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PLAYBUILDING: DEvised PERFORMANCE

WHY STUDY PLAYBUILDING?

Playbuilding is a collaborative and creative process whereby a group devise an original play over a period of time, which is then performed for a specific audience. The rehearsal process of playbuilding involves being creative in generating original ideas, as well as when refining the plot, themes, characters, acting skills and staging. In this chapter you will further develop your knowledge and skills in vocal dynamics, movement, character types, improvisation and the elements of drama as you work collaboratively and creatively as actors, directors and playwrights.

This chapter is divided into the following units:

- 4.1 The playbuilding process
- 4.2 Playbuilding structures
- 4.3 Highlighting dramatic moments using focus
- 4.4 Scene transitions
- 4.5 Creating a character
- 4.6 Stage spaces and the audience
- 4.7 Gothic drama
- 4.8 Performance task: creating a Gothic play
- 4.9 Performance task: the journey
- 4.10 Performance task: a new beginning

OUTCOMES

In this chapter you will:

- apply the skills of collaboration and a creative process to create performance work
- draw on a range of starting points for playbuilding
- contribute ideas, feelings and experiences to the process of playbuilding
- consider the actor–audience relationship and select stage spaces to suit playbuilding tasks
- create and develop characters using character biographies
- include and manipulate selected theatrical techniques in performance tasks
- create effective scene transitions.



Students performing
on stage



4.1 The playbuilding process

Playbuilt plays are powerful. Each member of the group contributes in some way to the development of the presentation; the final performance reflects the creativity and energy of all its members.

Carole Tarlington and Wendy Michaels

Building Plays: Simple Playbuilding Techniques at Work

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

ANGELA BETZIEN

Playwright, Real TV

Angela Betzien is a playwright and a member of the Melbourne-based theatre company Real TV. Her plays include *Children of the Black Skirt*, *Hoods*, *War Crimes*, *Girl Who Cried Wolf*, *Helicopter*, *The Dark Room*, *Where in the World is Frank Sparrow?*, *Mortido* and *The Hanging*. Several of her plays have been translated into other languages and have toured widely across Australia and internationally.

The motif of the lost child features in many of her plays prominently and the landscape is very much an antagonist. Her plays are often described as Australian Gothic, which is a way of viewing the atrocities of the past and their impact on the present. She writes, 'As an Anglo-Australian playwright, every time I sit down to write a story set in Australia, I do so with an understanding that this country always was and always will be Aboriginal land.'

She writes, 'I would encourage young artists to think deeply about their own history and where they are from. What are the stories of your birthplace? How do these stories impact upon the present? This knowledge will deeply influence the kind of art you make and why you make it.'



Angela Betzien

Angela Betzien

COLLABORATING AND CREATING AS ACTORS, PLAYWRIGHTS AND DIRECTORS

Collaborating effectively, as well as applying and developing your skills and knowledge as actors, directors and playwrights, are the main activities of playbuilding. Playbuilding does not happen suddenly—it requires extended periods of preparation time called 'rehearsal'. Some important research into creativity and collaboration can help you make the most of the rehearsal time you have to prepare. Through trial and error, you will manipulate and experiment with the elements of drama to develop the dramatic action of your play. Improvisation is an essential and effective rehearsal method by which you can explore and develop ideas.

While you will spend most of your rehearsal time collaborating, you will also need to work individually. It is important to spend time outside of rehearsals developing the ideas discovered in group rehearsals to build characters, and to refine and polish dialogue, timing, movement and the staging of scenes. In playbuilding, all of the participants might change from acting, to directing, to playwriting, and then back again many times during rehearsals. This is no easy task as each of these theatre practices requires particular skills and knowledge to contribute to a performance. You will acquire more knowledge and skills as directors and playwrights in later chapters. Before you begin working together as a group, respond to the following questions to begin developing your knowledge about these practices.



Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 What do you know about playbuilding? What questions do you have?
- 2 What are the key responsibilities of an actor during the playbuilding process?
- 3 What questions might an actor ask about their acting to improve their performance work and communicate character, mood, time and place to the audience?
- 4 What are the key responsibilities of a director during the playbuilding process?
- 5 What questions might a director ask to improve the staging of the play to more effectively engage the audience and communicate dramatic meaning?
- 6 What are the key responsibilities of the playwright during the playbuilding process?
- 7 What questions might a playwright ask to improve focus and action of a scene and/or the way the main ideas are best communicated to the audience?

THE CREATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE PROCESS OF PLAYBUILDING

Creativity and rehearsing

One of the most enjoyable aspects of playbuilding is the creation of an original performance that will communicate ideas to an audience. To be original and innovative requires you to be creative. Being creative has many interpretations. You are being creative when you solve problems or come up with a new way of doing things. But being creative is more than just solving a problem. Researchers in the area of creativity believe that creativity is not a one-off moment, but that it occurs in action over a period of time. This is because the individual is working with their materials, and trialling and testing ideas. In playbuilding, your teacher will give you some guidelines and structures to follow, but you will soon discover that there can be many original and different types of plays that emerge from the same starting point.

The flow state

In 1975, creativity researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi found that when people are experiencing what he termed ‘the flow state’, they are at their most creative. This creative flow state usually occurs when the people are in an experiential activity, and has some identifying features including:

- clear goals
- a high degree of concentration on the task
- a balance of skills with the challenge of the task
- a feeling that the work is personally rewarding, which creates a positive mood
- a loss of a sense of time when working as they are so involved in the task.



TED Talks – Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: Flow, the secret to happiness

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 What might be the personality traits of very creative people?
- 2 Look back at Csikszentmihalyi's features of creative flow state. How might you build your own ability to be creative?
- 3 What do you believe prevents you from being creative?
- 4 Recall a time when you were working on a project and felt you were in the flow state. What aspects of Csikszentmihalyi's features of flow state did you experience?

The following table outlines eight stages in the creative process. Dr Keith Sawyer, a researcher into creativity, collaboration and learning, compared the work of researchers into the creative process with his own eight-stage process. The column on the left lists Dr Sawyer's eight-stage creative process. The column on the right shows how the playbuilding rehearsal process might match with the creative process. Although the stages are listed in order, the reality of creating a playbuilt performance process means that while there is generally a progression forward through the stages, you may move back and forth between the eight stages many times as you rehearse. Dr Sawyer's process can be applied to any creative task in Drama including designing, directing and scriptwriting.



