

12

NON-REALISTIC THEATRE: VISIONS, DREAMS AND SYMBOLS

WHY STUDY NON-REALISTIC THEATRE?

Non-realistic theatre covers a variety of early 20th century styles, including expressionism, symbolism, absurdism and epic theatre. The influence of non-realistic theatre can be found in performance work today. By studying non-realistic theatre, you will learn and acquire performance skills and theatrical techniques to help you create abstract, strange, symbolic and dreamlike performance works.

This chapter is divided into the following units:

- 12.1 An overview of non-realistic theatre
- 12.2 Dreams and the subconscious
- 12.3 Expressionist theatre
- 12.4 Performance task: non-realistic theatre

OUTCOMES

In this chapter you will:

- explore the influences that encouraged the development of non-realistic theatre
- select and incorporate stylised movement and voice in non-realistic performance work
- explore the origins, purpose and conventions of expressionist theatre
- devise and present a non-realistic theatre performance.





12.1 An overview of non-realistic theatre

MODERNISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF NON-REALISTIC THEATRE

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, changes in industry, society and thinking led to artists questioning accepted traditional views associated with religion, class, daily life and the arts. This 'modern view' led to experimentation. In painting, artists challenged ideas about perspective. In literature, ideas about narrative were questioned, with some writers experimenting with stream-of-consciousness writing. Theatre also responded to these changes by creating theatre that encouraged freedom of expression and experimentation with dramatic structure, narrative, acting style and staging design.

You have already explored one form of non-realistic theatre, epic theatre (see chapter 10), and how this dramatic form changed the way stories were told on the stage and the influence this has had on theatre today.

There were many attempts to define these emerging dramatic forms including symbolism, expressionism and surrealism, but theorists have found it easier to refer to these dramatic forms with the umbrella term 'non-realistic theatre'. These new and experimental forms developed in reaction to the style of realism (see chapter 5, p. 115). Non-realistic theatre is not confined to re-creating life on stage—it also seeks to explore the more elusive and intangible qualities of human existence. As well as heightened use of movement and voice, non-realistic theatre experiments with non-realistic sets, sound effects and coloured lighting to create effect.

Some of the major developments of non-realistic theatre are listed below:

- During the 1890s, artists, poets and theatre practitioners reacted against realism and developed a style known as symbolism. Belgian playwright Maurice Maeterlinck wrote plays that included the use of non-realistic characters, sounds interspersed with long static silences, and dreamlike colour combinations of lighting.
- In 1896, Alfred Jarry wrote *Ubu Roi*, a highly comic and physical play that explores the abuse of power. The production of this play caused great scandal for its unconventional performance style and use of vulgarity.
- The development of the study of psychology, and an increasing interest in the power of dreams and the subconscious, inspired artists, musicians, poets and theatre practitioners to explore human experience beyond day-to-day living.
- Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold (a collaborator with Constantin Stanislavski) broke from the Moscow Art Theatre to create a non-realistic acting style known as biomechanic acting. This style was highly theatrical and incorporated abstract design and innovative use of the performance space.
- In 1911, Swedish playwright August Strindberg wrote *A Dream Play*, which incorporated memory, fantasy, absurdity and improvisation.
- Scenic designers, lighting designers and musicians designed sets, lighting and music to help create fantasy worlds.
- Increased use of machines in the workplace and the introduction of automated machinery were seen as a threat to the human spirit. Artists in Germany reacted to this change in society with a movement known as expressionism.
- Antonin Artaud developed the Theatre of Cruelty between 1926 and 1933. Theatre of Cruelty is an often-misunderstood term for performance work that



HINT

Although Stanislavski is remembered for his contribution to the development of realism, he also experimented with non-realistic forms of theatre later in his career.

abolished traditional actor–audience boundaries. Artaud was greatly influenced by the ritualistic and disciplined dance–drama work of Cambodia and Bali. Artaud promoted a theatre of the senses. The audience was to be shocked and moved by images of great power and beauty.

- In the late 1940s, the impact of two World Wars and increasing questioning about the philosophy of human existence encouraged the development of absurdism. Samuel Beckett’s absurdist play *Waiting for Godot* caused outrage when it was first performed in 1953.



