

Antonin Artaud Theatre of Cruelty



Text

- Emphasis on the written or spoken text was significantly reduced.
- The notion of text being exalted (a more powerful component) was eliminated.
- Artaud referred to spoken dialogue as 'written poetry' emphasis on improvisation, not scripts.

Movement & Gesture

- Artaud was inspired by a performance of Balinese dancers in 1931 (use of gesture and dance).
- Grotowski claimed Artaud's interpretation of the Balinese dancers was 'one big mis-reading'.
- Artaud wished to create a new (largely non-verbal) language for the theatre.

Acting & Characterisation

- The actor was encouraged to openly use emotions (opposite to Brecht and Epic Theatre).
- No emphasis on individual characters in performance (opposite to Stanislavski and Realism)
- characters were less defined by movement, gesture and dance (compared to spoken dialogue) Grotowski warned the Artaudian actor to avoid stereotyped gestures: one for each emotion.

Space & Actor-Audience Relationship

- Artaud experimented with the actor-audience relationship.
- relationship between the actor and audience in the Theatre of Cruelty was intimate.
- preference for actors to perform around the audience in the centre (rectangle/ring/boundary).
- he attempted to reduce or eliminate the special space set aside for the actors (the stage).
- Grotowski refuted Artaud's concept of eliminating the stage area.
- Performers placed in four corners / on four sides of the space.
- Grotowski argued Artaud's use of space was not revolutionary; it had already been attempted
- The audience was therefore placed in a weaker, less powerful position (encircled by actors).
- The audience was often seated on swivel chairs (easily swinging around to follow the action).
- Galleries and catwalks enable the performers to look down on the audience (trapping them)

Antonin Artaud

Costume and design

- All costume should be devoid of any contemporary relevance and should be specifically designed for each show. However, he felt it might be appropriate to look at images from the past and designs that might take their influences from certain cultural rituals. Masks and even puppets were encouraged as a way of moving away from realism.



The audience

- Would be in the middle on swivel chairs, while a walkway would be built around the edges of the auditorium to enable certain action to take place above the spectators. The show as Artaud called his performance, would fill the space using different areas and levels to engulf the audience and assault their senses.

Sound

- Artaud believed traditional theatre was a slave to dialogue, so he tried to redefine the aural experience. He focused on sounds rather than words. Screams were extremely important to him since they represented the most primitive emotion.
- Musical Instruments were used in experimental ways

Bertolt Brecht

Epic Theatre



Techniques using the 'v' effect

A theatrical **device** is a method or technique used onstage which has an aim or purpose. The aim when using the 'v' effect is to ensure that the audience are constantly reminded that they're watching a piece of theatre.

Narration

Narration is used to remind the audience that what they're watching is a presentation of a story. Sometimes the narrator will tell us what happens in the story before it has happened. This is a good way of making sure that we don't become emotionally involved in the action to come as we already know the outcome.

Coming out of role / third person narration

Commenting upon a character as an actor is a clear way of reminding the audience of theatricality. For example, midway through a heightened scene the action might break for the actor to comment upon their character in the third person, 'Darius felt his anger rise. He wasn't being listened to and wanted revenge', before returning to the scene.

Speaking the stage directions

This device was used by Brecht more frequently in rehearsal than performance. It helps distance the actor from the character they're playing. It also reminds the audience that they're watching a play and forces them to study the actions of a character in objective detail.

Direct address

Speaking directly to the audience breaks the fourth wall and destroys any illusion of reality. An example would be the moment where Grusha pleads to save baby Michael in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* by Brecht: I brought him up, shall I also tear him to bits? I can't.

Using placards

A **placard** is a sign or additional piece of written information presented onstage. Using placards might be as simple as holding up a card or banner. Multimedia or a Power-Point slideshow can also be used for this effect. The musical, *Miss Saigon*, for example, used a slideshow to demonstrate the loss of lives in the Vietnam War which was highly effective. What's important is that the information doesn't just comment upon the action but deepens our understanding of it.



Bertolt Brecht

Rehearsal Techniques



The Placard:

Create a number of placards with pens and card that do a number of things. Use some placards to introduce location, time and/or character. Use other placards to indicate the attitude and internal thoughts of the characters.