Keith Sawyer on Creating Spaces for Creativity

The Eight Stages of the Creative Process

(adapted from Keith R. Sawyer, *Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation*, ed. 2, Oxford University Press, 2012. By permission of Oxford University Press.)

STAGE	PLAYBUILDING PROCESS
Find the problem	<p>The search for a main theme, issue, idea or question in this stage of the playbuilding process is a development of the element of drama 'focus: framing the action'.</p> <p>Finding the focus for your play is important to help the audience engage with a particular perspective, idea or question that you and your fellow performers might be exploring. Some questions to ask are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is our main focus question (or questions)? • What is our intention as performers/directors/playwrights? • Why does this particular focus matter?
Acquire the knowledge	<p>This stage requires you to learn as much as you can about the focus of your play, the drama topic, the dramatic form and the required skills and knowledge. This might be through practical workshops, research and reading. Some questions to ask are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we know about this dramatic form or performance style? • What do we want to know more about? • What practice do I need to develop specific acting/performance skills? • How can I develop greater curiosity and interest as a learner in Drama? • How are we challenging and extending ourselves by learning and mastering new performance skills and knowledge for our play? • How effectively are we reflecting on our rehearsals (practice) to deepen our knowledge?

Gather related information	<p>In this stage, you are constantly looking for opportunities to link new information into the building of your play. Some questions to ask are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How alert are we to unexpected or unusual information that might help develop our play? • How good are we at spotting difficulties in the development of characters, scenes and staging? • What categories can we create to group information from rehearsals to link relevant information together?
Incubation (time off)	<p>This stage is about time out from rehearsals. It is referred to as 'an unguided, unconscious process' where you are engaged in a very different activity but fresh and exciting ideas about your play might suddenly come to mind. Some questions to ask as you rehearse your play are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often are we taking breaks from working on our play? • What unexpected ideas or new approaches come to mind during breaks in the rehearsal process?
Generate ideas	<p>As you come across problems in your play, you will need to draw on your previous experience and 'think outside the box' to solve these problems. This is a process that happens over time as you work towards solutions. Some questions to ask are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might this problem be solved using our existing knowledge of drama, playbuilding and the dramatic form? • Is the problem too difficult to solve because of a lack of knowledge and/or experience? • How can our teacher or another expert help us by giving us some advice and hints to solve problems?
Combine ideas (in unexpected ways)	<p>In this stage, with the help of incubation, your mind is making links between all aspects of your play. Some questions to help you combine ideas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are moments of 'insight' from incubation contributing to the building of our play? • What information or experiences are we combining in new and unusual ways? • In what ways have we put our ideas together to create exciting and engaging dramatic action?
Select the best ideas	<p>This stage is seen as a crucial part of being creative. It occurs in all steps of the playbuilding process, not just at the end. Some questions to ask are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the criteria that are we using to select the best ideas for our performance? • How might our own evaluation of our performance work differ from the evaluation of others?
Externalise the ideas	<p>This stage is not just about a final performance. Externalising ideas is an essential part of the playbuilding process and is about turning ideas into staged scenes and moments of action during rehearsal. Some questions to ask are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How frequently are we actually performing to test our ideas and to solve problems? • How have our ideas been communicated to an audience? • How have these experiences of performing in rehearsal or to an audience changed or altered our play?



HINT

Using any resource as a starting point requires you to use your imagination. It also requires research—going to the library or using the Internet to find out more information. Allow yourself ample time to conduct research that will assist you to create people, events and locations.



HINT

It is important to record and reflect on all of your rehearsals. This not only helps you to find your focus, but also provides you with a record of decisions to reflect on as the piece develops.



HINT

Some theatre practitioners such as Robert Lepage believe that each performance is still, in essence, a rehearsal. Each live performance is unique, and provides opportunities for the actors, director and production team to change or alter aspects of the performance in response to the audience's engagement.



Monkey Baa Theatre Company – Playbuilding

Collaborating and rehearsals

One of the unique features of the subject of Drama is the way in which you collaborate with others to create performance work. Collaborating is a powerful way to learn, and it is important to develop skills and understanding about what makes effective collaboration. Collaborating effectively and building on your skills and knowledge as actors, directors and playwrights is the main activity in this stage of your playbuilding. Through trial and error, you will manipulate and experiment with the elements of drama to develop the dramatic action of your play.

Research has revealed some interesting facts about effective collaboration:

- When there is shared understanding of the goals of the group for each rehearsal and the overall production, the workload is shared more effectively and fairly. This builds group cohesion.
- When groups are working at their peak, they create more innovative, unpredictable and suitable solutions to the problem than any one group member could.
- Brainstorming ideas is more effective when done individually and then shared with the group later. This leads to more original and creative ideas than brainstorming as a group, which inhibits creativity.
- Brainstorming ideas is much more effective when goals for the task are specific.

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 What are some of the best experiences you have had in collaborative group work at school?
- 2 Why were these experiences successful?
- 3 How might learning about improvisation help you to be a more effective collaborator?
- 4 What are some examples of goals that you might have for a rehearsal?
- 5 How might you check on the progress of achieving your goals?
- 6 What strategies can a group use to make the best use of rehearsal time?
- 7 How might differences between group members and differences of opinion be a positive thing for playbuilding?

4.2 Playbuilding structures

SELECTING A PLAYBUILDING STRUCTURE

Playbuilding is your opportunity to create an original performance. Before you begin rehearsing, it is important to consider the options you have for creating the structure of your performance. The structure of your performance is the framework through which the content of the drama is presented. For example, some traditional plays have a three-act structure and each act is divided into scenes. Each scene can be broken into smaller sections called 'units of action'. Preparing an effective dramatic structure will help make the intention of your piece clear to the audience.

As a group, you should consider the type of playbuilding structure you wish to adopt as the basis of your performance. There are two types of playbuilt structures to choose from: narrative and montage.

Linear narrative

A linear narrative tells a story in chronological order. It has a plot line that carries the action forward. A standard plot line will have one or more protagonists, an antagonist, a distinct climactic moment and a resolution.

Create a short three-stage story or use an existing fairytale, folktale or actual story to self-test your understanding of how a linear narrative uses cause and effect to move the story forward.

Consider the following example:

- The girl was born wealthy
- She lived a long time
- Everyone loved her.

