



## Using this transition guide

This transition guide has been created to be a flexible tool for teachers and students.

It can be used as a series of activities making a scheme of work in Year 11 to assess whether students would be able to cope with the demands of an A Level or AS in Drama and Theatre.

The activities suggested can also be used and adapted to make a taster lesson to see if students would like to study the subject at a higher level.

The check point tasks baseline assessment criteria can also be used by teachers to create their own tasks using their own resources, scripts and stimuli available in their centre.

Mapping KS4 to KS5

Page 3

Checkpoint tasks

Page 5

Teaching activities

Page 6



## Key Stage 4 Content

In GCSE (9-1) Drama students are required to do the following:

- Study two performance texts, one explored in full and key extracts explored from a second contrasting text.
- Participate in a minimum of two performances, one devised and one text based.
- Researching, working collaboratively and refining work through rehearsal to create their own original performances
- Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of Drama including: genre, structure, character, form and style, dialogue and stage directions.
- Use subject specific terminology accurately.
- Understand key differences between the roles of performer, designer and director.



## Key Stage 5 Content

### AS Drama and Theatre

There are two components in the new specification.

- Students complete a text based performance (Teacher assessed)
- Students can take these roles for practical work assessment: Performer, Lighting Designer, Sound Designer, Set Designer, and Costume Designer.
- There are separate performance and design routes through the qualification.
- There will be a written exam worth 40% of the qualification.
- Students study three texts; one for performance and two for the exam.
- Students also study one practitioner and analyse a live theatre performance.

### A Level Drama and Theatre

- There are four components in the new specification.
- Students complete one devising project and one text based project.
- Students can take these roles for practical work assessment: Performer, Lighting Designer, Sound Designer, Set Designer, and Costume Designer.
- There are separate performance and design routes through the qualification.
- There are two written exams worth 20% each, totalling 40% of the qualification.

## Comment

At GCSE level, students will have been given a clear grounding in practical and theoretical aspects of Drama and Theatre. They will have a practical understanding of performance texts as well as experience in devising. They should have gained an understanding of the roles of the actor, designer and director.

The knowledge and confidence gained at GCSE may inspire students to consider taking A Level Drama and Theatre as an option at KS5. It is, therefore, important that learners are made aware of the demands of pursuing this A Level.

It is a common student misconception that this A Level is a straightforward continuation of GCSE Drama. There is of course, a strong continuity to be found in studying at A Level as a continuation from GCSE. However, at A Level there is a considerably more demanding level of challenge and commitment, coupled with increased academic rigour and higher standards of performance. Learners will need to be willing and able to learn independently and take responsibility for their own learning.

It might be useful to advise students about the extra challenges that come with studying an A Level performance text compared to GCSE performance texts. Students will have been guided by teacher-led activities at GCSE, whereas at A Level, although the teacher is the specialist facilitator, students will be encouraged to take more active learning roles, especially when exploring performance and devising work.

Students taking the design route must be strong team players. They need to be able to take an active and focused role in all aspects of group work/ discussion and be reliable and trustworthy. Being self-motivated with good time management is also important.

Students also need to be able to construct logical arguments when writing essays and to respond to a wide range of performance texts with interest and imagination. They need to have a capacity for novel thought – offering their own ideas of interpretation to a text/character/devised piece without merely relying on the ideas of their classmates.

Strong students will be imaginative and creative with the ability to respond positively to all aspects of feedback and evaluation. They will be able to work with a positive attitude, despite apparent setbacks.

The students that will be most successful in A Level Drama and Theatre will have a strong interest in Theatre (including beyond the curriculum and/or outside of school) and be keen and fully motivated to learn more about Drama and Theatre as an art form. They will also have a strong interest in watching a wide range of live theatre performances, including a diverse selection of genres and styles of live performance.

It is also vital to emphasise the importance of independent learning when studying at A Level, and the A Level Drama and Theatre course is no exception. Ideally, students will be well motivated to pursue their studies beyond the Drama Studio by wider reading, researching into practitioners, playwrights, technical theatre, different genres/styles of theatre, theatre history and more. They will also be keen to follow up learning beyond lessons by exploring ideas further and independently and then bring that learning and knowledge to future lessons.