The Gest:

Choose a moment, a scene or even a character and create a movement/body language sequence that demonstrates who they are and how they are feeling. This can be as simple as the wolf arriving at each of the houses with the expectation of a meal.

The Music:

Choose a song or a piece of music that you think could introduce or comment on some action of the play. Be as topical as you want – choose a piece of current music from the charts or a film, or use something more traditional. Think about what you want the music to say when it is juxtaposed against a particular scene or movement.

Alienation:

Perform your piece, and discuss whether you have found a way of making the story strange and fresh to the audience. If so, in what way?



Mirror and Mirror Variation

- This is a technique in which consists of pairs- yet again- one labeled A and the other B and also relies on the full attention of each partner as each individual has to mirror the specific movement their partner does.
- This technique can be altered in many different ways such as: delayed movement; the pace in which it is does;reversal in the order and also the partners can change, to create a different atmosphere or story.



Chair Duets

This is a challenge created by Frantic Assembly for a dramatic effect within a piece of drama, which involves the use of communication between the partners and physical theater (performed by the upper body) to convey a range of different emotions between the two participants involved. Due to restrictive nature of sitting down, it demands you explore and experiment with different movements to make the most of the body parts that are available. The idea of 'Chair Duets' is to build a story through movement and ultimately create a working scene from it. According to Frantic Assembly, a story will naturally develop after adding meaning to the movement.



Round-By-Through

- This puts the 3 individual movements of 'round' , 'by' and 'through' into one piece to convey a storyline or emotion/theme towards the audience
- Round- This is the movement in which consists you to 'literally' go round a part of your partners body as a basis for the entire piece.
- By- Consists for you to be parallel to your partner
- Through- should be confined to only the use of the upper body/arms.



Konstantin Stanislavski

Naturalism



The System

This term refers to the methods used by Stanislavski to foster a good performance in his actors. It focuses mainly on helping an actor recall the emotions needed for a role. Don't confuse 'method acting' with the System. Method acting is how Stanislavski's work was interpreted by others, in particular, actors and directors in the film industry

Given circumstances

The given circumstances are the information about the character that you start off with and the play as a whole. How old is the character? What's their situation in the play and in relation to the other characters? Are there any notes provided about the play and its characters? Such notes and stage directions may not tell you everything you need to build a character but they are the starting point from which you'll work to examine the other questions.

Emotional memory

Emotional memory is when the actor finds a real past experience where they felt a similar emotion to that demanded by the role they are playing. They then 'borrow' those feelings to bring the role to life.

Method of physical actions

Imagine a simple activity like cleaning your teeth and then imagine a husband cleaning his teeth whilst deliberating on how to tell his wife about his mistress. This is a simple illustration of how a physical action can release the necessary emotions.

Subtext

The script of a play could be called the text. The **subtext** is the actual meaning and motivation behind the lines that are spoken and the actions taken. For example, the heroine might say to the hero, "I love you" and we might assume that it is the happy ending fairy tale moment. But the delivery would be very different if she was worried that he was about to walk out on her.

Magic If

Stanislavski said that the character should answer the question, 'What would I do if I was in this situation?' Also known as the '**magic if**', this technique means that the actor puts themselves into the character's situation. This then stimulates the motivation to enable the actor to play the role.

Objective

An **objective** is the reason for our actions. What are we trying to achieve? Life, people and circumstances constantly put up barriers in our way. Each of these barriers presents us with the objective of getting through them. You shouldn't try to express the meaning of your objective in terms of a noun, always use a verb, eg 'I wish to...'

Konstantin Stanislavski

Naturalism

Rehearsal Techniques

Circles of attention

Stanislavski believed that an actor needed a sense of isolation in order to produce a characterisation and avoid unnecessary tension. They needed to concentrate on themselves. This is the **first circle of attention**. Stanislavski referred to it as **Solitude in Public**. Beyond this, the actor might, in the 'second circle', be aware of the character he is addressing and in the 'third circle', the rest of the production. There's no direct awareness of the audience in this. These circles of attention are achieved through focus and concentration.