The example does not include causes to explain the effects of actions, decisions and choices. A clearer explanation of cause and effect for this story might be:

Cause The girl was born wealthy.

Effect Because of this, she could pay for whatever she needed.

Cause She chose to spend her money on healthy food and good doctors.

Effect Because of this she lived a long time.

Cause Every day from her window high above the street she could see people suffering, and she wondered why everyone was not healthy and happy like her.

Effect Because of this, she felt guilty and her conscience made her see that it was important for everyone to have healthy food and good doctors.

Cause She used her money to build hospitals, and farms that produced cheap, healthy food.

Effect Because of this, everyone had access to good food and medical help, and everyone loved her.



HINT

A 'protagonist' is the central character in a play. There may be more than one protagonist. An 'antagonist' is the character who forces the protagonist into action.

EXERCISE

ANALYSING NARRATIVE

Divide into groups of three or four. As a group, create a list of three or four linear narratives from plays, novels or films. Identify the protagonist/s and the antagonist/s. Choose one narrative. Break the narrative into the following three sections:

- an 'exposition' in which the characters, place and time, and tension are established
- a 'crisis' or 'complication' in which conflict and tension are heightened
- a 'resolution' in which an outcome is reached.

Now identify one moment of cause and effect from each of the narrative stages: exposition, the crisis and the resolution.

Non-linear narrative

Similar to a linear narrative, a non-linear narrative also tells a story but in this case the events are not presented in chronological order. The non-linear narrative employs flashbacks or flashforwards to tell the story.

EXERCISE

NON-LINEAR ROLE-PLAY

Divide into groups of four. Devise a short role-play that incorporates the use of flashback and/or flashforward techniques. Your plot should still have a narrative structure—although you flash forward and backward in time, there should still be a central narrative that moves to a climactic moment. Some ideas for role-plays are:

- A deep-sea diver recalls diving on a dangerous shipwreck.
- A group is having a party on the beach. The role-play then flashes forward to the present day; at the same beach an important discovery is made.
- A child and their grandparent are trapped temporarily in a location of your choice. The role-play flashes back and forward at various points.



HINT

Whether you choose a narrative or a montage structure for your playbuilt performance, it is important for the playbuilt performance to progress from a starting point to a climactic moment. A consideration of how you manipulate the elements of drama will help you achieve this.



National Theatre –
Creating Chorus: Building
Choreography
Chorus Work – School of
Jacques Lecoq (in French)

MONTAGE PLAYBUILDING

The montage playbuilt performance explores a central theme, issue or subject through the use of short, self-contained scenes. These scenes, or ‘episodes’, give the montage playbuilt performance an episodic quality. Each scene is independent of the others; however, the scenes are unified by their exploration of a theme, issue or subject. Each scene in a montage playbuilt piece has its own timing and thrust, but the pace and energy of the overall performance works towards a clear climactic moment.

Montage role-play

In preparation for this role-play, you will need to create a mind map in your logbook. Choose one of the following words: *oxygen, reflection, egg, camouflage, balloons, desert, honesty, black, seasons, opposites, voyage, community, plots, hunger*. Brainstorm as many images, situations and characters as you can related to the word you’ve chosen. Then, using stylised movement, soundscapes or tableaux, create a series of short scenes of contrasting styles to represent your ideas.

DRAMATIC FORMS, CONVENTIONS AND PERFORMANCE STYLE

Dramatic forms

In the history of drama and theatre there have been many different dramatic forms. These include realism, expressionism, commedia dell’arte, melodrama, epic theatre, Ancient Greek drama, absurdism, mime, Restoration comedy and physical theatre. During your study of Drama you will examine many of these dramatic forms in detail.

Each dramatic form springs from a particular place and time. The form is unique because it is based upon a specific structure, subject matter, acting style, actor–audience relationship or use of production elements.

Dramatic conventions

Within each dramatic form you will find particular dramatic conventions. These are the typical features of the form, and you will see these conventions used repeatedly in theatre and drama of the same form. For example, a Shakespearian play will contain a ‘soliloquy’, in which a character talks to themselves, or reveals their thoughts without addressing a listener. A soliloquy is a dramatic convention typical of the Shakespearian form of drama. In the commedia dell’arte form of theatre, performers wear comic half-masks to portray stock characters. This is a dramatic convention typical of the commedia form.

DEVELOPING A PLAYBUILT PERFORMANCE

*What are you passionate about? What questions are you asking? What statements would you like to make?
What is your performance intention?*

Choose from

NARRATIVE (LINEAR OR NON-LINEAR) or MONTAGE



Consider

DRAMATIC FORM

Commedia dell'arte, Pantomime, Mime, Epic theatre, Ancient Greek drama, Restoration comedy, Symbolism, Melodrama, Kabuki, Realism, Absurdism, Aboriginal ritual, Expressionism, Vaudeville, Shakespearian drama, Puppetry, etc.



Select and incorporate

DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES AND CONVENTIONS

Narration, Exaggerated movement, Asides, Soliloquy, Projected signs, Mime, Actors moving amongst the audience, Mask, Playing to the audience, Political song, Transformation, Tableaux, Extended silences, Changing character in view of the audience, Slow motion, Stock characters, Fourth wall, etc.



Consider/Remember

THE ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

Role and character, plus situation, are directed by focus, driven by tension, made explicit in place and time, through the use of language, sound and movement to evoke symbol and atmosphere, which together create dramatic meaning and audience engagement.



Create your

PERFORMANCE STYLE

Performance style

The final, polished theatrical performance has its own performance style. This style is a result of the many decisions made regarding the use of dramatic forms and conventions. Your own ideas also affect the performance style. For example, you may choose to use the conventions of melodrama—*asides, music to accompany the entrance of characters, cheers and boos from the audience*—but perform your playbuilt piece in the style of a parody of a contemporary television soap opera.

The form or style you adopt for your playbuilt piece will depend on a variety of factors. You do not need to limit yourself to one form or style of performance. It is likely you will borrow from a range of dramatic forms and performance styles to create your playbuilt piece.

4.3 Highlighting dramatic moments using focus

ESTABLISHING FOCUS IN PERFORMANCE

In terms of the overall dramatic action being presented, an effective use of focus directs the audience's attention to specific moments in the action. When rehearsing, it is important to plan the focus of the dramatic action, especially at key moments. This will prevent the action from becoming unclear.

