

Introduction

The aim of this scheme of work is to allow the students to explore Physical Theatre and Mask Work with a particular focus on Trestle masks – although this can be adapted to suit any masks. The aim of the scheme is:

- ▶ To explore the use of the body in Physical Theatre
- ▶ To use the body to express emotions, stories and characters rather than the verbal work
- ▶ To encourage students to be more expressive with bodies and space when performing on the stage
- ▶ To understand the rules of mask work and experiment with getting them right
- ▶ To explore how to use a mask effectively in a piece of theatre
- ▶ To use narration to tell a story and communicate a message clearly to an audience.

The scheme explores key Physical Theatre skills such as the Seven States of Tension, centring, mime and mask work. It can be used with KS3 but could also be effective with KS4 students at the beginning of their GCSE course. The stimuli can be changed for anything that you deem appropriate for your students. Finally, the scheme of work utilises narration which can be used to communicate a story using Physical Theatre and Mask Work effectively.

Lesson 1: Demonstrate an understanding of the Seven States of Tension through experimentation

Success criteria

- ▶ Plan and structure a scene that makes use of the Seven States of Tension
- ▶ Work confidently in groups using a range of drama techniques to explore Physical Theatre
- ▶ Comment on how intended effects have been achieved, e.g. the Seven States of Tension.

Starter

In groups of 4/5, the class are asked to make the following objects using only their bodies. Once made these are shown to the class.

- ▶ Washing machine
- ▶ Bowl of jelly
- ▶ Spider
- ▶ Snooker table
- ▶ Cuckoo clock

The class then share their ideas of what they think Physical Theatre is and come up with a definition.

Main content

Using this knowledge of Physical Theatre, the class work through the Seven States of Tension. They recognise how the tension in their body is increasing with each new state. Ask the class to walk around the room in silence, using breath, sighs and movement to communicate the state of tension – allow time for each state to be experimented with.

- ▶ Californian: The body is so relaxed they can hardly stand up straight
- ▶ Neutral: They are a face in the crowd, no one recognises them
- ▶ Gorgeous: They are the most gorgeous person on the planet and they know it
- ▶ Fish: They have the memory of a fish; go to do something and forget

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The correct definition is written on the board: 'Actors using bodies to express objects, set and emotions.'

- ▶ Birthday: It's your birthday and you have the present you have always wanted
- ▶ Bus Stop: You can see the bus and if you don't make it you will be in trouble
- ▶ Catatonic: You are faced with your worst fear and you are terrified.

Game: Teacher says random 'states' and the students recreate these – this is to help enhance understanding.

Class discussion: How could the Seven States of Tension be useful in Physical Theatre, refer back to the opening exercise.

Extension task: In pairs, students choose two different states of tension and use this to create a character – e.g. Bus-stop – the character may be a really nervous person who is full of nervous-energy and can't sit still. They then act out the scene 'The Waiting Room' for a job interview.

Performances and evaluation of work if time allows, use lighting if possible.

Plenary

The class discuss how their bodies changed during each state and what that did to their physical work. They discuss why this is important in physical work, e.g. when they are supporting someone.

Lesson 2: Experiment with and demonstrate an understanding of centring

Success criteria

- ▶ Use the centring exercise to inspire and create a character, with control over movement and voice
- ▶ Experiment with movement, to create and show a character in a mimed performance
- ▶ Comment on how intended effects have been achieved, e.g. the use of centring.

Starter

Begin with a practical recap on the Seven States of Tension – walking around as each tension, considering physicality of a character; followed by a teacher-led discussion of how this exercise was used in the previous lesson.

Introduce the technique of centring and explain how it links with the work of commedia dell'arte – in this style of theatre every character leads from certain parts of the body. Centring is when an actor uses a part of their body as a lead which suggests a type of character; emphasise that this is being led by, not being pulled by.

The teacher demonstrates leading with their nose and the class come up with the type of character this suggests – this may be someone who is stuck up.

Centring

When an actor uses a part of their body as a lead which suggests a type of character.

Main content

Class walk around the room individually in the space creating characters with centres suggested by the teacher:

- ▶ Leading from big toes
- ▶ Leading from belly
- ▶ Leading from forehead
- ▶ Leading from knees
- ▶ Leading from chest

Introduce mime (a performance with no speech) to the class. Give a demonstration of what mime is – mime buying sweets from the shop; highlight the fact that as the actor you did not move your mouth, the communication was all through movement. Discuss the importance of clear mime work and working towards the audience.