This qualification can be a truly fulfilling experience for most students. They will be inspired and respond with imagination and delight to their new learning experiences at A Level. However, some students may lack the necessary range of skills and confidence that have the scope to be developed at A Level, especially performance skills and/or the ability to contribute imaginative ideas and contribute effectively to all aspects of group work. For these students, such an A Level course can become too challenging to the extent they will end up relying on others, especially when exploring practical processes, especially devising. They could even create problems in terms of group dynamics within the group. Such students need to be carefully advised when selecting this A Level.

**At the start of the A Level course students should be able to:**

- Work with commitment and keep focused on the task in hand
- Have a clear collaborative attitude
- Have a positive and collaborative approach towards devising/exploring ideas
- Contribute actively within group devising processes
- Show evidence of an imaginative response/ideas
- Use a range of skills/techniques/strategies when devising
- Respond to the ideas of others in a positive way
- Use peer assessment as a tool for developing work
- Respond positively to feedback given
- Adapt ideas/skills in response to feedback given
- Try out ideas practically rather than a sit down discussion when devising
- Show a willingness to take risks (emotionally, imaginatively, intellectually and at times, physically) when exploring ideas
- Show the ability to make links to prior learning and apply this in new/creative/relevant ways
- Show objectivity when reviewing/evaluating the devising process.

**Checkpoint task success criteria – Devising Exemplar****Students should be able to:**

- Show a willingness to push themselves vocally and physically
- Express an emotional range through heightened vocal and physical expression
- Show evidence of imaginative approaches and responses within the devising process
- Show a willingness to take risks (emotionally, imaginatively, intellectually and at times, physically) when exploring ideas
- Experiment with practical notions (physical, vocal, visually, lighting, sound)
- Perform with focus, energy and commitment
- Respond positively to feedback/peer assessment and act upon it to develop devised notions further.

## Introduction to activities

### Possible challenge and extension tasks

The activities outlined in the task examples offer suggestions of possible challenge and extension tasks. Students should be aiming to develop their practical skills to emulate a professional standard at A Level and potential to do this should shine through.

# KS4 to KS5 Transition:

## Devising activities

### Overall aims

- To be able to create a range of work using Artaudian techniques.
- To explore a range of creative devising activities.
- To develop imaginative response to a range of stimuli/practical approaches.
- To respond to evaluation processes to develop and refine the work.

### Activity 1

#### Teaching and learning aims

- To introduce the principles of *Theatre of Cruelty* through a series of taster activities.
- To explore sensory awareness.
- To explore heightened vocal and visual dynamics.
- To focus on emotional expression.

#### Lesson outcomes

- To have an understanding of the basic principles of Artaud's theatrical style.
- To explore emotions through physical and vocal expression.
- To be able to start to feel more confident in taking risks with heightened expression.

#### Practical: Introduction to *Theatre of Cruelty* (taster activities)

The teacher can select accordingly from the following:

- Play a game of Blind Man's Bluff to introduce a feeling of risk and tension.
- Introduce a senses activity: The teacher provides a pleasant and unpleasant stimulus for each of the senses: taste, touch, smell, sight, sound; for example Chocolate followed by lemon juice or sandpaper followed by silk. This is more useful if the pupils are blindfolded. Sit the pupils facing outwards in a circle sitting on the floor. Pass round one object at a time. After each stimulus pupils brainstorm what reactions/emotions were created. They can use these lists for the later activities.
- Each pupil stands in a space. Ask them to slowly reach and stretch up high, reaching to the floor, stretching out with both hands to the left and then to the right. Maintain a continuous rhythm. Continue building the level of reaction and tempo throughout the repetitions to bring out a heightened level of expression.
- All pupils walking in the space and on the command "Freeze!"; pupils adopt a heightened physical freeze. Develop this activity by adding vocal expression on the freeze moment. Encourage the pupils to be as strong vocally and physically as possible.
- Develop this by exploring a range of heightened emotions expressed physically and vocally on the freeze command e.g. anger, fear, madness, obsession.
- Walking in the space, pupils greet each other as they pass in the space using sound (no words) and physical reactions to express polite pleasure. The teacher will then signal when the liking turns more intense until it reaches love and finally adoration. Ensure vocal and physical expression becomes heightened.
- Repeat this exercise but focus on dislike through to pure hatred.

