bodies to look slumped and heavy. They may move from side to side in a slow rhythm and pause occasionally. The group could also use their voices to make groaning sounds and sighs. Through the use of physical and vocal dynamics we gain a clear picture of a couch, and through the communication of its abstract qualities we know it is old and worn.

Complete a table in your logbook listing a range of landmarks and objects. Indicate the main quality of each, and indicate how you could use movement and sound to help portray the object and its quality. The table below gives some examples to help you get started.

OBJECT	DEFINING QUALITY	USE OF MOVEMENT	USE OF SOUND
Clock tower	Eerie	Swaying, regular, rhythmic movements to indicate the hands of the clock; be mechanical figures.	Whispering; ticking; wind blowing; slow and heavy clock chime.
Automatic teller machine	Faulty	Stiff, mechanical movements, some out of time and erratic.	Sound words such as 'buzz', 'whirr', 'click', 'boing', 'plink' and 'klunk'.

Form groups of six and share your lists of objects. Choose one object from each person's list in your group to present to the class. Although you will have some idea of what to do in terms of sound and movement, you will discover more as you rehearse your presentation. Consider how you can manipulate movement and vocal dynamics to heighten your representation of the defining qualities of your chosen objects.

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Pick two objects presented by two different groups. Be clear in your description of what you saw. Identify and describe the strengths of these presentations. Consider how movement was used to clearly represent the object, the interaction of group members, the use of levels and space, and the use of sound. Make any suggestions for improvement. Be specific with your advice. For example:

The group that performed the eerie clock tower worked well together. They used people as gargoyles, and they used people and levels to create the height of the tower. They made the hands of the clock look bent and broken by holding their arms at odd angles. Some group members needed to stretch their arms up more fully to create the height of the tower. I think they needed to make the sound of wind blowing more intense because it was too soft and it seemed gentle rather than frightening.

- 2 Share your answer to question 1 with another student. Read each other's work and tell your partner what you think is clear about their description and one thing they might do to make their description and evaluation even better.

PERFORMANCE TASK



1.5 Performance task: images of Australia

The task

In this task you will work with a group to create a series of no more than eight tableaux to tell a story about one character and their experience of Australia. For example, the tableaux might show a journey, or show events over a lifetime. The tableaux will represent different ideas that you and your group have about life in Australia. Tableau suggestions include:

- a tableau of people at a famous location in Australia
- a tableau showing what people who have not been to Australia think Australia might be like
- a tableau to show Australia on an important day
- a tableau to show a particular suburb or area in Sydney.

Each tableau can include the use of people as objects, and a limited use of voice and movement to show different characters in different situations. The sequence of tableaux must tell a narrative or story, but only one character can appear in all eight of the tableaux. The voice and movement might be repeated two or three times to make it clear to the audience. Each tableau must have a specific point of focus for the audience to look at. When you present your tableaux, your group will start frozen and when your teacher gives you a signal, you will add your movement and sound.

Each performance will need to include planned use of the staging (the arrangement of the performers in the stage space) to create a strong point of focus for the dramatic action. Create original characters, places and situations, and the use of vocal dynamics to create atmospheric sound and sound effects, including consideration of rhythm and repetition.



iStockphoto.com/yellowsarah

What does it mean to be Australian? Does this image fit your experience of being Australian?