In pairs, using the centres as inspiration to create a character, students create a mime sequence entitled 'The Clothes Shop'. Students can use the following structure to help guide them if they need it.

- ▶ A owns a clothes shop and is busy tidying up at the end of the day
- ▶ B enters and sorts through clothes, messing up A's displays
- ▶ A tries to help B, however B is happy to look through the clothes by herself
- ▶ A waits at the till but B decides not to buy anything
- ▶ B leaves but walks into the door on her way out.
- ▶ A laughs at B as she walks away.

Performance and evaluation: Some of the pieces are shown and the class give feedback regarding the clarity of their mime work and the effectiveness of what they have produced.

Plenary

In pairs, create a still image that shows two clear characters interacting with each other.

Lesson 3: Use the skills learnt (Seven States of Tension and centring) to create a living machine

Success criteria

- ▶ Plan and structure a mechanical machine that makes use of a range of physical techniques to explore how the body can be as expressive as vocal work when producing a piece of theatre
- ▶ Comment on how intended effects have been achieved, e.g. the use of mime, sound and eyes.

Starter

Physical warm-up to a piece of music; the aim of the exercise is to encourage the class to be more expressive with their bodies.

Discuss thought showering and first reactions to a stimulus. The class listen to a piece of music (see example opposite) and discuss the images that came into their minds. The repetitive tone is highlighted and the mechanical feel is discussed.

Main content

In groups of 5 students are to produce a short movement sequence to the piece of music which shows a mechanical machine. Brainstorm as a class the different sorts of machines they could create. As they rehearse the music is played for them; remind students of the states of tension and centring; how can these exercises be used for this work?

- ▶ **Mid-point:** Discuss the importance of precision and detail and introduce the power that eyes and sound can have within a piece like this.
- ▶ **Extension task:** Groups try to add a context to the scene, for example one character comes in, starts the machine and then becomes it.
- ▶ **Performance and evaluation** of work created and feedback on the work they thought was the most effective and why.
- ▶ Allow time to perform at least two of the pieces, have the class compare the different interpretations of the pieces of theatre.

Plenary

The focus and power of the use of their eyes is highlighted through examples of work they have shown.

Homework

Research 'The Bombing of Guernica' and come to next lesson with at least 5 facts written down in your own words.

Lesson 4: Work as a class to create a scene about Guernica using Physical Theatre

Success criteria

- ▶ Work confidently as a class using a range of drama techniques to explore 'The Bombing of Guernica' and devise a piece of Drama which captures the event
- ▶ Comment on how intended effects have been achieved, e.g. the use of mime, sound and eyes.

Starter

Using the opening of Adagio for Strings (see link opposite). The class write their name, first with just their finger then through the teacher's guidance their whole body – this will warm them up and develop their focus for the work ahead.

Main content**The Guernica image**

The Guernica image by Pablo Picasso is shown and the class discuss the words that come to mind as they look at it. Go round the circle, each student states one of their facts from their homework.

They then take one of the human images and create a still image of it in the drama space. This is to be remembered as their final Guernica image.

Physical Theatre

Using the actors' bodies and voice to create objects and set.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bg0FQCTFCml>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izQsgEOL450>

The Village

The class then discuss what jobs the people in the village might have done. Remind them that Guernica was a normal village in which people lived normal life, they were not soldiers and were not part of the war. Students should give suggestions of the different types of jobs and things that people in the village might be doing (farmers, bakers, school children, children playing, market sellers, etc). Individually students come up with a three-movement sequence to show their job.

They act this sequence out to the music used in the Starter, and they keep repeating these movements – rehearse until students feel confident with what they are doing. This is a whole class performance, so the teacher needs to position the students so that they create a whole village.

The bombing

The music is listened to beyond the opening music and the teacher describes the plane coming overhead, people waving at the planes in a friendly way before they see the plane's doors open and finally the dropping of the bombs and the fear the people feel – this should happen as the music changes. The class close their eyes and visualise this. The teacher then asks them to act this out and when instructed they are to get into their final Guernica image. This is then run through.