There are many ways that focus on dramatic moments might be established in performance. Examples include:

- **Space** – focus can be established according to where performers are positioned in the space (for example, upstage, downstage, centre stage, on levels, in groups or individually)
- **Gesture** – a gesture can concentrate attention (for example, pointing, facing a particular direction, touching, waving, putting your hand up or wiping your brow)
- **Eye contact** – focus can be established using eye contact (for example, one performer looks at another, one performer is looked at by all the others, two groups of performers look at each other, or one performer looks at an audience member)
- **Contrast** – focus can be achieved by contrasting images (for example, all performers are in darkness except one who is in light, all performers move except one who is still, or all performers move in slow motion except one who moves quickly)
- **Language and voice** – focus can be achieved through the selection of who is speaking, what they say and how it is delivered (for example, a tour guide speaks in a serious tone to a tour group, warning them of the dangers of an unstable cliff edge).

EXERCISE

DIRECTING AND CREATING A FOCUS ROLE-PLAY

Work groups of five or six. Each group must choose two group members to act as director. Collaboratively, prepare a short role-play of five minutes in length incorporating three of the methods of establishing focus. The directors must provide feedback to the group to help ensure the use of space and the creation of focus on a moment of dramatic action is clear for the audience. Present your role-play to the class.

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Using examples from your own performance work, explain the possible meanings of the term 'focus'.
- 2 Choose two of the following means of creating focus: *space*, *gesture*, *eye contact*, *contrast*, *language*, *voice*. For each of the two methods you have chosen, outline in point form a dramatic moment that illustrates the use of this method. Share your ideas with the class. Choose three or four examples and perform them.

4.4 Scene transitions

Scene transitions should not be seen as a break in a performance but as an integral way of adding to the performance. Scene changes can be achieved in a variety of ways depending on the dramatic form of the performance, the performance space and the availability of technology. A poor scene transition interrupts the flow of the performance. The following lists describe some techniques that can be used for scene transitions.

Performer-based scene transitions

- A narrator addresses the audience while set and/or actors are changed.
- Actors remain on the stage and transform their physical shapes and positions to create new characters in a new place and time.
- Actors enter the stage area or exit to the offstage area.
- Actors change costume in front of the audience.

Elements of production scene transitions

- Blackout of lights – scenery is changed and performers move while lights are out.
- Cross-fade of lights – one lighting state fades down while another fades up.
- Curtains open or close.
- Change of scenery (for example, flying in backdrops, flats, revolves, trucking of sets, changes in projected imagery or use of film footage).

TRANSFORMATION

Most classroom performances require students to remain in the performance space and not exit from the room. For this reason, classroom performances require you to create imaginative and original scene changes. Transformation is a theatrical technique that can be employed to make scene changes effective.

The technique of transformation has evolved from the work of many theatre practitioners. One key practitioner was the Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski (1933–1999). His theatre sought to create plays that had strong social and political messages. He devised the term ‘poor theatre’ to describe what he thought was true theatre, focused on actors in a space using their skills to create the world of the drama without expensive sets, lighting or costumes.

Transformation is an effective dramatic technique for creating scene transitions. The technique requires the performer to use his or her expressive movement and voice skills, and to manipulate energy, rhythm, timing and space. Using transformation for scene transitions often requires a group of performers to work as an ensemble. There are endless ways of creating scene transitions using transformation, for example:

- snap transformations – in which all performers change position instantaneously
- cross-fade transformations – in which performers use slow and controlled movements to merge from one character and setting to another
- transformations accompanied by a regular or irregular rhythm
- transformations with or without sound.



HINT

‘Flying in’ a backdrop means the backdrop is lowered from the fly tower above the stage. A ‘revolve’ is a mechanised, circular area built into the stage floor that revolves to change the scene of a play. ‘Trucking’ sets involves moving them onstage from the wings by placing them on special mechanised platforms with wheels.



HINT

The ‘improvisation tag’ exercise in chapter 2 on p. 42 is a good improvisation game for developing skills in transformation.



HINT

At their best, transformations are ingenious and entertaining for audiences. They seem to magically create new characters and places even though the performers have not left the stage.

EXERCISE

TRANSFORMATION

1 Transforming objects in a circle

Sit in a circle as a class. Your teacher will give you an object, such as a piece of fabric or rope, to pass around the circle. Each person transforms the object by reshaping it and using it in a way that indicates a new object.

2 Transforming objects in groups

Divide into groups of three. Each group requires one chair and one piece of fabric. Using people and objects, each group is to create a tableau to illustrate the following themes:

- victory
- peak hour
- drought
- adrift.

Your teacher will give you 10 counts to transform from the first tableau to the next tableau. It is important that members of the group make and yield to offers from one another so that the tableau is transformed without discussion.

3 Transformation using sound and rhythm

Devise two short, self-contained scenes that explore one of the following words:

- trust
- balance
- pressure
- escape.

Consider how you will use a combination of sound and rhythm to create transitions from one scene to another. The choice of rhythm and sound will need to have some relationship to the overall subject, or to the scene that has just ended or is just about to be shown.

4 Scene transitions using transformation

Divide into groups of five or more. Choose one of the following situations to practice transformation in creating scene changes.

- One performer plays a girl getting ready for her school dance. Other performers are items of furniture in the girl's bedroom. As the girl gets up from her chair and moves downstage, the other performers establish the rhythm of the music at the dance and transform their positions to become new characters.
- A scene in an office. All performers freeze. One character takes off a jacket and puts on a windcheater. As the character makes this costume change, the other performers create a soundscape of wind and waves. They also snap transform, one at a time, into surfers at a beach.
- Four supporters at the football are cheering for their team. When a goal is scored, they freeze. Using vocal sound and movement, they snap transform from the football to a building site.

MOTIFS

A motif is an image or moment of action that is repeated throughout a performance. Although a pattern is established, the nature of the motif may change slightly each time it occurs. A motif reinforces a symbol or message, and is a powerful tool for creating focus. Motifs can be used effectively as playbuilding scene transitions. For example, a play that explores the issue of refugees may have scenes set in two countries; these scenes could be linked by scene transformations using a recurring motif of a refugee boat on its journey.

EXERCISE

DEVISING THREE SCENES LINKED BY MOTIF

Divide into groups of four. Create a short linear narrative that uses a standard three-scene format. In other words, include a beginning to establish characters and situation, a middle in which a problem or conflict is encountered, and a resolution. Link the three scenes by moments of transformation. Experiment with any of the types of transformation you have explored in the previous exercises, including the use of motif.