Tempo and rhythm

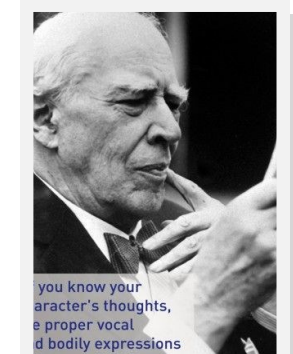
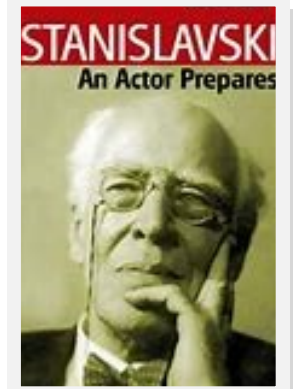
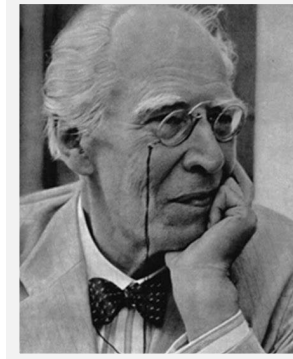
Stanislavski felt that an inner and an outer **tempo** and rhythm were vital if you were to enact movements truthfully and link them to the expression of emotions and feelings. He linked tempo to the speed of an action or feeling and the rhythm to the intensity or depth of the experience.

Physical action

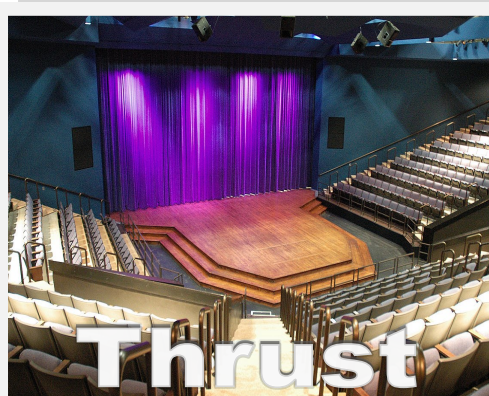
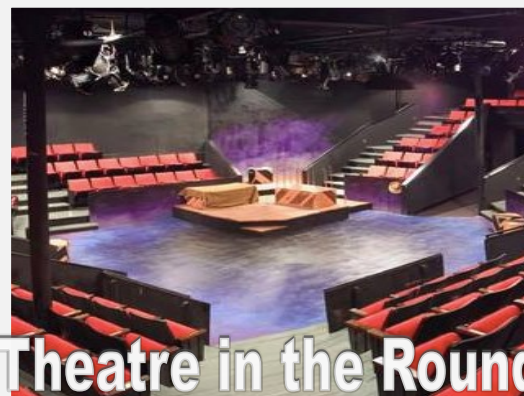
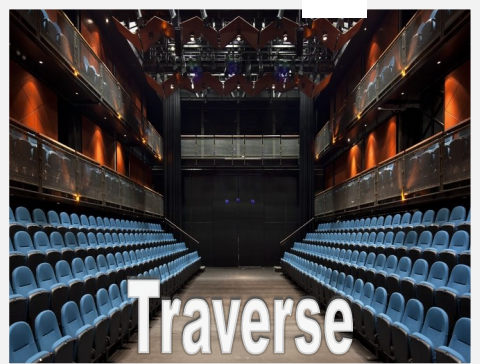
If a musician plays a musical instrument, they ensure before they start that the instrument is in tune so that they play the right notes and can do justice to the composer's work. Stanislavski felt that an actor should regard their body in the same light. It should be trained or tuned so the actor can call on it to perform effectively. Stanislavski didn't want to accept that an actor couldn't measure up to the physical demands of a role. The demands of a role may not just be athletic, but may have to do with vocal power or intensity of emotion.