A rehearsal is then done putting the village and the bombing together as a whole class, then followed by a final performance (time permitting).

Plenary

Students share their ideas of how they felt as the music changed and as they acted it out with the rest of the class.

Lesson 5: Rules of mask work

Success criteria

- ▶ Demonstrate the ability to use the mask rules
- ▶ Organise an interesting scene when creating a performance
- ▶ Evaluate the effectiveness of using masks in a scene
- ▶ Create a scene in which the mask is central to the play.

Starter

Warm-up focusing on exaggerated gestures. Explain and demonstrate what a gesture is. Have students create exaggerated gestures for the following characters:

- ▶ Greedy
- ▶ Nervous
- ▶ Confident.

Discussion: What gestures did they use to communicate these characters? Were they stereotypical?

Main content**Mask Rules**

Introduce Mask Rules through demonstration; there are videos on YouTube linked to Trestle that can help develop your skills with these masks if you do not have much experience in using them. These can also be good as a starter to show students if they struggle to understand.

- ▶ Masks must always face the audience – a mask is a character; we do not want to break the illusion by seeing the side of the mask.
- ▶ Never break the line between the mask and the audience – there is an imaginary line between the mask and the audience, e.g. do not put hand in front of mask.
- ▶ If wearing a full-face mask, don't talk.
- ▶ Gestures and movements must be exaggerated; audience can't see your facial expressions therefore your emotions and feeling must be shown through exaggerated body language.
- ▶ Never touch the mask – it breaks the illusion.

Ask for a volunteer; the student wearing a mask is to mime going to sleep. Recap on mime from previous lessons. Discuss any mistakes that were made with reference to the rules.

Repeat exercise with another volunteer; encourage them to try to focus on the rules.

Introduce Trestle masks – these masks all have an expression and therefore a

character. Talk about the thought that should go in to choosing a Trestle mask. You should never choose a mask blindly; always think of the character you will be playing.

Split the class into two: one half will be the audience, the other half the actors. The scene is 'waking up'; they must do this in the character of their mask and they must not stop acting until they are told to do so.

The audience give feedback on how well the actors stuck to the rules.

The other half now repeat the same exercise and the audience give feedback.

Mask work in a scene

Ask for a volunteer and act out a scene – Boss and Employee. Boss (student) has called Employee (teacher) into their office; employee has done something wrong. Improvise the scene (although it may be worth discussing it with the volunteer first).

Follow this with class discussion about performance. Ask: what do masks add to a performance?

In groups of 3, create a short improvisation, based on your choice of masks (each group will only be able to have one masked student so they need to decide on what mask they want and who will wear it). Each group is given a prop and this item must be central to the scene. Props may include things such as a briefcase, top hat or book.

Perform and discuss a number of scenes – did the masks add to the story? How and why? Did the students follow the rules for mask work?

Plenary

Class recap on the list of rules when using a mask.

Lessons 6 - 7: Assessment 1 - 2

Success criteria

- ▶ Plan and structure the story of Hansel and Gretel making use of a range of techniques and forms to express ideas, e.g. narration in story theatre, mask work, and mime in Physical Theatre
- ▶ Establish a character, with control over movement and voice
- ▶ Reflect on and evaluate their own work, suggest improvements and use correct basic theatre terminology.

Starter

Discuss all that has been learnt this term: the Seven States of Tension, centring, mime, Physical Theatre and Trestle masks. What skills do they feel were the most effective? Why?

Warm-up

Mill, Grab and Tab; tab is using Physical Theatre to show different objects/emotions of teacher's choice. Ideas might include: a house, sweets, anger, innocence, an oven, a chair.

Main content

Introduce the assessment for this module: The students will use the skills they have learnt this term to create the story of Hansel and Gretel.

Groups will create the story in stages, led by the teacher. Remind the students that the focus on this is to use the Physical Theatre skills that they have learnt this year. They need to create all aspects of the story and set using their bodies and should think about how the Seven States of Tension and centring can be used to enhance the work.

