**Acting Methods Unit**

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**Unit Objective:**

Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of different acting methods by presenting a 2 minute scene using one acting technique and writing a 1-2 page paper outlining the pros and cons of different acting methods.

Students will be able to demonstrate their ability to construct a personal acting method by writing out the steps they use, theories/methods they are influenced by, and the styles they adhere to.

**Learning Level:**

Intermediate-Advanced Theatre

**Prior Experience:**

Students should have a solid background of the following material:

* Scene Work/Partner Work
* Voice and Diction
* Objectives/Tactics
* Script Analysis for Actors
* Ann Bogart’s Viewpoints

It is recommended that before doing this unit, the students should do a unit on Viewpoints, and another on Scene Work.

**2014 National Arts Core Theatre Standards:**

TH:Cr3.1.II.b. Use research and script analysis to revise physical, vocal, and physiological choices impacting the believability and relevance of a drama/ theatre work

TH:Pr5.1.II.a. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

TH: Re7.1.II.a. Demonstrate an understanding of multiple interpretations of artistic criteria and how each might be used to influence future artistic choices of a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cn11.2.II.a. Formulate creative choices for a devised or scripted drama/theatre work based on theatre research about the selected topic.

**Big Idea:**

There are various ways of approaching acting, and reasons for doing acting. There are different methods and techniques to choose from when acting, and it is up to the actor to do the choosing.

**Essential Questions**

*Creating:* How do theatre artists transform and edit their initial ideas?

*Performing*: What can I do to fully prepare a performance?

*Responding:* How do theatre artists comprehend the essence of drama processes and theatre experiences?

*Connecting*: In what ways can research into acting theories alter the way a drama process or production is understood?

**Enduring Understandings:**

*Creating:* Theatre artists refine their work and practice their craft through rehearsal.

*Performing:* Theatre artists create and refine their methods as they work.

*Responding:* Theatre artists reflect to understand the impact of drama processes and theatre experiences.

*Connecting:* Theatre artists critically inquire into the ways others have thought about and created drama processes and productions to inform their own work

**Key Knowledge and Skills:**

*Students will know…*

* The basics of how to do 4 different Acting Methods (Psychological, psycho-physical, physical, physical-social)

*Students will be able to…*

* See the pros and cons of each acting method.
* Apply different acting methods to a text and scene.
* Use critical thinking to begin to construct and describe their own acting methods.

Performance Tasks:

* Write a paper discussing the pros and cons of each acting method.
* Perform a 1-2 minute scene using one of the acting methods (other than psychological acting)

**Lessons**

**Lesson 1:** Intro to Acting Methods

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their ability to explain what their acting method is by writing out the definition of their own acting method and practicing traditional method acting techniques on a content-less scene.

**Lesson 2:** Psychological Acting: Emotional/Sense Memory

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of psychological acting, specifically sense and emotional memory, by playing the improve game Emotional Quadrants.

**Lesson 3:** Psycho-physical Acting: Chekov Exercises

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of psycho-physical acting techniques by using psychological gesture in practicing their objectives.

**Lesson 4: Psycho-Physical (Day 2)**

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of psycho-physical acting techniques by using Chekov exercises in practice and demonstration of their final assessment scene.

**Lesson 5:** Physical Acting

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their ability to incorporate interesting and abstract movement by creating a 30 second physical theatre piece using their scripts.

**Lesson 6:** Physical- Social/Cultural: Bertolt Brecht

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of the Verfremdungseffek (alienation) techniques by rehearsing a short scripted scene using this effect.

**Lesson 7:** Review

**Objective:** Students will be able to use the basics of four separate acting techniques by doing activity station exercises to rehearse each acting technique with their final scenes.

**Lesson 8:** Rehearsal for Final

**Objective:** Students will be able to apply their understanding of an acting method of their choice by rehearsing and previewing their scenes.

**Lesson 9:** Rehearsal for Final

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of different acting methods by previewing a 2 minute scene using one acting technique.

**Lesson 10:** Performances

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of different acting methods by presenting a 2 minute scene using one acting technique and turning in a 1 page paper on how each acting method changes and influences the scene.

**Lesson 1:** Intro to Acting Methods

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their ability to explain what their acting method is by writing out the definition of their own acting method and practicing traditional method acting techniques on a content-less scene.

**Standards:**

TH:Cn11.2.II.a. Formulate creative choices for a devised or scripted drama/theatre work based on theatre research about the selected topic.