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 What is transformation?
- 2 Describe and evaluate two examples of successful transformation that you have observed in your classwork. Identify how space, rhythm, timing, and physical and vocal skills were used to achieve the transformation. Here is an example of how you might respond:

Today we watched all the group performances. Each group was given the title “Circus” as a starting point. Adrian, Sally, Courtenay and Lily showed the best use of transformation. Their scene transitions moved smoothly between scenes in the big top and scenes in the clown’s caravan. The group used slow-motion movement, and humming and whispering, to help show that the scenes in the big top were in the clown’s imagination. He wants to be the star of the show and dreams of how he can become famous. The group’s use of timing and control of movement was excellent, especially as they synchronised the slow motion. The scene transitions and use of transformation were as enjoyable to watch as the scenes themselves.
- 3 What is a motif? Provide your own example of a motif and explain how it could be used in scene transformations. Alternatively, explain how you have observed the use of motifs in others’ work.
- 4 Research the work of Grotowski. Summarise his beliefs on theatre and performance. Discuss his aims, perceptions of successful performance and the desired actor–audience relationship.

4.5 Creating a character

ROLE AND CHARACTER

In your drama performance work you will play both roles and characters. To play a role, you need only have basic information about it. For example, a role may be defined simply as 'the mother', 'the policewoman', 'the politician' or 'the citizen of the town'. Roles can be important in performance because they help the audience to focus on themes and issues. Roles also help to move the plot forward by being vehicles for providing important information, advice or points of view. A role may be small, but the performer still needs to apply a skilled use of vocal dynamics, movement, energy and focus to play the role well.

Characterisation is the development of a role into a character. The performer will have much more knowledge about the personality and life experiences of a character they play. The performer can discover information about a character by engaging in written exercises, drawing on personal experiences and analysing the script.



HINT

A character biography provides the performer with all the important information about the character. The information includes who the character is and why they behave the way they do.

THE CHARACTER BIOGRAPHY

In the performance tasks at the end of this chapter you will be required to develop characters over a period of time. This provides an excellent opportunity to create more complex and detailed characters.

The following exercises explore how to create an original character using a character biography. The character you create may be based on someone you observe or may come from a picture you have seen in a book or magazine. The character needs to be original, so avoid choosing a famous identity or someone you know. Use the character biography writing exercises below to begin your creation of an original character.

EXERCISE

CREATING A CHARACTER

1 Character details

Write down all the essential details about your character. Include the following:

- personal details – for example, age, occupation, nationality, star sign, address, languages spoken, education, hobbies and family details
- physical description – for example, weight, height, colouring, distinguishing features, clothing and accessories.

2 Asking questions

Ask questions of the character to learn more about their personality and how they may behave in certain situations. Often the way we behave is due to what we believe about the world, about ourselves and about others. Write answers to the following questions. As you write your answers, you will need to think as the character to gain the best responses.

- In social situations I am _____ because I _____.
- My relationship with my parents is _____ because _____.
- My favourite film is _____ because _____.
- I would never _____ because _____.



HINT

The more you know about your character, the more interesting and truthful your character will be in performance.



- I used to _____ but now I _____ because _____.
- The most frightening experience I ever had was _____.
- My ambition in life is to _____.
- I think the world is a _____ place because _____.
- I believe true happiness is _____.



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Write your own questions for your character to answer. Write questions that you feel will help you develop a deeper understanding of your character. Answer your questions as though you are the character and share your responses with a classmate.
- 2 Ask classmates to suggest other questions. Write down the questions that you feel would be useful in the development of your character.

EXERCISE

BEING THE CHARACTER

In the following exercises you will need to use the character that you established in the previous 'creating a character' exercise. These exercises will help you to sustain and develop your character. They will also help you to establish a strong sense of belief.

1 A day in the life

Start with a relaxation exercise and imagine your character clearly. Find a position to show your character in bed in the early hours of the morning. On the signal from the teacher you are to wake as the character. Begin by acting out the character's morning routine. If you need to, include imaginary family members who are part of the morning routine. On a given signal, your teacher will ask you to freeze and move the character forward in time by a few hours. Take up a new position and show the character in a new situation performing a new activity. This continues until the character returns to bed at the end of the day.

2 Character phone call

Begin by acting as the character and give the character an activity in which they are involved. After working for a short time on the activity, the character makes a telephone call. The performer must use the character's voice when speaking to the imaginary caller, as they improvise the conversation out loud. Once the conversation is finished, the character returns to their activity. On a given signal, the character hears the phone ring, answers the call and improvises another conversation.

3 Hot seat

One volunteer sits in front of the class as their character. The class asks questions about the character's life and past experiences. The aim of this exercise is to help the performer learn more about their character, not to intimidate the character or point out inconsistencies in their answers.



HINT

In your playbuilt performance you may play a number of roles. These roles are important as they can represent different points of view. They can also establish relationships between the people, ideas and environment being presented in the performance.



HINT

The skill of spontaneity is needed for the character-building 'hot seat' exercise. You may be asked questions that surprise you because they may involve providing information about your character that you have not considered before. Answer the questions as quickly as you can. If you hesitate, you will drop out of character.

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Describe any new information you discovered about your character after completing the exercises.
- 2 Write several diary entries for your character. Describe particular events and explore your character's reactions to them.
- 3 What is a role? Why are roles important?
- 4 How does a performer establish a strong sense of belief when playing a character?

4.6 Stage spaces and the audience

CONSIDERING THE AUDIENCE

When devising performances it is necessary to consider two important factors:

- 1 **Stage spaces** – where is the play to be performed?
- 2 **Audience arrangement** – where will the audience be placed in relation to the performance?

To answer these questions you will need to consider:

- the type of play to be performed
- the availability and suitability of a venue
- audience comfort and their ability to see; also known as consideration of sightlines.

CHOOSING AUDIENCE SEATING ARRANGEMENTS FOR A PURPOSE

The way you seat the audience has a direct impact on their appreciation of the performance. Some of the earliest performances had the audience sit in an arena format, which is in a full circle around the performers. No scenery was used. The seating of an audience in an arena format focuses the attention of the audience to a central point. Being able to see other audience members encourages a stronger sense of 'sharing' an experience. This awareness of other audience members encourages energy and excitement.