Improvisation

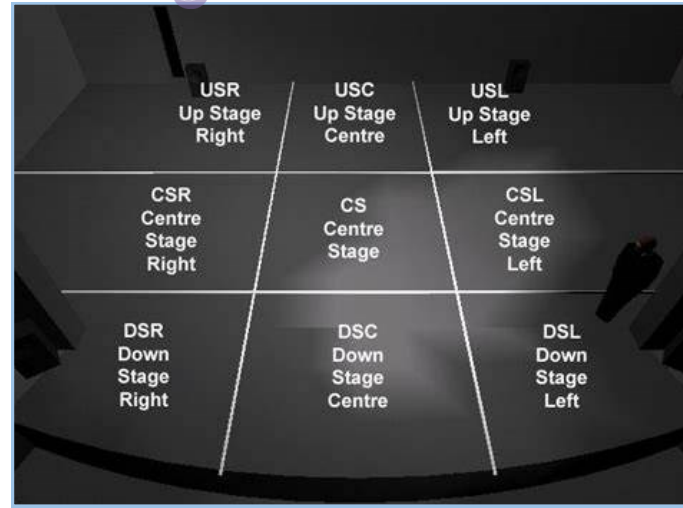
Improvisation is a crucial part of the rehearsal process and Stanislavski wanted the actor to reach far into themselves in creating the role. Improvisation is the idea of making a moment or a scene up on the spot to help with the development of ideas.



Section A Stage Configurations



Stage Positions



Tip: In the Component 1 written examination, you must always write about the stage positions from the actors perspective **NOT** the audiences.



Section A: Roles and Responsibilities

Theatre Maker: Stage Manager

What they do: Running the backstage elements of the play and supervising the backstage crew. Organising the rehearsal schedule and keeping lists of props and other technical needs. Creating a prompt book and calling the cues

Theatre Maker: Playwright

What they do: Writing the script of the play, including the dialogue and stage directions.

Theatre Maker: Sound designer

What they do: Designing the sound required for the performance, which may include music and sound effects. Considering if amplification, such as the use of microphones is needed and also creating a sound plot.

Theatre Maker: Director

What they do: Overseeing the creative aspects of the production. Developing a 'concept' or central unifying idea for the production. Liaising with designers, rehearsing the actors and ensuring that all technical elements of the production are ready. Giving notes to the actors to improve their performance.

Theatre Maker: Theatre manager

What they do: Running the theatre building, including overseeing the front of house staff (ushers) and the box office staff who sell tickets.



Theatre Maker: Understudy

What they do: Learning a part including lines and movement so they are able to take over the role for someone if needed when there is a planned or expected

Theatre Maker: Puppet designer

What they do: Designing the puppets for a production, taking into account the style of the puppets

Theatre Maker: Set designer

What they do: Designing the set of the play and the set dressing (objects placed on the stage). Providing sketches and other design materials before overseeing the creation of the set.

Section C: Live Theatre Review (Billy Elliot)

Setting: The musical is set during the miners strike in the mining village of county Durham (1984-1985). The community is under extreme threat be-

Pit Closures: By the 1980's, the demand for coal had dropped by 67% from the 1920's, due to cheap oil and gas being made available. This meant that a significant change had to be made to the coal mining industry, resulting in uneconomic pit closures.

Trade Unions: A trade union is an organisation/group of workers who join together to negotiate hours and working conditions. The leaders of the union work with managers to draw a contract, with the aim of giving workers what they want.

Strike and Picket Lines: A strike is when a large number of workers stop working in protest of pay and working conditions. In Billy Elliot, the strikes and protests are illustrated in the 'Solidarity' song. A picket line is when workers, chant and hold signs in front of where they work. This is illustrated in the 'Scab' scene as Jackie Elliot returns to work to support his son Billy.

Scabs: When Jackie Elliot makes the decision to return to work, he is called a scab by the miners that are on strike. Scabs refers to circumstances where union workers cross the picket line to work. They are referred to as Scabs as the picket line is symbolic of a wound and those who break its border to return to work are the scabs who try to heal that wound before it is treated/fixed.

Context and Setting

Violence: Workers on strike would sometimes try to prevent a desperate worker from crossing the picket line. Violence would often break out and riots. Most workers would not cross a picket line. This is a way of showing solidarity/support for the union.

Margaret Thatcher's Plan: By the 1970's the coal mining industry had come to symbolise everything that was wrong with Britain. Inefficient/costly– must be fixed). Anticipating mine workers strikes, the government built up the national stokes of coal ready, to cover a long strike (I.E- 'Striker for as long as you like, you are only hurting yourself')

Political/Social Context: In the early 1980's, Margaret Thatcher introduced new economic reforms that threatened the power of trade unions. Class division was still very strong in England. Miners became very poor whilst on strike, Thatcher's changes therefore widened the class gaps with society.