TH:Pr5.1.II.a. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

**Materials:** projector, laptop, VGA adapter, LOTS of white board markers, 40 Acting Technique Note Sheet, 40 Writing Pre-assessment sheets, 20 Performance Pre-assessment sheets.

**Preparation:** Write starter on the board before class begins, print Note Sheets.

**Hook/Starter**: Write on the board, “How does Sir Ian McKellen act so well?” Have the students watch the following clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyoWmkhRyp8>

Afterwards, have a few of the students describe what they wrote down.

*Discuss*

1. Is acting just this simple? Why or why not?
2. Do you think there is one way to act? Why or why not?

**Step 1: Instruction**

*Explain the unit.*

This next unit will be focused on each of you developing your own acting method. During this unit, you’ll learn many different ways to communicate emotions, objectives, and moods to the audience. That will be our working definition of acting method: how you communicate emotions and ideas through characters and movement.

We’ll review method acting, but the majority of the unit will be focused on new methods. At the end of this unit, you will perform a short monologue, using the acting method of your choice. You will also write a short 1 page paper on how different acting methods change the way you express yourself onstage, and what your own acting method is. The goal of this unit is for each of you to begin to define what works best for you, as well as introduce you to different ways of doing acting.

Hand out the Acting Techniques Note Sheet. Explain that the things that we are going to focus on four different types of acting methods. There is no way we could cover everything in that method, or all the famous practitioners within each method, but this will give you a solid base. In your paper that you will write, I will be looking for these vocabulary, and your ability to apply them to acting. Make sure you know what these are. After the review day, you will turn this note sheet in for credit.

*Graffiti Board:*

Ask the students, “What are some things that must be part of an acting method?”

Have the students all come up to the board and write something. Tell them it is okay if someone else writes down what they were thinking, but they should write something anyways. You may need to give them an example like (Decide objectives, do intense physical warm-ups, etc.)

*Discussion*

1. What are things that are similar here?
2. Does anything on here seem to contradict something else?
3. Do you think there are several different acting methods represented here?
   1. Explain that most of the students have only interacted with one type of acting method, the psychological method. The pioneer of this method was Stanislavski, who lived in Russia. He is certainly not the only person to have contributed to the development of this acting method, but he has had a large influence on it. This acting method is the most popular in theatre and film (especially film.) It depends on “getting into the mind” of the character. Some people call this method “method acting.”

*Transition*

However, there are so many other ways to access emotion and communicate things to the audience. Throughout this unit, you’ll need to make decisions on what you think is most crucial to different types of acting methods, and what things are crucial to your own acting method.

**Pre-Assessment Part 1:** What is your method?

Pass out the pre-assessment papers. Explain to the students that this is just a pre-assessment so they will get credit for just doing the assignment, and try to answer as best as they can.

**Pre-Assessment Part 2:** Review Stanislavski/method acting

We are going to start by the popular Stanislavski techniques that most of you should be most familiar with.

What are some techniques you’ve learned in previous drama classes?

* Objectives, tactics, super-objectives, room conflict, emotional/sense recall, urgency, etc.

Do you notice how these all have to do with getting your mind to think like the character? That is because Stanislavski is a huge component of psychological method acting. The emotion is derived from the psyche.

We are going to review objectives and tactics today.

*Step 1:* Have students divide into pairs with the people they are sitting next to in class. In their partnerships, have them quickly discuss what objectives and tactics are. Then ask a few groups to share what they discussed.

Make sure they understand

1. Objective: What the character wants.
2. Tactic: How the character tries to get what they want. Best if they are in the pure verb form, for example, to convince, to beat, to challenge, etc.

Hand out the content-less scenes. Within their partnerships, have the students write down their objectives, and then the different tactics their character uses. They must use at least 2 tactics per character in this scene.

*Step 2:* When they are done have them perform in front of the class, or, if time is short, for other groups in the class. Write specific feedback for each group on a small piece of paper, and grade them according to the pre-assessment rubric below. Afterwards, discuss anything you noticed from their performances. Tell them what they did well, and what they could improve on. Have a student hand out the specific feedback you wrote during the performances.

Then discuss:

1. What do you think are the pros of using objectives/tactics, or even just psychological methods in general?

**Conclusion:** Good work everyone! We’ll continue discussing the psychological method tomorrow.

**Assessment Scoring:** Students will be given 20 participation points for the day, 5 points for the starter, and 20 points for the two pre-assessments. 10 of the participation points will come from participation in the class activities, the other 10 will come from participation in the class discussions.