Playwrights of tragedies and comedies in Ancient Greece explored the power of 'background' and began to add basic scenery to enhance the action in their plays. The semicircular shape of the tiered amphitheatres gave a perfect view of the actors, but also allowed the audience to look beyond the acting area to the views of the mountains and countryside. The once-complete circle had been broken to allow for the inclusion of scenery. It is thought that the view of the mountains and countryside helped the audience imagine battles, the gods on Mount Olympus and the relevance of the play to their own homeland.

Today, theatre groups still experiment with audience seating to achieve certain effects. Many outdoor performances use an environment performer–audience arrangement where the performers are among the audience and/or the audience moves to different locations for different scenes.

An interesting use of audience in modern performance was in a production devised by Urban Theatre Projects, a theatre company based in Western Sydney. *The Tribe* is a play performed in a backyard in Western Sydney featuring actor Hazem Shammas, and is based on Michael Mohammed Ahmad's novella. It is an Arab–Australian story of belonging. The focus or 'framing of the action' is created through the character

Bani, who, as a small boy, finds his way living in Australia by recounting tales of an older country. The focus is sharpened even further through the references to Bani's grandmother. She is a significant influence in Bani's life as she carries the stories, history and truths of 'The Tribe'—a small Muslim sect who fled to Australia from Lebanon.



Photo by Catherine Cranston

The Tribe by Urban Theatre Projects

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Why might performers choose to stage their play in a backyard in Western Sydney? What impact would this decision have on the relationship between the audience and the performers?

TYPES OF THEATRE SPACES

Proscenium

The proscenium stage is rectangular in shape and is divided into nine areas. Each area is given a name and labelled with an abbreviation or identification code as shown in the table. USC stands for upstage centre, DSL for downstage left, CS for centre stage, and so on. These codes are a useful form of shorthand for performers, directors and stage crew. The areas above and to the sides of the stage are hidden by the proscenium arch and the wings.

STAGE AREA	ABBREVIATION
Upstage right	USR
Upstage centre	USC
Upstage left	USL
Centre stage right	CSR
Centre stage (or stage centre)	CS
Centre stage left	CSL
Downstage right	DSR
Downstage centre	DSC
Downstage left	DSL



HINT

Remember that stage left and stage right are from the actor's point of view.



HINT

A proscenium stage often slopes upwards from front to back, which explains the terms 'upstage' and 'downstage'.



iStockphoto/BeautifulLotus

A traditional, proscenium stage

Environment

This type of audience arrangement varies depending on the requirements. Raised platforms, rostra, wagons, gangways, catwalks and other performance areas are arranged in a performance space so the audience feels within or surrounded by the action. This arrangement also allows for movement of the audience from one location to another.



iStockphoto/Bernhard Richter

An example of an environment-style stage

Theatre-in-the-round

This type of stage is divided into 13 areas—similar to the hours on a clock dial with the centre being the thirteenth area. This audience arrangement focuses the attention of the audience to the centre of the arena and encourages the audience to 'share' the experience.



Peter Pan 360 Photo by Jeremy Daniel, courtesy of AT&T Performing Arts Center

Theatre-in-the-round

Thrust

A thrust stage takes the action into the audience by using an extension to the proscenium stage, which makes the audience feel closer to the action.



Stewart Hemley © RSC

A thrust stage

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Draw audience arrangements for the performances listed below. Be imaginative in your ideas for where the play is performed and how the audience are seated. Explain why you think your choice would be effective.
 - a performance for primary school students about road safety
 - a serious, realistic drama set in a living room
 - a rock musical about the French Revolution
 - a Shakespearian play set in a forest.
- 2 Explain how you think your choices for audience arrangement would suit the purpose of each performance and make it more interesting for the audience.



eHow – 10 Elements of Gothic Literature



HINT

Research the work of English actor, playwright and director, Steven Berkoff. He is known for the use of transformational acting, strong mood and atmosphere created with minimal props and set, and the development of Gothic performances based on the work of Edgar Allan Poe.



HINT

Children of the Black Skirt, by Angela Betzien, is a play in the Gothic style. It explores the impact of the past on children who were placed in institutions.



Steven Berkoff



CHALLENGE

Read the book or play version of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* or view the film *The Others*. Why might these stories/films be described as Gothic?

4.7 Gothic drama

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The words Goth and Gothic describe the Germanic tribes that sacked Rome and also ravaged the rest of Europe in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th centuries. By the 18th century in England, Gothic had become associated with the Middle Ages (500–1500 CE), a period that has been seen as the ‘dark ages’, when people were superstitious.

Gothic architecture can be seen in many European cathedrals with the use of pointed arches and vaults, flying buttresses, gargoyles, narrow spires and stained-glass windows. It is also a style of architecture that English nobility appreciated in the 1800s because it suggested power and authority, hence many of their homes were designed with Gothic architectural features.

Gothic novels have similar plot features and settings including castles, mansions and supernatural experiences.

GOTHIC LOCATIONS

The setting is greatly influential in Gothic novels. The location is always very isolated and the protagonists are usually unable to leave of their own free will. It not only evokes the atmosphere of mystery but also portrays the deterioration of its world. The building itself almost becomes another character in the story.

POSSIBLE GOTHIC CHARACTER TYPES

- Protagonist – usually isolated either voluntarily or involuntarily, who is the hero/heroine of the play
- Villain (antagonist) – who, by his or her own actions, has fallen from grace
- Relatives and friends of the antagonist or protagonist
- Servants, clairvoyants (people who believe they can speak to spirits), gardeners
- Spirits

EXERCISE

GOTHIC WORKSHOP EXERCISES

1 Creating Gothic settings

In groups, use movement and sound to create the following:

- a rusty entrance gate to an old mansion
- a hall of whispering portraits
- a secret sliding panel to a chamber
- gargoyles on the roof of a castle
- gnarled and blackened trees.

2 Supernatural transformation

Work with a partner. Firstly, become a candelabra (a richly carved candlestick holder with many arms for candles). Show the movement of the candle flames flickering. Now become a spirit trapped within the candelabra. Make the spirit





beckon to a passer-by. Rehearse using controlled movement and vocal sound, transforming from candelabra to spirit and back again. As a class, watch others become candelabras and spirits. Give feedback on effective use of voice, facial expression, movement and sound to create the right mood and atmosphere.