A version of the story of Hansel and Gretel

- ▶ Hansel and Gretel are walking through a forest; they get lost.
- ▶ Hansel and Gretel come across a gingerbread house; they begin to eat it. A door in the house opens and an old lady (a witch) comes out. She invites them in.
- ▶ Hansel and Gretel go into the house, Hansel is locked in a cage and fed lots of food, while Gretel is forced to clean.
- ▶ The witch goes out and Gretel breaks Hansel out of the cage, as they are about to escape the witch comes back. They hide.
- ▶ While the witch searches for Hansel and Gretel she somehow ends up in the oven – end the play in your own way. (It might be that the witch is actually good and the children are evil and they are trying to communicate the message that one should never judge a book by its cover.)

Mill – walk around the room in silence;
Grab – grab however many people the teacher says;
Tab – still image using bodies.

Student-led rehearsal time, focusing on how to transition from one scene to the next in an effective and smooth way. Remind them that they need to consider the Seven States of Tension and centring and their pieces must be no longer than 2 minutes.

Plenary

Groups share one achievement they have made in this lesson and one thing they need to do to improve.

Create 3 still images to capture the beginning/middle/end of their Hansel and Gretel story.

Lesson 8: Narration and masks

Success criteria

- ▶ Explore the story of Hansel and Gretel through the use of narration
- ▶ Experiment with the three different types of narration, ensuring you have evaluated each
- ▶ Demonstrate the ability to use mask work to enhance a piece of theatre.

Starter

Students have 10 minutes to rehearse the story that they have developed so far.

Main content

Ask students to recap the main rules of using a mask in their groups. Feed back rules to the class (teacher finalising the rules on the board).

Introduce the skill of *Narration* to students – what is it? Explain the three different types of narration that can be used and provide demonstrations with the help of students.

- ▶ Narration with mime – an external character narrates the story and the actors act it out without using speech
- ▶ Narration in and out of speech – an external character narrates the story but the characters deliver dialogue at appropriate times, normally indicated by the narrator
- ▶ Narrator as actor – one of the characters narrates the story throughout from their point of view.

Class discussion of how narration can be used effectively when linked with a Trestle mask.

In groups of three or four choose an appropriate Trestle mask to bring the idea they have decided to explore alive. They will need to decide which character wears the mask: will it be the Witch, Hansel or Gretel? They should be able to justify their choice.

Groups are to experiment with the three different types of Narration, giving the different group members the chance to be the narrator. This exercise should be teacher led, giving the group five minutes per narration type. The aim is to develop their piece using narration to further enhance their story and communicate their message to the audience.

Groups discuss and evaluate the Narration techniques used, they must decide on one narration idea from the three and develop their play using it in at least two scenes.

Students use the remainder of the lesson to rehearse with narration and also their chosen masks. Recap on the mask rules to ensure that they are following them correctly:

- ▶ Masks must always face the audience
- ▶ Never break the line between the mask and the audience
- ▶ If wearing a full-face mask don't talk
- ▶ Gestures and movements must be exaggerated
- ▶ Never touch the mask.

Plenary

Create a still image that captures your message from your version of Hansel and Gretel.

Production meeting

In the final rehearsal session students are asked to hold a production meeting. In this meeting they must discuss the following:

- ▶ Lighting
- ▶ Costume

Stretch and challenge

Pit two natural class leaders against each other in a debate where the reward is kingship for an hour and losing means serfdom and humiliation. They must win votes by any means.

- ▶ Set/props
- ▶ Music.

Homework

Students should bring in props/costume that represent character/theme, if appropriate for their piece.

Lesson 9: Performance

Success criteria

- ▶ Select and operate a range of simple theatre technologies to create the right space for their drama and to enhance their work
- ▶ Experiment with their voices and movement, to create or present different characters in performance
- ▶ Demonstrate an awareness of some theatre traditions from different times and places, e.g. Physical Theatre
- ▶ Comment on how intended effects have been achieved, e.g. the use of sound effects.

Starter

Warm-up - physical; walking in the space focusing on centring. Students should lead by the following body parts: nose, belly, shoulders, feet and hands. Spotlight a few of the students as they do this; what characters stand out?

Main content

Whole class in starting positions – teacher leads one final run through.

Performance and evaluation of work. After each performance, ask each actor to specify what they personally did well and what they could improve. Then pick members of the audience to comment on how they achieved effects on stage. Ensure everyone has the opportunity to make a comment.

Plenary

Class discussion

- ▶ Can Physical Theatre be used effectively in theatre? How?
- ▶ Do masks add to a performance? How?