**Adaptations:** Students who may need extended time to write out their pre-assessment response can use time at the end of the class when we are introducing the unit.

**Performance Pre-Assessment**

Graded on the student’s ability to use the Psychological Acting Method, specifically objectives and tactics.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Superior (15-13)** | **Excellent (12-10)** | **Good (9-7)** | **Fair (6-0)** | **Score** |
| **Application of Acting Method** | It is clear that my partner and I used the acting techniques appropriately, creatively, and boldly in our scene. | It is clear that my partner and I used the acting techniques, but choice could have been bolder. | It isn’t clear that we understood the acting technique that well, but evidences of acting choices are seen. | My partner and I didn’t use the acting techniques we were assigned, and didn’t make choices. |  |
| **Commitment** | It is clear my partner and I worked hard to memorize, rehearse, and perform this scene. | It is clear that we put forth a good effort, but the scene could’ve used some more rehearsal. | We weren’t really ready to perform (not memorized, not rehearsed, not blocked) but evidences of acting choices are seen. | We were not ready to perform at all. |  |
| **Blocking/Movement** | Our movement was appropriate and bold for the acting method we were assigned. | Our movement was mostly appropriate for the acting method we were assigned. | Our movement wasn’t really appropriate for the acting method we were assigned, but we did make some creative choices. | We didn’t have much movement. |  |
| **Emotion and Meaning** | We portrayed strong emotions or meaning through our voice, movement, and other scene choices. | We portrayed strong emotions or meaning through our voice, movement, and other scene choices most of the time. | We portrayed some emotions or meaning, but it was few and far between. | We didn’t incorporate emotion or meaning into our scene. |  |
| **Score** |  |  |  |  | /60 |

**Acting Techniques Vocabulary Notes Sheet**

Acting Method:

**Psychological Acting Terms**

Objectives

Tactics

Sense Memory (Recall)

Emotional Memory (Recall)

Stanislavski

**Psycho-Physical Acting Terms**

Psychological Gestures

Radiating

Receiving

Michael Chekhov

**Physical-Social Acting Terms**

Verfremdungseffekt (alienation effect)

Gestus

Bertolt Brecht

**Physical Theatre Terms**

Pantomime

Abstract Movement

Viewpoints

**Acting Techniques Unit Pre-Assessment**

Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Define the following terms:**

Psychological Method:

Objectives:

Tactics:

Emotional/sensory recall:

Psycho-physical method:

Psychological gestures:

Radiating:

Receiving:

Physical acting method:

Abstract movement:

Physical-social method:

Gestus:

Alienation Effect:

**Answer the following question in 2-3 paragraphs.**

“What is your acting method? Write out steps you take, theories you use, and/or styles you adhere to.”

#1: Oh

#2: Yes

#1: Why are you doing this

#2: It’s the best thing

#1: You canʼt mean it

#2: No, Iʼm serious

#1: What does this mean?

#2: Nothing

#1: Listen...

#2: No

#1: So different

#2: Not really

#1: Oh

#2: Youʼre good

#1: Forget it

#2: What?

#1: Go on

#2: I will

**A:**    **Hello.**  
**B:**    **Hello.**  
**A:   I didn't expect to find you here.**  
**B:   You did though. I might say the same for you.**  
**A:   Are you going to be busy between now and dinner?**  
**B:   Not really. Not busy.**  
**A:   Would you like to talk for a while?**  
**B:    I might. For a while.**  
**A:   Good.**  
**B:   Good.**

**Lesson 2:** Psychological Acting: Emotional/Sense Memory

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of psychological acting, specifically sense and emotional memory, by playing the improve game Emotional Quadrants.

**Standards:**

TH:Cr3.1.II.b. Use research and script analysis to revise physical, vocal, and physiological choices impacting the believability and relevance of a drama/ theatre work

TH:Pr5.1.II.a. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

**Materials:** 40 sugar and salt packages, index cards for exit cards, 30 pieces of paper, string

**Preparation:** Cut the pieces of string before class. Each quadrant should be at least 3-4 feet around.

**Starter:** Have the students write down their answer to, “Who is your favorite actor and why?”

*Discuss*

1. What are some of the things you wrote down?
2. Do we see similarities/differences?
3. Someone is probably bound to say the words “real” or “just like real life.” When they do ask, why is that important?