### Activity 2

#### Teaching and learning objectives

- To introduce the principles of Artaudian Theatre.
- To explore physical and vocal dynamics through improvised approaches.
- To take emotional and physical risks.
- To use heightened vocal and visual dynamics.
- To work as an ensemble to create a scene.
- To use performance skills, both vocal and physical, to reveal dramatic intentions.

#### Lesson outcomes

- To have an understanding of the principles of Artaud's theatrical style.
- To be able to put imaginative responses into a dramatic realisation.
- To be able to work as an ensemble.

#### Practical: Exploring the principles of *Theatre of Cruelty* (part one)

The following web links might provide useful introductions to Artaud at the start of this activity. It might be useful if pupils have watched these before the first activities.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpvVW6otfyQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZAYe1HMIYU>

<http://interartive.org/2008/10/artaud/>

- Brainstorm a series of themes through word association. The group can use themes that they wish to explore for a devised project. It will be helpful to have a scribe to record the range of responses. Discuss the emotive and symbolic notions of the responses. Again, record responses. e.g. The word 'night' can suggest darkness, fear, silence, loneliness, dreams or the unknown amongst other things.
- In groups, pupils create tableaux to show these qualities in a visual and symbolic manner. Focus on the heightened, non-naturalistic, symbolic and grotesque notions that can be communicated. Avoid specific, naturalistic visual contexts.
- Consider how can these tableaux be developed further: How can lighting and use of sound effects and vocal sounds enhance the work?

### Activity 3

#### **Practical: Exploring the principles of *Theatre of Cruelty* (part two)**

Developing from the above activity, pupils now come up with a list of dramatic contexts that can be explored using the same principles to create a short piece in an Artaudian style. Visual stimuli can be used for example the paintings of Salvador Dali or Fuseli's *The Nightmare*.

- Start by creating a sequence of tableaux that encapsulate the symbolic and grotesque notions to be communicated. Link the sequence through movement, breathing, rhythm, music, sound effects, heightened vocalised emotions and physical expression to the extreme.
- To create language for the piece, consider describing the context of the scene/emotions/symbols as metaphors. Also, focus on describing the senses through language: Touch, smell, sight, sound and taste. Try to express these as metaphors if possible. Avoid naturalistic dialogue where possible.
- Language can now be explored through: in chorus, chanting, echoing, repetition, words used as sounds.
- Consider a range of tempos: from slow motion through to high energy. A range of counterpointing tempos can be very effective.
- Integrate lighting into the piece: Use of colour, gobos, focal points, strobe, creating silhouettes/shadows using a back lit cloth, torches.
- This process may take more than one or two lessons.
- Engage in feedback/peer assessment at stages throughout to focus on development and refining of ideas.
- Perform and evaluate the work. How do these pieces express ideas in a visual and symbolic way? Were these notions successful? What is the experience created for the audience?

### Activity 4

#### Teaching and learning objectives

- To create devised text.
- To create a character through improvised approaches.
- To use heightened vocal and visual dynamics.
- To work as an ensemble to create a scene.
- To use performance skills (vocal and physical) to reveal dramatic intentions.

#### Lesson outcomes

- To create a devised piece exploring memory.
- To be able to put imaginative responses into dramatic realisation.
- To be able to work as an ensemble.

#### Practical: Creating character and language for a devised performance

This activity can be used as a starting point for devising a character or can be used to develop characters that have already been created.

- The pupils select a memory for their character. These memory titles can be adapted to focus on themes that the teacher/pupils wish to explore. Pupils lie on the floor and visualise the memory, creating as vivid visualisation as they can. Focus on sound, heart rate, breathing, emotions as well as visual detail:
  - Childhood memory
  - Aspiration memory
  - Murder memory
  - Bleakness memory
  - Depression memory
  - Madness memory
  - Anger memory
- Then pupils are asked to write down the memory in only five lines. This is a spontaneous writing exercise. Write each sentence/phrase on a new line on the page. All pupils then walk in the space at the same time, whispering their memory out loud over and over again, increasing the energy, tempo, urgency and volume.
- Divide the class into groups. One group at a time stand in a line. Working down the line, one actor says their first phrase, then the second actor etc. Repeat until all five lines have been vocalised.
- Repeat but all lines are said in unison.
- Select one actor's memory lines. The other actors in the groups turn their backs and listen as they improvise the actions being described. Add in breathing sounds and heightened vocal expression to communicate the emotions as described in the memory.
- This same process can now be explored with the other actors' memories in the group. Now the group have a collection of memories with physical action, sound of breathing and vocalised emotions. This can now be further explored, shaped and refined.
- Consider other dynamics: Lines can be said in unison, canon, overlapping, chanting, and echoing of certain words.
- There may be developing physical/vocal motifs which can be explored and refined in the piece.