HINT

Changes in theatre at the turn of the century closely mirrored changes in visual arts, music and literature.

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Research one of the following non-realistic theatre practitioners: Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski, Robert Wilson or Edward Gordon Craig.
- 2 Make point-form notes on the distinctive conventions of their performance styles. Present your findings to the class.



Theatre Links – Symbolism
Robert Wilson – Avant-garde Theatre Director

12.2 Dreams and the subconscious

DREAMS AND INTERPRETATION

In this unit you will undertake exercises that help create theatrical representations of dreams and the subconscious. There are many theories regarding dreams and the subconscious. Some theorists have suggested that dreams are an expression of our subconscious and are a process of ‘sorting out’ our issues and concerns. Others believe that dreams hold symbolic significance and that we need to interpret our dreams to understand their meaning. Another group of theorists believe that dreams are merely erratic electrical activity in the brain that triggers disconnected and unrelated memories and images as we sleep. These theorists maintain that dreams have no particular meaning.

Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud suggested that our concerns and anxieties come from a conflict between our conscious and the needs of the subconscious. Freudian psychologists believe that the subconscious is connected to our primitive and instinctive needs and urges. It is believed our conscious mind is often unaware of the influence of the subconscious.

These discoveries and theories influenced the art world and the ways in which characters and situations were expressed in theatre. Writers and directors played with characters, time and space, and created non-realistic stories that were often disjointed and disconnected.

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

Research artworks from the surrealist painters or expressionist painters. Look for images that you feel express dreams and the subconscious. Find one painting to show to the class. Some artists from this period are Paul Klee, Salvador Dali and Edvard Munch.

DREAMS AND THE SUBCONSCIOUS

1 Slow motion, high speed and exaggeration

Manipulating movement is a very effective way to create non-realistic performance work.

Choose one of the activities below:

- eating large quantities of very soft and sticky toffee
- being trapped in a room with a venomous spider
- leaving the premiere of a movie you star in, to meet hundreds of your fans.

You will perform the chosen activity and explore the use of the following movement styles:

- **Slow motion** – This requires the performer to give the impression that movement has been slowed to a minimum. The performer still needs to communicate effort and reactions, for example, but all in slow motion. Strong discipline and control are required for this exercise. Each time your teacher gives the signal, halve the speed at which you perform the activity until you have reached slow motion. Do not exaggerate the movements—only slow them down.
- **High speed** – Begin performing the chosen activity at normal speed. Each time your teacher gives the signal, double the speed at which you complete the activity until you reach high speed.
- **Exaggeration** – This requires the performer to amplify the size of their movements. Repeat the chosen activity. Begin with normal movements. On a signal from your teacher, exaggerate your movements slightly. On each subsequent signal, continue to enlarge your movements until they take on giant proportions. Do not increase the pace of your actions as you exaggerate the movements.

2 Transformation

You will need coloured pieces of fabric for this exercise. Performers can use transformation as an effective technique in non-realistic performance. When you are practising this exercise, it is important to complete the transformations slowly. You can complete 'snap' transformations when you have gained confidence in this technique.

Try the following exercises in groups of four:

- Choose a piece of fabric. Each person in the group must take a turn using the fabric as an object. The first person turns the fabric into an object, which is then passed to the second person. They transform the object that has been passed to them into a new object.
- Choose a piece of fabric and decide on three objects. The group will use their bodies and the fabric to create these objects. Examples include a piece of furniture, a musical instrument and an antique clock. On a signal from your teacher, the whole group becomes the first object. On the next signal, the group transforms into the next object, and so on.

3 Sounds and language

Sounds and language in dreamlike performances are heightened and stylised to add to the symbolism and atmosphere. The use of percussion instruments,



CHALLENGE

Explore different combinations of high speed, slow motion and exaggerated movement in situations you devise.





recorded sound effects, atmospheric music, vocal sounds and stylised language adds to the non-realistic quality of the performance.