**Instruction** (5 minutes)

Purpose: To help the students identify what psychological acting looks like.

Yesterday we started discussing and practicing psychological acting techniques. It is important to note that most psychological methods are the basis of most of the acting that you see today in films, tv, and broadway theatre. It is an acting method that is trying to represent reality. This acting method has only been popular for the last 50ish years.

*Transition*

Psychological acting relies on the actor’s ability to put their mind (and thus body) into the experience of the character. Let’s practice some ways of putting our minds into the situation of a character. We are going to start by practicing what is called “sense memory” or “sensory recall.”

* What do you think this means?
  + To use your own memories of sensory experiences (for example, burning your hand on the stove) to inform your reaction in real life. You are substituting these memories for the ones that the character might have.

**Activity 1:** Sensory Recall Practice (20 minutes)

We are going to practice doing some Sensory Recall Activities. Just a note, if it feels like you cannot put your memory of your reactions into your body in a believable way, try just focusing on one thing. For example, if you are trying to act out stretching after you wake up, focus a specific place you are try to stretch.

Step 1: Being Cold

Get the class up on the stage, with everyone having a small individual place in the room. Have them think of a time when they were really cold. Encourage them to identify the specific places on their body that were cold. Was it their bear arms? Was it their toes? How did this effect their movement? Once they have thought of something, have them walk around as if they were cold.

*Step 2:* Practice being hot

Now, do the same thing but with heat.

*Step 3:* Practice feeling the wind in your hair.

*Step 4:* Tasting Salt

Hand out a packet of sugar and a packet of salt. Explain that all at once, we are going to eat the packet of salt (or eat as much as you can without throwing up, even if that is only the smallest taste.)

Now, we are going to pantomime this exact experience. Before we start, take a moment to think about how your muscles tightened, how it felt on your tongue, how it tasted, and all of the other sensations you felt when you ate it. Now on the count of three, we are going to recreate what happened. 1-2-3.

*Step 5*: Tasting Sugar

Now do the exact same thing with the sugar packets.

*Discussion (10 minutes)*

1. How did your memories inform your facial expressions, movements, and other things?
2. What do you think of this technique? Do you feel like this method will allow you to make believable actions on stage? Why or why not?

*Transition/Safety Discussion (10 minutes)*

We are going to take this memory recall to the next step. The next technique we are going to try is emotional recall. This is when you recall more emotional memories and use them as a substitute. This is a challenging technique, so we are going to try to start small. It is also one that we must be very careful with. This requires us to use emotional experiences from our own lives, which means we must be stewards over our own selves. Don’t dip into anything too emotional for these activities. Recalling emotional experiences can result in pulling out unresolved issues that may trigger your emotions in a way that you didn’t plan or want. In fact, the more resolved the memory, the better it is to pull from it.

* Why do you think it is better to pull from more resolved memories?
  + because it will allow you to get into character, but allow mature control over emotions.

Let me give you an example. When I was in college, I was assigned to a scene from the play, “Proof.” I was playing Catherine, a young woman who has just lost her father. At the time, I had just lost my own father only a month before. The first rehearsal I had with my scene partner, I tried to apply Emotional Recall from my recent memories of grieving. I wasn’t able to do it in a safe way because I was still going through that emotion. Recalling those emotions only made it so my memories and feelings were taking over my ability to become the character. I had to find another way to act out the scene, and other things to recall.

* In a situation like this, what are some other ways to use emotional recall? What other kinds of memories could you use?
  + Think about the specific emotions that are a part of grieving. Loss, hurt, shame, love, etc. You don’t have to have lost your father to have felt those things before. (That’s why it is called substitution.)
  + Have a trigger object. Instead of dragging yourself through the mud, think of an object or something else that may bring the emotions without having to go through the memories.
  + Create a new memory. Some famous actors do crazy things. Take this actor for an example.
    - Adrien Brody, actor from the Pianst: In order to accurately play the role of Władysław Szpilman, Brody literally gave up everything. Brody gave up his apartment, sold his car, disconnected his phones and moved to Europe. Why? Brody needed to truly feel what it was like to lose everything. He also broke up with his girlfriend, and stopped eating. He wanted to know what it would be like to be starving and have to work.

**Activity 2:** Emotional Recall Practice (20 Minutes)

Have the students take a deep breath before you start.

Step 1: Let’s start by working on laughing. Think of a time when you laughed really hard at something. What did that feel like emotionally? What did it feel like in terms of sensory experience? Now, let’s try laughing.