Billy's father and brother work and live in the mining community of Durham. Privatisation and anti-union measures by Margaret Thatcher in the previous decade had seen the closing of many mines and the decline in heavy industry. Major upheavals in employment meant threats to the struggling mining communities and the deeply entrenched traditional attitudes shaping men (which defined and restricted them).

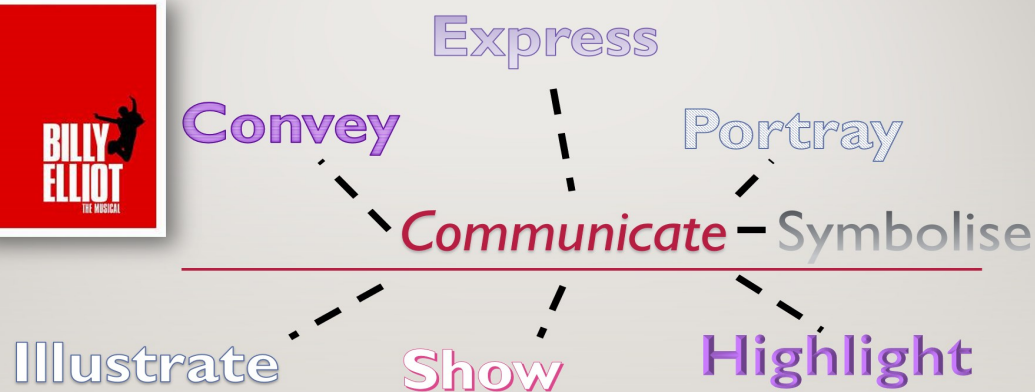
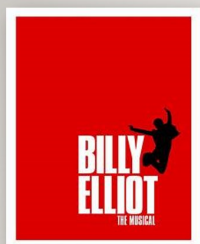
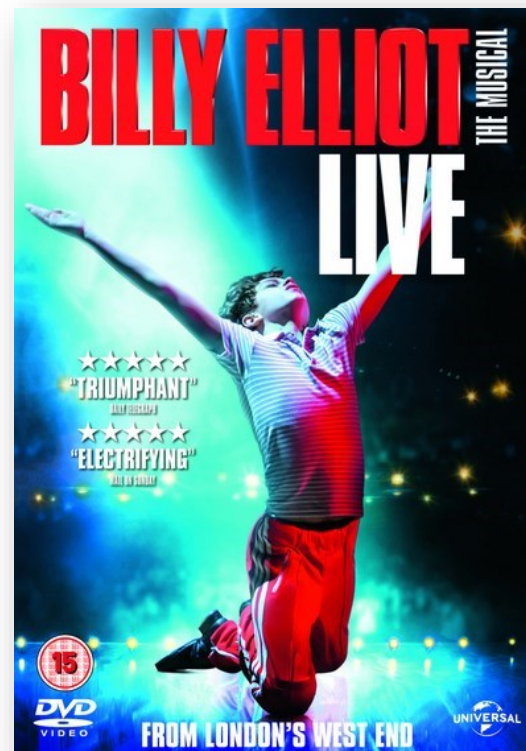


Section C: Live Theatre Review (Billy Elliot)

In your *Live Theatre Review*, use the below **PARMA** paragraph structure when you are analysing and evaluating your selected scene/scenes from Billy Elliot. This will help you access the (AO3) and (AO4) assessment criteria.

PARMA → Paragraph

1. *Precisely describe* a key moment in the production.
2. *Analyse* how *effective* the actors were at using their *theatrical skills* to *communicate meaning* to the audience.
3. *Relate* to the *context* of the musical.
4. Make a *judgement/evaluate* how *effectively* the actors *achieved the question*.
5. *Audience*-How does this moment impact on the audience?



Use a variety of words in your exam

Characters names:	Actors names:
Billy Elliot	Elliot Hanna
Jackie Elliot	Deka Warmasley
Tony Elliot	Chris Grahamson
Mrs Wilkinson	Ruthie Henshall