Divide into small groups and use the following extract from *A Dream Play* by August Strindberg to create a short movement and sound presentation. Be creative in the way you use movement and deliver the dialogue. Consider the use of multiple voices, repetition, long pauses, volume and pace to add impact to your presentation. Also consider how you may convey the contrast of fire and water in your performance work. If possible, include the use of percussion to enhance your performance work.

***A Dream Play* BY AUGUST STRINDBERG**

SCENE 3

It is we, we, the waves,
that rock the winds
to rest!

Green cradles, we the waves.

We are wet and salt;
we are like flames of fire,
we are wet flames.

Quenching, burning,
washing, bathing,
breeding, bearing.

We, we the waves
that rock the winds
to sleep!

4 Recreating aspects of dreams

Find a space in the room in which to work on your own. Explore how you may use your body in performance to represent the following common dream states:

- running but not getting anywhere
- screaming but not being heard
- floating
- falling but not hitting the ground.



CHALLENGE

The class divides into groups of five. Each group presents two of the listed dream states to the class.



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1** Describe how you incorporated the techniques you learnt in the exercises into your interpretation of the extract *A Dream Play*.
- 2** What choices did your group make when deciding how to deliver the lines? Did you incorporate any special techniques for effect? Why?
- 3** Comment on the use of movement by two different groups to represent dream states. Discuss how their use of movement helped to make their presentation successful.

EXERCISE

RECALLING AND INTERPRETING DREAMS

Divide into pairs or small groups. Each person is to share a memorable dream they can recall. Although you can ask each other questions about your dreams, allow the person time to tell their dream fully before you ask questions. When you tell your dream, make sure you include details that describe the characters, time and place, focus, tension, atmosphere and mood.

Once each person has shared their dream, use the elements of drama table in the following 'collaborate and think critically' task to help identify certain aspects of your dream. You are to make suggestions for how you may represent these aspects of your dream in a performance.

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

An example of a dream has been provided in the table below. Use the table as a guide to help identify how the elements of drama will work together to communicate your own dream.

SELECTED ELEMENT OF DRAMA	DESCRIPTION	HOW DO I SHOW THIS IN PERFORMANCE?
Characters and situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a teenage boy• he is surfing to escape his problems• later in the play he attempts to escape a tsunami	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the boy awakes on the beach and does not know where he is• the only actual prop is a surfboard• other performers represent the ocean, the beach and other objects in the play
Tension	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• bizarre• hint of danger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• as the boy attempts to surf, he confronts things from his life more frequently than he is trying to forget• create tension and anticipation with vocal sound and rhythm of actors' movements
Focus to frame the action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• how can we accept messages from our subconscious?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• as the play progresses, the boy learns to face his fears as the messages cannot be avoided
Time and place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a deserted and alien beach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• use lengths of fabric to create waves/water• use boxes to create cliffs and rocks
Language and movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• need to communicate the issues the boy is facing• need to communicate, through dialogue, information about his recent past	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the performers transform from waves and trees on the beach into aspects of the boy's subconscious that he tries to ignore
Symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the tsunami = facing your worst fears• lighthouse = wisdom• colours: red (danger), black (fear), yellow (success)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• use red lights as the tsunami approaches• people under a cloth, beneath chairs, represent fears• the surfboard is the boy's capacity to make the right choices

EXERCISE

DREAMLIKE PERFORMANCE

Divide into groups. Each person will need to share the dream that they recalled in the previous exercise. Choose one group member's dream to present in performance. As a group, document the breakdown of the aspects of the dream and how you will realise these in performance.

Performing dreams opens exciting possibilities for physical work. Include balances, carrying and lifts into your work if you can. Include the use of sound, lighting (if possible) and material, for example, to heighten the dreamlike quality of your performance. Consider how you can manipulate voice and movement to add to the non-realistic effect.



HINT

If you are attempting any physical work, make sure you first complete a physical warm-up. Check with your teacher that you are completing any heavy lifting or physical work safely.

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 How have the exercises in this unit helped you to make decisions about the ways in which you can present dreams in performance?
- 2 Describe one other group's presentation. In your description, highlight one aspect of the performance you felt was effective and explain how the group made the moment effective.
- 3 Based on your knowledge, research and experience, discuss why you feel non-realistic theatre is a valuable style of performance work.