Step 2: Now let’s think of a different type of laughing, one that isn’t as hard and intense. Can you think about a time when you felt that? What did it feel like emotionally? What did it feel like in terms of sensory experience? Let’s try that laugh.

Step 3: Now let’s think about abstract experiences. Do the same activity, but this time, have the students think of a time when they felt the following words:

* Freedom, dislike, love

*Discussion*

1. How was your experience different and similar to our exercises on sense memory?
2. Was it easy? Why or why not?
3. How would this help you make believable choices?

**Informal Assessment:** Emotional Quadrants

We are now going to try playing around with sense and emotional memory in acting.

Step 1: Divide the class into groups of 8, and assign them to certain parts of the space. Give them each 4 pieces of paper and string. Explain that each of the groups will be doing the same improv activity.

Step 2: Have the students divide the scene in 4 quadrants, and allocate 4 different emotions to each quadrant. Demonstrate what their playing space should look like. Let them decide what emotions they want, but they have to remain appropriate. Here are some suggestions on possible emotional quadrants you could have: Sad, lonely, joyful, excited, surprised, terrified, grateful, etc. Explain that the players improvise a discussion between parent and child, but need to take on the emotion of the quadrant they are in. Each player will have 1-2 minutes in the activity.

Only two players will be able to go at a time, so the rest of the group should be a good audience for them. While the students are doing this activity, the teacher should be taking some brief feedback on how well students are accessing emotion. Also take notes on how well the class seems to be taking on the emotions of each quadrant.

Have the students clean up the quadrants 5 minutes before the class is over.

**Conclusion:** Exit Card

Before students exit the room, have them quickly answer the following question on a small piece of paper.

1. How well do you understand what the psychological acting method is? (5 is extremely well, 1 is not at all.)

**Assessment:** Students will receive 20 participation points for the day. They will get another 5 points for the exit card, and 5 points for the starter. Students will get informally graded on the exit card assessment.

**Adaptations:** Students who have difficulty speaking in the discussions can write down responses on a piece of paper. Extended time to answer verbally will be provided by the teacher.

**Lesson 3:** Psycho-physical Acting: Chekov Exercises

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of psycho-physical acting techniques by using psychological gesture in practicing their objectives.

**Standards:**

TH:Cr3.1.II.b. Use research and script analysis to revise physical, vocal, and physiological choices impacting the believability and relevance of a drama/ theatre work

TH:Pr5.1.II.a. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

TH: Re7.1.II.a. Demonstrate an understanding of multiple interpretations of artistic criteria and how each might be used to influence future artistic choices of a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cn11.2.II.a. Formulate creative choices for a devised or scripted drama/theatre work based on theatre research about the selected topic.

**Materials:** Character quotes from plays, laptop & videos, Print outs of scenes.

**Preparation:** Print out character quotes, print out scenes.

**Starter:** (5 minutes) Write on the board, “What are the some pros and cons of psychological acting?”

Have a short discussion about this.

**Instruction:** (10 minutes)Psycho-Physical

*Purpose:* To distinguish psychological acting from psycho-physical acting.

Great! Today we’ll be focusing on Psycho-Physical acting, specifically the Michael Chekhov’s acting techniques. Can anyone guess how this is different from psychological acting? (allow them to answer.) Let’s try to see what these two things look like.

Step 1: Watch *The Blind Side* clip

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPjYhPGkhGA

1. What do you notice about the acting style?
2. Where are they showing emotion the most? Why do you think that is?
3. What are some pros and cons to this acting style?

Step 2: Watch Michael Chekhov acting

Or http://www.tcm.com/mediaroom/video/640394/In-Our-Time-Movie-Clip-Life-Has-Chopped-Me-Down.html

1. How was their acting style different than the blind side clip? Why do you think that was?
2. Where are they showing emotion the most? Why do you think that is?

The psycho-physical technique relies upon drawing emotion from both the mind, and the body. In this technique, these two things are connected. This also makes sense because many psychology experiments have shown that when someone does the body language of an emotion (for example, smiling) the person will eventually feel that emotion (which can mean certain chemicals, like serotonin or the chemical that makes you happy, are released in the brain just by doing the physical action. Literally, fake it till you make it can work to your advantage.

Let’s begin exploring how our bodies and minds are connected with a warm-up.

**Warm-Up:** (10 minutes) Triangle Flow

*Purpose:* to get the students thinking about how their bodies can communicate abstract feelings.