3 Gothic scene transitions

In groups of about five or six, use transformation to show a change of location. The first location is a corridor of mirrors. Choose one person from the group to walk past the mirrors—at times they see their own reflection, but at other times they might get a glimpse of something other than their own reflection. As the person reaches the end of the hall of mirrors, the group transforms the location to create a circular stairwell that the person descends. The transformation needs to be as seamless as possible. Use your collaborative skills to work out the best way to achieve this.

4 Using transformation to show past and present

As a class, use body shape and minimal sound and movement to create objects in a Gothic garden such as iron gates, fountains, statues and a door to an abandoned Gothic building. Choose one class member to be the protagonist who comes across this place by chance. When the scene begins, they enter the garden and it is overgrown, the gates are rusted, and the fountain no longer works. There is an eerie mood and atmosphere. As the protagonist reaches the main doors to the house, they turn back to look at the garden. For a moment it transforms into a place that was lush, happy and inviting, but then slowly decays again back to its original state. Once it is back in its decayed state, the protagonist turns back to the door to the house, which slowly and eerily opens.

5 Gothic sounds using voice

As a class, create the following vocal sounds to build mood and atmosphere for a drama:

- gentle wind blowing
- doors creaking
- clocks ticking
- tree branches brushing against windows
- footsteps.

Sit in a circle and have each class member say one person's name in a ghostly whisper. Overlap the saying of the name to create an echo effect. Next, create the sound of rain approaching and fading away by gently patting your hands against the top of your thighs, slowly at first then building in tempo and then fading away until there are only a few drops of rain.



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Describe how one group used movement and sound to create an effective transformation.
- 2 Why does the use of actors as objects and other physical features of a Gothic play add to the mood and atmosphere? How does this acting technique help to create a world that seems to have supernatural qualities?



PERFORMANCE TASK

4.8 Performance task: creating a Gothic play



HINT

Gothic plays are more mystery plays—they are not horror. There are no monsters, brutal murders or evil possessions. The tension is built through the suggestion that spirits and hauntings are just out of reach, hidden, elusive and secretive.



Shutterstock/Zacarias Pereira da Mata

Atmosphere is critical in Gothic drama.

The task

In this task you will work collaboratively to create a short Gothic drama, exploring what ‘drama’ is (in contrast to a comedy). You will also explore how the Gothic genre employs plot conventions, character types, mood and atmosphere, and theatrical techniques to create ‘supernatural’ moments to address themes about past actions and their impact on the present.

The key question you are exploring that will create a focus to frame the dramatic action is:

How might the mistakes of the past affect the present if there is no reconciliation with those who have been hurt?

Performance requirements

Your group must comprise five or six people, and all actors *must* remain onstage during the performance and use transformation to become characters, objects, etc. in the play. Characters must be developed using character biographies.

The central themes of acknowledging past mistakes and the power of forgiveness to reconcile must be explored and will be the focus of the dramatic meaning of the piece. The performance must demonstrate a strong control of tension and the ability to establish an appropriate mood and atmosphere.

The play must be set in Australia in the past, in an imagined location. An outsider arrives at an isolated house or building. This person is the *protagonist*, who uncovers a mystery linked to an unresolved past incident.

A house/building is inhabited by one or more characters who are connected in some way to the past incident. As the plot unfolds, supernatural forces reveal themselves to the outsider to help them solve the mystery. The inhabitant acts as the *antagonist*, who tries to prevent the uncovering of the mystery. This builds *tension* for the audience.

At some point in the play, the discovery of an object that holds great power and significance must be included to heighten the tension of the drama. This object will also act as a *symbol* that is tied to the message of the play.

The performance intention

Always be clear about your intentions and goal, as this helps to maintain the focus of your play. Keep the following questions in mind as you begin to make and shape your play:

- What is the central theme, subject or idea that we are exploring?
- What is the one question about the central theme, subject or idea that the audience is asked to consider?

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

Use the following questions to help you with the beginning of your creative process:

- 1 Who are the characters in your play?
- 2 Where does the action of your play take place?
- 3 Which character is the protagonist? Is there more than one? What do they want and why?
- 4 Which character is the antagonist? Is there more than one? What do they want and why?
- 5 Define the tension of your play as questions the audience might want answered. This will build the mystery of your play. For example, what happened to the locket? Why is the door always locked? What happened here in the past?
- 6 What is the climactic moment of your play? How is the mystery uncovered? What is forgiven?
- 7 List the potential scenes of your play using a table similar to the following format:

SCENE NO.	CHARACTERS	LOCATION	ACTION/ SITUATION	STAGING (USE OF SPACE, PROPS, ETC.)
1	Robert Molly	Underground tunnel	Robert and Molly are looking for Molly's wedding ring, which was washed down the sink. Climax of scene – they find a package of old letters.	Actors use DSC – crawling on hands and knees to show size of tunnel. Robert has a torch with a strong beam of light.
2				

- 8 How will the moments and situations in the dramatic action maintain a focus on our core question and challenge the audience to think more deeply about the issues?



HINT

It is also helpful to keep track of how you and your group are using the elements of drama in the development of your piece.



HINT

You may show the characters travelling from one location to another. Find a way to 'compress' the travelling time so that the bulk of the play's action occurs at each location.

4.9 Performance task: the journey

The task

Devise a performance that uses the theme of 'journey' as a starting point. Your play will be about one or more characters on a journey. The journey could be one of exploration, escape or discovery. Your performance will show three different locations and the way the characters travel to each location. It will also show how your characters are affected by their experiences on the journey. Some characters may change significantly because of their experiences; some may not change at all.

Incorporate the following in your playbuilding:

- a journey set in Australia
- a group of original characters who may or may not know each other
- for each character, a 'hidden' objective that they reveal by the end of the play
- the use of contrasting locations
- a theatre space or audience arrangement that you devise, such as those on pp. 89–91
- the dramatic technique of slow motion to highlight an important moment.

The following resources are provided as assistance. You can decide whether to use them directly or indirectly in your performance.



Shutterstock/gmstockstudio

Tips for Americans – how to function Down Under

1. No one calls it 'Down Under'. You might as well carry a sign saying 'I'm a tourist' if you call it this.
2. Always keep in mind the saying 'She'll be right', which basically means 'Don't worry, it'll be fine, so don't bother whining'. Go with the flow, and leave your anxiety and neuroticism behind. Try to blend in with the locals. They'll be the ones looking completely chilled.
3. Everything is opposite ... the seasons, the side of the road to drive on, the side of the escalator to stand on. It's totally bizarre, but just go along with it (see point 2).