12.3 Expressionist theatre

TRANSFORMING REALITY

Expressionism is an art movement that originated in Germany in the early 1900s. Artists and writers reacted to what they saw as the mechanisation of human society, and produced non-realistic artwork to challenge the changes in society. Although this movement was short-lived, it had an enormous influence on modern art forms. Expressionism is directly linked to the development of Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre. The function and purpose of epic theatre are quite different from those of expressionist theatre; however, they do have a few similar features.



Edvard Munch's *The Scream*

The creators of expressionist theatre wanted to convey a heightened interpretation of the world through the use of stylised acting, including controlled physical movement and the use of concise and direct language. The features of expressionist theatre are:

- transformation of reality as we know it into a dreamlike and fantasy world
- use of many varied characters and locations that build to a powerful climax
- communication of a political or social message
- use of fantasy and symbolism, with moments of realism
- use of generalised character names, such as mother, father and worker, to make characters representative of all mothers, fathers and workers, for example
- use of symbolic props and sets—the sets are often abstract and vast
- in some productions, use of slides to help show the many locations and to help create mood and atmosphere
- use of coloured lights and shadows to create spectacle
- integration into the performance of music and sound effects, often at very loud levels
- use of masks and stylised make-up
- generally non-realistic movements that are, for example, rhythmic, slow, graceful or mechanical
- change of characters during performance; for example, a character appearing as a robot in one scene and then moving realistically in a later scene.

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

ADENA JACOBS

Theatre Director

Adena Jacobs is a theatre director and the Artistic Director of independent company Fraught Outfit. In addition to her role as Resident Director at Belvoir in 2014–15, Adena has directed at Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne International Theatre Festival, Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Chamber Opera, Red Stitch and at various independent venues across Australia. She is known for her radical, image-led versions of canonical myths, most notably, *The Bacchae*, *Antigone*, *Wizard of Oz*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Hedda Gabler* and *Persona*.



Courtesy Adena Jacobs

Adena Jacobs

When interviewed for *Time Out* magazine in December 2013, Adena said, 'One of the biggest driving forces for me in making theatre is that idea of expressing the inexpressible – finding some shape or form for what we can't speak about, what is buried underneath. I see theatre—and all art—as a way of expressing individual perception. Each of us experiences the world in a very different way, and if we can somehow try to communicate that – then we can start to bridge those gaps.'



Theatre Works presents –
The Bacchae (Interview
With Adena Jacobs)

EXERCISE

EXPRESSIONIST THEATRE

1 Humans become robots

Your teacher will need a whistle for this exercise. As a class, walk through the room, maintaining an even distance from each other. On the first sound of the whistle, freeze and hold the freeze for about thirty seconds. On the second sound of the whistle, transform your character from human to robot. Alter your walk and movements so they become rigid and sharp. When the whistle sounds again, freeze and hold the freeze for about thirty seconds. Then, one by one, unfreeze and revert to your normal walk. On the final whistle, freeze and remain completely frozen for one minute. Repeat these steps.

2 Puppets

Divide into pairs. You will take turns at being both puppet and puppet controller. The puppet controller coordinates the puppet's movements by pulling on invisible strings that are connected to the puppet's limbs, head and body. The puppet yields to the pulling of the invisible strings and can be made to walk, sit down, pick up items and perform other movements. The controller can also control emotional responses from the puppet through verbal instructions.

3 Paper chase

Divide into medium-sized groups. Improvise a short play in which a human is seeking approval for an important and urgent matter. For example, it may be a loan, a traveller's visa or an insurance claim. The human character must get the correct form signed in order to get approval.

During the improvisation, the human approaches an inhuman and impersonal world of machines and robots or puppets, and seeks their advice as to how to get the matter approved. Each robot or puppet tries to thwart the attempts of the human by creating diversions, extra charges, more forms, and so on.



HINT

If you choose to act as puppets for the paper chase exercise, you may wish to include human controllers in the improvisation. The human controllers should appear to be invisible to the human character seeking approval.