The class should get into their groups for the performance, and then further divide so that everyone is in groups of 3.

Each group will get into a triangle (or a diamond if there needs to be a group of four), with everyone facing the same direction. The leader of the triangle will begin the stretching and moving. Make it slow, deliberate, and meaningful as a warm-up. It may be a good idea to demonstrate this before having the students do it.

Then at some point, the leader must find a way to non-verbally switch to another leader. After a while, that leader must find a way to switch to another leader.

After 5 minutes, stop the students.

*Discussion:*

1. What were some of the things you were feeling or thinking while doing your physical exercise? Was your body and mind connected? If yes, in what way? If no, why?

**Instruction:** (5 minutes) Psychological gestures

Let’s explore this idea of connectedness by doing psychological gestures. But first, let’s remind ourselves what a gesture is.

* 1. Thinking back to the viewpoints unit, what is the definition of a gesture?
     1. A shape with a beginning, middle and end.
  2. Does anyone feel like they can describe what psychological gestures?
     1. A movement that embodies the psychology of a character.
  3. How are psychological gestures related to viewpoint gestures? How are they different?
     1. Psychological gestures are a specific acting technique used to get into character, and to explore the relationship between mind and body for the character. They are always gestures (shapes with a beginning, middle, and end) but they are not to be used in a drama work necessarily. Only in the preparation of a dramatic role.

*Transition:*

Chekhov was trained by Stanislavski. Do you all remember who Stanislavski is? He notes in his book on acting that Stanislavski’s methods work for Stanislavski because he is naturally very connected to his body. However, Chekhov argues that most actors, especially beginning actors, are not very connected to their bodies. Because of this, actors need to prepare for their roles in very physical ways, not just by understanding the psychology.

Let’s practice this!

*Transition*

Have the step by step instructions written on the board.

Step 1: Create gesture in your mind.

Step 2: Begin to rehearse the gesture. Make it huge, full of energy, and abstract.

Step 3: Continue doing the gesture in a large, non-realistic way, while saying the line.

Step 4: Begin to make gesture more realistic, while saying the line. Keep the energy!

Emphasize and demonstrate the difference between realistic gestures and abstract. Go through the rest and ask for questions. Demonstrate quickly the whole process. Make sure the board is somewhere students can still see it. This will be a good visual for students who get confused or behind.

**Activity:** (10 minutes) Making Psychological gestures

Step 1: As a class memorize the following line: “Will you please stop what you are doing.”

Step 2: As a class we are going to practice putting our objectives into our body through gestures. I will tell you an objective that goes along with the line of dialogue you just memorized, and then you have got to follow the steps.

* Your character wants to get their friend to talk about what they have been keeping secret.

What would that feel like in your body? How would you express the urgency of the situation? Begin to see the gesture in your mind. This gesture should represent this desire, or your objective. Make sure the gesture is moving, big and abstract. Encourage students to over exaggerate. Feel the gesture in every part of their body.

Step 3: Now, begin to make the gesture. Remember, the more abstract the better. Feel free to change it as you are doing it. Repeat it over and over exploring how this gesture influences all of your muscles, joints, etc.

Step 5: Now, begin saying the line of the character while doing the gesture. Make sure your voice, your intentions, and your body are all in sync.

Step 5: After a minute or so of repeating this over and over, have the students gradually stop doing the psychological gesture, and just say the words. They should begin to find gestures and movement that seem more realistic, but maintain the intent, and expression of the psychological gesture.

Step 6: Now try this process again, but with a different objective:

* Your character wants to make themselves resist a delicious doughnut.

Step 7: Try the whole process again but this time with a line and objective from your favorite movie.

*Discussion*

1. What was your experience with this? Did the gesture help you in any way? If so, how? If not, why?
   1. Don’t throw out this technique just because the first time you tried it, it didn’t work. Finding true connectedness between your body and mind takes LOTS of practice. Years and years for many actors.

*Transition*

We are going to work more with this acting method tomorrow. However, we are going to practice this acting method using our scripts for our final performances. Keep in mind that we will be practicing a lot of different acting methods with these scripts before we make final decisions.

Tell them that they can choose their own partner for this assessment, however, they need to make sure it fits the scene. For example, two girls cannot do the Romeo and Juliet scene. That’s simply because of the nature of the scene. Today, you’ll be given a scene, but you will not be given what acting method you are supposed to use until after today’s activities. We are going to review each of the acting methods we’ve covered in relation to the scene you’ve been assigned. Then after you’ve done some practice with them all, you’ll be given the one you should focus on.