- Use the experience of the previous activity to inform response.
- Experiment with music, sound effects and lighting, including strobe lighting.
- Perform and Evaluate. What were some of the most effective choices made in the devising process? How could this piece be developed further? What is the experience created for the audience?

### **Challenge and Extension: Extend and deepen the development of written response**

This activity can be developed by the pupils drafting extended monologues from the initial five lines. Follow the same process as described in Activity Three.

*Consider:*

- Onomatopoeic vocal qualities; adding a heightened action for each line
- Acting out silently as a solo piece and/or with ensemble
- Act out with volume coming in/out (directed by workshop leader)
- Having the ensemble copy an actor in the same manner or a contrasting style
- perform silently with heightened actions as a solo piece and/or with ensemble
- repeat with one word only per phrase out loud
- ensemble add further heightened vocalisations/breathing.

*Perform and evaluate:*

- What were some of the most effective choices made in the devising process?
- How could this piece be developed further?
- What is the experience created for the audience?

### Activity 5

#### Teaching and learning objectives

- To explore Artaudian techniques in a solo activity.
- To create a character through imaginative, improvised approaches.
- To use heightened vocal and visual dynamics.
- To work independently.

#### Lesson outcomes

- To be confident in devising, exploring and performing a solo piece.
- To be able to work independently.
- To be able to have developed own imaginative responses using heightened physical and vocal expression.

#### **Practical: Exploring a solo or group piece with a focus on heightened vocal and emotional expression**

*The Scream* by Edvard Munch can be used as a visual stimulus for this activity.

- Each pupils finds their own space, standing up. The teacher recites a scenario whilst the pupils physicalize the scenario on the spot (including running) and focus on their breathing:  
*It is late at night and you've missed the last bus home. You turn down a narrow alley. Keep looking ahead. Don't turn around. You are feeling more and more anxious. Don't look back. There is someone following you. Don't turn around. You're scared now. Don't look back. You begin to run.*
- The teacher asks the pupils to suddenly freeze. Ask the pupils to focus on their emotion(s) and keep the breathing going out loud.
- On a count to ten, the pupils then extend and stretch their posture to show the emotion through the whole body. Find the most extreme level of expression.
- Each pupil then drafts a series of sentences to describe this scenario. They can then explore the integration of their words into the physical scenario. They may decide to perform the story on the spot or start on the spot and then use the space accordingly.
- They do not have to use all the sentences in the final piece. Experiment using key words only from phrases, as well as the range of vocal strategies from previous activities. This can include use of breathing and screams as effects. Ensure the piece builds and progresses in tempo, directing energy towards dynamic physical and vocal expression.
- Consider how music/sound effects may enhance the mood/atmosphere of the piece as well as lighting effects, including colour, gobos and strobe.
- Perform each solo piece and evaluate. How effective are the choices made by each pupil? Have they successfully built up the performance in terms of tempo/pace, energy towards dynamic physical and vocal expression? Assess the experience created for the audience.

### Challenge and Extension: Integrate solo pieces into a small group ensemble piece

- In small groups of two or three learners, students should integrate their solo pieces into an ensemble piece. They need to consider how they will integrate the solo stories in an interesting way, focusing on the visual as well as emotional expression.
  - Consider using the actors in a line using canon/unison or using the space with levels/proxemics.
  - Pupils may act out their story silently whilst others are vocalising theirs.
  - They may physicalize the story of other actors. Think about the use of ensemble breathing.
  - Also: Cutting suddenly from one story to another.
  - Pupils can act at different levels of tempo/expression at the same time.
  - Incorporate use of tableaux as well as ensemble movement.
- Consider:
  - Different volumes for each line; onomatopoeic vocal qualities
  - Acting out with volume levels shifting up and down whilst maintaining heightened physical expression.
  - The ensemble can copy or utter the lines in a different manner as one pupil enacts their lines/actions.
  - The ensemble can repeat key phrases out loud.
  - The ensemble adds vocalisations and breathing.



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