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 What kind of mood and atmosphere was created in the exercises where you played robots and puppets?
- 2 Describe the differences between your use of body language and movement in human form and your use of body language and movement in either robot or puppet form.
- 3 What reactions did you experience as you observed the human character and their dilemma in the paper chase exercise? Why?
- 4 Describe an incident from your own personal experience that reflects the issues presented by the actions of the characters in the paper chase exercise.

WORKING WITH AN EXPRESSIONIST SCRIPT

The following extracts are from *The Hairy Ape* by US playwright Eugene O'Neill. Once you have read both extracts and completed the written tasks, choose one of the extracts to present to the class.

Synopsis of *The Hairy Ape*

Written in the 1920s, *The Hairy Ape* is a strong example of expressionist theatre and explores the dehumanising of ordinary workers as they become slaves to industry. O'Neill's message is reinforced through the title of the play and the repeated use of the symbolic image of humans as primates in captivity.

The central character, Yank, who is tough and aggressive, works shovelling coal on a ship. He is attracted to and rejected by Mildred, who is the pale and pampered daughter of 'a captain of industry'. Yank seeks revenge for being rejected. His subsequent futile and violent search for Mildred symbolises the hopelessness of his existence. Despite his physical strength, he will always be a slave to industry. He is arrested, escapes, and eventually goes mad and dies in a gorilla cage at the zoo.

The Hairy Ape conveys a lot of power and energy, and has an important social message, even though it may seem a little peculiar to us today.

Extract A

Extract A gives the opening stage directions for Scene 3, where Yank first sees Mildred in the furnace room of the ship. The directions establish the atmosphere of the scene. Before Mildred arrives, Yank and the others are working stoking the furnaces. Yank's anger builds as he is provoked by his superiors. The tension is heightened by the use of the shrill sounds of whistles and other loud noises. As the scene builds to a climax, Mildred enters and sees Yank at the peak of his anger. This terrifies her and she hurries away under protection, referring to Yank as 'a filthy beast'. Note the ways in which lighting and sound are incorporated to add impact to the opening of this scene.

THE HAIRY APE

SCENE 3

(Scene. The stokehole. In the rear, the dimly-outlined bulks of the furnaces and boilers. High overhead one hanging electric bulb sheds just enough light through the murky air laden with coal-dust to pile up masses of shadows everywhere. A line of men, stripped to the waist, is before the furnace doors. They bend over, looking neither to right nor left, handling their shovels as if they were part of their bodies, with a strange, awkward, swinging rhythm. They use the shovels to throw open the furnace doors. Then from these fiery round holes in the black a flood of terrific light and heat pours full upon the men who are outlined in silhouette in the crouching, inhuman attitudes of chained gorillas. The men shovel with a rhythmic motion, swinging as on a pivot from the coal which lies in heaps on the floor behind to hurl it into the flaming mouths before them. There is a tumult of noise—the brazen clang of the furnace doors as they are flung open or slammed shut, the grating, teeth-gritting grind of steel against steel, of crunching coal. This clash of sounds stuns one's ears with its rending dissonance. But there is order in it, rhythm, a mechanical regulated recurrence, a tempo. And rising above all, making the air hum with the quiver of liberated energy, the roar of leaping flames in the furnaces, the monotonous throbbing beat of the engines.)



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Describe how O'Neill creates mood and atmosphere using the following elements: lighting, sound, movement and rhythm.
- 2 Describe how the performers in this scene of *The Hairy Ape* would need to use movement and body language to communicate their status as well as the atmosphere of the location.

Extract B

Extract B is from Scene 5. Yank is on Fifth Avenue in New York. O'Neill indicates an abstract setting of shops selling overpriced jewels and furs. His stage directions indicate, 'The effect is of a background of magnificence cheapened by commercialism.'

The selected extract occurs at the end of the scene. A crowd of wealthy people is leaving a church and Yank attempts to accost them to avenge his wounded pride at being rejected by Mildred. In Yank's mind, all wealthy women represent Mildred and all wealthy people represent those who keep him working in subhuman conditions. The wealthy people's desire to buy monkey fur in this scene symbolises how Yank and others like him are regarded as products rather than people. This particular moment further infuriates Yank and reminds him of how Mildred rejected him.