Project the scene list onto the screen: (or whatever list you create for your class; scripts not included)

Odd Couple----- Two characters, male or female

Barefoot in the Park---- 1 male, 1 female

Our Town---- 1 male, 1 female

Antigone---- 1 male, 1 female

Measure For Measure--- Two characters, male or female

Clean House- 2 women, 1 man

Now choose your groups! Only 2 groups can do each scene, so if you all choose the odd couple, I will make you change your scene.

**Activity 2:** Basic script analysis (10 minutes)

Step 1: Take the next ten minutes to read over your script, decide who will be who, and then come up with a main objective. You only have 10 minutes to do this, so please use the time wisely. Also, remember to discuss with your partner dates. Make sure you will both be here the day you are supposed to perform. Get each other’s contact information. (Learn from the last group project!)

Step 2: Look for smaller objectives your character has within the scene, as well as places where your character’s objective changes. Write down each changing objective.

Step 3: Now, take one part of the scene where you feel your character is fighting really hard to achieve their objective. Come up with a psychological gesture and make a video recording of you doing this.

**Conclusion:** Before you leave, please send me the video you recorded so that I can give you feedback!

**Assessment Scoring:** Students will receive 20 participation points for the day. They will get another 5 points for the starter. They will get an additional 5 points for the video recording.

**Adaptations:** Students who have difficulty speaking in the discussions can write down responses on a piece of paper. Extended time to answer verbally will be provided by the teacher.

**Character quotes:**

“Nothing happens. Nobody comes, nobody goes. It's awful.” – Waiting for Godot

“Oh, well, if you want original conversations, you'd better go and talk to yourself.”- Candida

“Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father's passin'.” – To Kill a Mockingbird

“I think we two have found the higher love.” – Arms and the Man

“I like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me.” – Noel Coward

“Nothing happens. Nobody comes, nobody goes. It's awful.” – Waiting for Godot

“Oh, well, if you want original conversations, you'd better go and talk to yourself.”- Candida

“Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father's passin'.” – To Kill a Mockingbird

“I think we two have found the higher love.” – Arms and the Man

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“Nothing happens. Nobody comes, nobody goes. It's awful.” – Waiting for Godot

“Oh, well, if you want original conversations, you'd better go and talk to yourself.”- Candida

“Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father's passin'.” – To Kill a Mockingbird

“I think we two have found the higher love.” – Arms and the Man

“I like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me.” – Noel Coward

“Nothing happens. Nobody comes, nobody goes. It's awful.” – Waiting for Godot

“Oh, well, if you want original conversations, you'd better go and talk to yourself.”- Candida

“Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father's passin'.” – To Kill a Mockingbird

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“Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father's passin'.” – To Kill a Mockingbird

“I think we two have found the higher love.” – Arms and the Man

“I like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me.” – Noel Coward

**Lesson 4: Psycho-Physical (Day 2)**

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of psycho-physical acting techniques by using Chekov exercises in practice and demonstration of their final assessment scene.

**Standards:**

TH:Cr3.1.II.b. Use research and script analysis to revise physical, vocal, and physiological choices impacting the believability and relevance of a drama/ theatre work

TH:Pr5.1.II.a. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

TH: Re7.1.II.a. Demonstrate an understanding of multiple interpretations of artistic criteria and how each might be used to influence future artistic choices of a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cn11.2.II.a. Formulate creative choices for a devised or scripted drama/theatre work based on theatre research about the selected topic.

**Materials:** Character quotes from plays, laptop & videos, Print outs of scenes.

**Preparation:** Print out character quotes, print out scenes.

**Hook:** Write on the board, “How do you use movement to achieve everyday objectives in your life?”

Allow a few students to answer. Ask students to demonstrate if they can. Relate all their answers back to the idea of psychological gestures. Then have the students hop up on the stage.

**Warm-Up:** (5 minutes) Shake-Down

Demonstrate while explaining. First start with the right hand and shake it while counting to 8. Then do the same with the left hand. Then the left foot, then the right foot. Repeat this, this time only counting to 7. Then the next round only count to 6, and so on. It should be fast, full of energy, and exciting.