Tourists of Australia

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE



The key to finding Australian tourists is always water. Check waterfalls, rivers, and of course, beaches. Those in search of young tourists should not stray far from coastal southern Australia and rarely far from major urban centres ...

Key identification aids: any vehicle towing a caravan, any vehicle towing or carrying a boat, any fully-equipped 4WD vehicle, any bus that looks like it is lived in, generally anyone making a lot of noise.

Where to find tourists in Australia

4.10 Performance task: a new beginning

The task

Work in groups to devise a performance that incorporates the theme of ‘a new beginning’. It may be set in any place and in any time, but a character or a group of characters must face ‘a new beginning’.

The new beginning may have:

- happened suddenly, or may have been known about for some time
- been eagerly anticipated
- been anticipated with fear.

In your play, the characters are at the start of the new beginning and set about dealing with the change to their lives. As the play progresses, we learn more about how each character copes with the adjustment to the new beginning. In the course of your play, we also learn more about the characters’ past experiences.

Incorporate the following in your playbuilding:

- a group of characters who are affected by the new beginning
- the use of recorded music at the beginning and end of your play to help establish mood and atmosphere
- a theatre space or audience arrangement that you devise, such as those on pp. 89–91
- the theatrical technique of flashback; include no more than four flashbacks to help explain each character's past.

Performance technique: flashback

In a flashback, we step back in time momentarily and learn about an incident in the past that helps us understand what is happening in the present. In your performance, you will need to consider how you make the transition from the present to the past in a way that does not interrupt the performance's flow.

Here are three examples of how you can incorporate flashbacks in your performance:

- Freeze the action and quickly take up a new position showing the characters in the past situation; then continue performing. Repeat this procedure to return to the present.
- Have characters walk from one area of the stage to another to indicate a different place and time.
- If you have access to technical equipment, use lighting changes or music to bridge the changes between flashbacks and the present time.

The following resources are provided as assistance. You can decide whether to use them directly or indirectly in your performance.



Courtesy of Green Bug Theatre

The play *Boy Overboard* by Green Bug Theatre explores a family's incredible journey to Australia.

NEWS

600 MILLION SEE TWO MEN WALK INTO HISTORY

In two hours, 14 minutes, yesterday, Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin opened a new world before the wondering eyes of the estimated 600 million people watching them from Earth.

The watchers saw the shadowy figure of Armstrong make the first step on to the moon's surface—perhaps the most significant single event of the century—and Edwin Aldrin follow him soon after.

160 Years of the *Sydney Morning Herald*: Major News Stories, 1831–1990

COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Identify the purpose or intention of your performance.
- 2 Brainstorm ideas for climactic moments, points of tension and conflict.
- 3 Brainstorm ideas for the characters and develop your character by completing a character biography.
- 4 Brainstorm ideas for situations. Consider the elements of drama in your notes and discussions.
- 5 Brainstorm ideas for how you can incorporate the required dramatic technique in your performance.
- 6 Consider how you may seat your audience to achieve your purpose.

Exploring, developing and selecting

- Use improvisation to explore characters and situations.
- Develop your character using the character biography and the character exercises outlined on pp. 86–87.
- Explore the use of space, considering your chosen audience arrangement.
- Explore how the use of focus on a dramatic moment, transformation and transitions can add impact to your performance.
- Refine and rehearse the scenes, and the scene transitions, to achieve a coherent and polished performance.

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:

- portray character/role through considered use of voice and movement
- sustain and develop character in performance
- research and prepare a playbuilt performance
- include any required dramatic technique
- evaluate your own work and the work of others
- structure and link aspects of your drama into a coherent and polished performance.



COLLABORATE AND THINK CRITICALLY

- 1 Choose one character from another group's play that you feel was particularly convincing. Identify the reasons why you feel the performance was convincing.
- 2 Did your performance demonstrate the use of effective scene transitions? Give reasons for your success or lack of success in this area. Offer suggestions for how you could improve your creation of scene transitions.
- 3 What was the climactic moment of your piece? How did you make this moment stand out for the audience?
- 4 Describe how you incorporated the required theatrical technique in your performance. What effect did you want to achieve through the inclusion of this technique?
- 5 Make suggestions you feel would improve your use of rehearsal time in future playbuilding tasks.
- 6 Imagine you are redirecting one group. Outline the difficulties you observed in the staging of their performance. Offer suggestions for improvement.
- 7 Evaluate one group and their use of scene transitions. Using drama terminology, explain how they achieved their transitions and whether or not the transitions were effective.
- 8 Imagine you are a performer working with people who have no previous drama experience. Outline how improvisation has been used in the past as a tool for playbuilding. Use examples from your own playbuilding to explain how improvisation is valuable in rehearsals.
- 9 Research a form of theatre or style of performance that uses a non-proscenium stage space for a specific purpose. For example, you might look at the theatre of Urban Theatre Projects, Jerzy Grotowski, Augusto Boal or Circus Oz. Report your findings to the class.



Performance task

Student Teacher

Group names

By completing this task you should be able to:

- apply the skills of collaboration and a creative process to create performance work
- draw on a range of starting points for playbuilding
- contribute ideas, feelings and experiences to the process of playbuilding
- consider the actor–audience relationship and select stage spaces to suit playbuilding tasks
- create and develop characters using character biographies
- include and manipulate selected dramatic techniques in performance tasks
- create effective scene transitions.

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"> • improvising with the elements of drama and narrative structure to develop ideas, and explore subtext to shape devised and scripted drama? • practising and refining the expressive capacity of voice and movement to communicate ideas and dramatic action in a range of forms, styles and performance spaces? • structuring drama to engage an audience through manipulation of dramatic action, forms and performance styles, and by using design elements? • performing devised and scripted drama making deliberate artistic choices and shaping design elements to unify dramatic meaning for an audience? • creating and performing a range of convincing characters and roles effectively using voice and movement? 				
<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 performance? • use questioning to interrogate the purpose of particular acting and staging techniques? • evaluate how the elements of drama, forms and performance styles in devised and scripted drama convey meaning and aesthetic effect? • analyse a range of drama from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their drama making? 				

Comments