O'Neill used masks for the wealthy characters in performance and described them as moving like 'A procession of gaudy marionettes, yet with something of the relentless horror of Frankenstein's in their detached, mechanical unawareness'.



HINT

If you choose to perform extract B of *The Hairy Ape*, use the script detective steps outlined in chapter 5, p. 114 to assist in your preparation.



HINT

In extract B, Yank punches a gentleman but the punch has no effect. To achieve this in performance you should practise 'pulling punches'. This means you deliver a punch with full effort to make it appear real, but 'pull' the force of the punch away from the object you are punching just before you make contact. It is suggested you practise pulling punches before you perform this extract.

THE HAIRY APE

SCENE 5

(Yank is in the middle of abusing the wealthy men and women as they leave the church.)

YANK *(He turns in a rage on the men, bumping viciously into them but not jarring them the least bit. Rather it is he who recoils after each collision. He keeps growling.)*

Get off de oith! G'wan! Look where yuh're goin', can't yuh? Git out a-here! Fight, why don't yuh? Put up yer mits! Don't be a dog! Fight, or I'll knock yuh dead!

THE PEOPLE *(But, without seeming to see him, they all answer with mechanical affected politeness.)* I beg your pardon.

(Then at a cry from one of the women, they all scurry to the furrier's window.)

THE WOMAN *(Ecstatically, with a gasp of delight.)* Monkey fur!
(The whole crowd of men and women chorus after her in the same tone of affected delight.) Monkey fur!

YANK

(With a jerk of his head back on his shoulders, as if he had received a punch full in the face—raging.)

I see yuh, all in white! I see yuh, yuh white-faced tart, yuh! Hairy ape, huh? I'll hairy ape yuh!

(He bends down and grips at the street kerbing as if to pluck it out and hurl it. Foiled in this, snarling with passion, he leaps to the lamp-post on the corner and tries to pull it up for a club. Just at that moment a bus is heard rumbling up. A fat, high-hatted, spatted gentleman runs out from the side street. He calls out plaintively: 'Bus! Bus! Stop there!' and runs full tilt into the bending, straining Yank, who is bowled off his balance.)

YANK

(Seeing a fight—with a roar of joy he springs to his feet.)

At last! Bus, huh? I'll bust yuh!

(He lets drive a terrific swing, his fist landing full on the fat gentleman's face. But the gentleman stands unmoved as if nothing had happened.)

GENTLEMAN

I beg your pardon. *(Then irritably.)* You have made me lose my bus. *(He claps his hands and begins to scream.)* Officer! Officer!

(Many police whistles shrill out on the instant, and a whole platoon of policemen rush in on Yank from all sides. He tries to fight, but is clubbed to the pavement and fallen upon. The crowd at the window have not moved or noticed this disturbance. The clanging gong of the patrol wagon approaches with a clamouring din.)

(Curtain.)



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 What does Yank's inability to affect the passers-by symbolise?
- 2 Describe how you could incorporate skills you have learnt in the expressionist theatre exercises to achieve O'Neill's description of the wealthy people.
- 3 How would you create the impression of Yank bumping into and hitting the wealthy people without them being affected?
- 4 Why does Yank react as though he has been punched when the crowd choruses 'Monkey fur'? How would the actor playing Yank perform this moment?
- 5 What sounds could you incorporate into this scene to heighten particular moments? How do you create these sounds?

PERFORMANCE TASK



12.4 Performance task: non-realistic theatre

The task

Devise a non-realistic theatre performance. Divide into groups and appoint one person as stage manager/technical operator. Your group must choose option A or B (see below) as the basis for your playbuilding.

In your performance you must use:

- a variety of non-realistic locations
- realistic and non-realistic characters
- stylised movement and voice
- effective and appropriate scene transitions
- recorded sound and/or lighting to establish mood and create effect
- at least one distinct symbol
- extended moments of stillness
- mask and/or stylised make-up for some of the non-realistic characters.