Rehearsing, making images and responding

EXERCISE

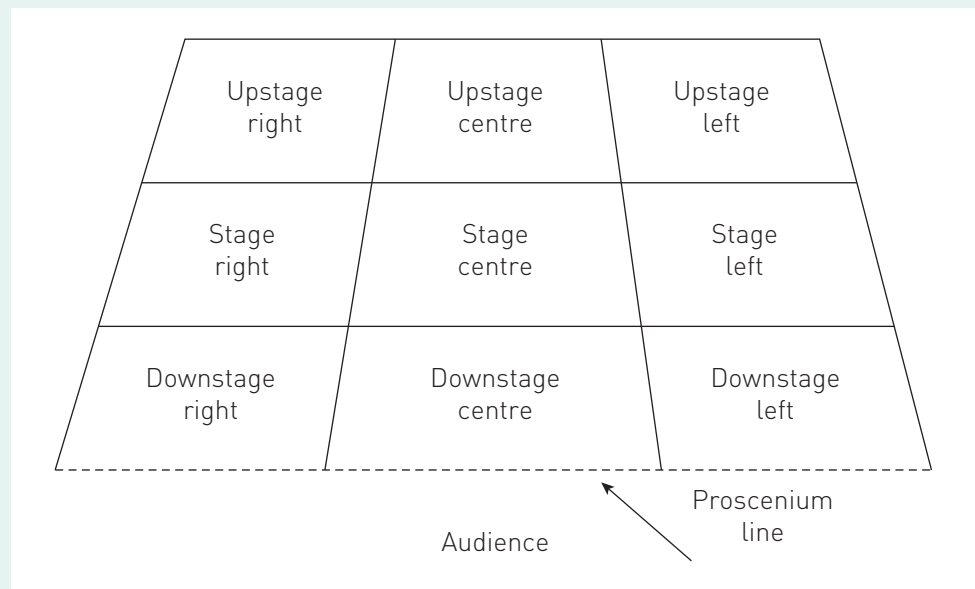
PRESENTATION PREPARATION

The following activities will help you to prepare for your presentation. Use these exercises to develop your creativity in coming up with ideas for situations and in using your skills of voice, body and staging to communicate ideas.

1 The stage spaces game

This game is designed to help you learn the theatre terminology used to make the direction of actors efficient. It is much better and clearer to communicate if you are specific in your directions to each other about where to stand or move to in the stage space. You will also use this terminology in your writing about class work.

The standard stage space is divided into a grid of nine areas, as shown in the diagram below. It is important to remember that this code for direction is always from the actor's point of view as they are the ones being asked to move or stand in certain areas of the stage space.



In this game, a small group of about five students begin standing centre stage. The teacher or another student randomly calls out different areas of the stage space; for example, 'upstage left!'. The group must run to the stage space called and the last person to arrive is then eliminated. The game continues until only one person is left. The game repeats with a new group of players.

2 Directing to create tableaux

In groups of four, devise three of your own tableaux. Use the terminology of the stage space to direct each other into positions on the tableau. Each pose should show four characters in a particular situation. Show your tableaux to the class and see if they can interpret the characters and situations you are trying to communicate.

Performance preparation

Look at the following images. The first is *Australian Beach Pattern* by painter Charles Meere, and the second is *The New Bathers, 2013* by Australian photographer Anne Zahalka. Zahalka's photograph is an adaptation of the work by Charles Meere.



AGNSW. © Charles Meere Estate. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016, Sydney

Australian Beach Pattern by Charles Meere



© Anne Zahalka/Arc One Gallery Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

The New Bathers, 2013 © Anne Zahalka/Arc One Gallery. Licenced by Viscopy, 2016

With your group, look at the images and answer the following questions:

- 1 Who are the characters in each image and what is the situation?
- 2 What do you think is the point of focus in each image and why is your attention drawn to this?
- 3 What might the focus of the photo be in terms of what the image is capturing of Australian life?
- 4 How might you use this image to create your own stage frozen images?

Performance checklist

You and your teacher will evaluate your work individually using a list of criteria. These criteria relate to your achievement in this task. Some criteria will relate to the achievement of the group. The criteria are listed on the evaluation sheet at the end of this chapter and will be used to evaluate your ability to:

- create no more than eight effective tableaux, including powerful use of space and levels
- incorporate movement and mime to effectively communicate character and/or object
- incorporate rhythm and repetition in voice and/or movement for effect
- integrate movement and vocal sound to portray objects and their qualities
- work effectively as part of an ensemble
- select, modify and link aspects of your drama into a coherent and polished performance.



Effective tableaux create visually interesting stage images with a strong point of focus for the audience.

Shutterstock.com/Igor Bulgarin

Performance task: images of Australia

Student Teacher

Group names

By completing this task you should be able to:

- explore and identify the expressive potential of the body and voice to create role and character
- use your skills as a director to manipulate space, spatial arrangements, gesture, contrast and movement to communicate situation and create a point of focus for the dramatic action
- respond by thinking critically about performance work using questions to build understanding and communicate your thinking to others.

Key learning areas	Level of achievement			
	Beginning	Consolidating	Mastering	Excelling
<p>Creating, making and presenting ideas using skills, knowledge, techniques and processes</p> <p>Have you prepared for your performance by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorporating in your performance your ideas about life in Australia? • including resources from your own research? • recording all planning, rehearsals and decisions in writing? • completing critical thinking questions as required? <p>Have you selected and included the skills of voice and movement by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effectively communicating character and/or object through the use of body language, movement and mime? • incorporating voice to suit character and to create mood? • effectively incorporating rhythm and repetition in voice and/or movement? <p>Have you planned, selected and modified your presentation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considering the available space and how it can be used to suit your purpose? • using direction to help arrange actors in the stage space to represent a situation with a clear point of focus? 				
<p>Responding</p> <p>Have you used your critical thinking and communication skills to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effectively reflect on the development, rehearsal and shaping of performance work? • think deeply about the use of voice and movement in your responses to questions? • share ideas and perspectives on class workshops to show a developing understanding of the use of voice and movement? • describe and explain the use of the stage space in a clear and succinct manner? 				

Comments