Option A – ‘To sleep, perchance to dream’

Create a dream story in which one or more characters move from one dreamlike location to another. During the dream, the central characters confront aspects of themselves, experience memories, confront hidden fears or phobias, are tested, witness a prophetic event, or are given advice.

Option B – Humans, machines and technology

Create a story in which one or more characters show the effects (positive and/or negative) of a world that is run by machines and technology. Your performance should resemble our world but incorporate some of the features of non-realistic and expressionist theatre to accentuate the issues and concerns of your performance.

Creating and making a non-realistic expressionist performance

- Research dreams or the impact of technology to provide material for your performance.
- Use improvisation and movement to explore bizarre, odd, dreamlike and ridiculous situations.
- Consider how voice and language can be used to create atmosphere. Consider the sort of language that characters may use; for example, poetic, colloquial, informal or formal. Can you incorporate repetition, chanting or multiple voices?
- Explore how the use of transformation of objects and fabric, for example, can help to create different environments.

- Consider how you can include moments of stillness. Describe the effect you want to achieve.
- Consider how lighting and recorded sound can be incorporated into your performance.
- Consider the possibility of incorporating overhead projections, slides, video and data projection into your performance.
- Prepare a prompt copy (see chapter 5, p. 110) that has provision for action, sound and lighting cues. The prompt copy should be prepared as a series of annotated blocking diagrams if your script is a description of action rather than dialogue.

Creating and making a non-realistic character

- Explore and document how your character or role will move and will use body language. Create different and distinct gestures to communicate particular emotions and attitudes.
- If you play more than one character or role, consider how you can use body and voice to distinguish one character or role from the other.

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.

As a performer, the criteria will be used to evaluate your ability to:

- sustain and develop character or role in performance
- select and incorporate vocal dynamics to portray character or role
- select and incorporate movement and gesture to portray character or role
- incorporate at least one distinct symbol
- select and link elements of your non-realistic drama into a coherent and polished performance.

As the stage manager/technical operator, the criteria will be used to evaluate your ability to:

- effectively incorporate one or more of the following: sound, lighting and audio-visual
- blend technical operation with the performance.



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Evaluate your own group's performance. Analyse the elements that you felt were successful. What factors contributed to this success?
- 2 Describe how one other group created a powerful moment through the use of either slow motion or stillness.
- 3 Offer suggestions for how one group could further improve their performance. Identify the particular areas you feel could improve, and describe the approach you would take.
- 4 Imagine you are speaking to non-realistic theatre practitioners from the past. Explain to them your understanding of the influences that encouraged the development of this style. Include in your discussion the relevance of this style to performers and audiences today. Include in your explanation examples from your own performance work.



Performance task: non-realistic theatre

Student Teacher

Group names

By completing this task you should be able to:

- select and incorporate conventions of non-realistic theatre
- select and incorporate stylised movement and voice in non-realistic performance work
- devise and present a non-realistic theatre performance.

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"> • using improvisation and movement to explore bizarre dreamlike situations? • considering how vocal dynamics and recorded sound can be used to create atmosphere? • exploring how the use of transformation of objects and fabric can help create different environments? • preparing a prompt copy with action, sound and lighting cues? <p>Have you used the elements of drama, skills, techniques and processes to structure a non-realistic performance by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • selecting a variety of non-realistic locations and characters? • incorporating stylised movement and voice? • incorporating recorded sound and/or lighting to establish mood and atmosphere? • including at least one distinct symbol? • incorporating extended moments of stillness? • remaining focused in performance? <p>Have you rehearsed and presented a performance for a specific audience by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing an appropriate mood and atmosphere for the topic? • effectively manipulating the actor–audience relationship through consideration of the performance space? • structuring the drama into a coherent and polished performance incorporating effective scene transitions? 				
<p>Responding</p> <p>Have you used your critical thinking and communication skills to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect on the development, rehearsal and shaping of a non-realistic performance? • use questioning to interrogate the purpose of particular acting and staging techniques? • show strong knowledge of the purposes and intentions of non-realistic theatre and their social and political contexts? 				

Comments