**Instruction:** (5 minutes) Radiating

We’ve focused a lot on individual character work, but in most drama work, you are trying to achieve your objective through or with the help of someone else. For Stanislavski, this means you understand what tactics you are using to get what you want (to convince, to bribe, to beg.) Chekhov thinks that these things also need to be found in physicality. He calls it radiating and receiving.

1. Can anyone describe those for us?
   1. Radiating is the ability to send out the invisible essence of whatever quality, emotion, or thought you wish. It is an activity of your “will.”
   2. Receiving is the ability to “pull in” the qualities, thoughts, and feelings of another character in a scene.
   3. You can think of this as the ability to send or use tactics, as well as react or receive tactics by other characters.

Let’s practice it!

**Activity:** (10 minutes) Radiating

Step 1: Have the students walk around the space in an abstract way.

Step 2: Continue doing this, and imagine that there are invisible rays that stream from your movements into the space. Send the rays from your body into the space around you, in the direction of your movement and after each movement. The radiation of the rays must precede and follow your movements. Send rays in different directions, all at once, from various parts of body. Fill entire space around you with rays.

Step 3: One all of, or the majority of students have demonstrated that they can do this, allow them to relax. Sit in a close and tight group for discussion.

*Discussion*

1. How do you think the idea of radiation and psychological gesture are linked?

*Transition:* Let’s try Receiving now!

**Activity:** (10 minutes) A round of rhythm and movement page 92

Step 1: Have the class get into a circle. Explain that this exercise requires focus, even though it may seem very silly. The more you giggle and break character (or break the action) the less you and your neighbors will get out of this activity. Try your best to focus.

Explain that we will start off with one volunteer in the middle who will make any kind of movement. It can be as strange or unusual as you want. Just like with the machines we made, this movement needs to be accompanied by a sound. It will be repeated over and over. Once the group has seen it, they need to join in, trying to receive the movement/sound and copy it exactly. Stressing the exactness of it. That means that if a woman is in the middle, the men in the circle must try not to produce a “masculine” version of the movement, and vice versa.

After a few beats of the entire group copying the movement, the person in the middle will challenge someone else in the group to take their place. They do this by going up to a person, continuing the movement. The other person will continue to receive that movement as they trade places with the person in the middle and slowly transition into changing the movement.

Demonstrate this activity. It is easier to understand when seen.

Step 2: Play the game!

*Discussion*

1. In what ways were we receiving in this game?
2. How would you apply this to acting in a scene? What activity could you do to work on effective receiving?

Let’s try to combine psychological gestures, radiating, and receiving into acting a short scene.

**Assessment:** (25 minutes) Psycho-physical Practice and application

Step 1: Have the students get out their scripts. Have them practice the psychological gesture they created last time to begin getting in character.

Step 3: Now, have the pairs get together (if they separated.) Have them think again about what the objective of their character is. When you say, “Go” have them direct their psychological gestures towards their scene partner, as if they were radiating what they wanted to their scene partner. Describe and demonstrate as always.

Step 4: Have them continue doing this, but instruct one person in each pair to now receive the radiation. Then switch and have the other person receive. Describe and demonstrate again.

Step 5: Now, have the groups do this, but add all the words of the scene.

Step 6: Explain to the groups that they can now transition into making the story realistic. Tell them to let the movements and feelings they had in the exercise inform their acting and movement.

Step 7: Allow everyone to be able to perform their short sections for the class. Give them written feedback as you watch them.

Discussion

1. Give students feedback.
2. What are the pros and cons of this acting method?

**Conclusion/Exit Card:** Great work! Before you leave, I want to pull out a piece of paper. Answer the following question:

1. Rate yourself on how well you understand the psycho-physical acting method (1-5)
2. Is there a certain concept you are confused about? Do you have a question about anything.

That’s a very basic version of psycho-physical acting techniques. Next time we’ll be covering physical acting methods.

**Assessment Scoring:** Students will receive 20 participation points for the day. They will get another 5 points for the starter.

**Adaptations:** Students who have difficulty speaking in the discussions can write down responses on a piece of paper. Extended time to answer verbally will be provided by the teacher.

**Lesson 5:** Physical Acting

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their ability to incorporate interesting and abstract movement by creating a 30 second physical theatre piece using their scripts.

**Standards:**

TH:Pr5.1.II.a. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

TH: Re7.1.II.a. Demonstrate an understanding of multiple interpretations of artistic criteria and how each might be used to influence future artistic choices of a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cn11.2.II.a. Formulate creative choices for a devised or scripted drama/theatre work based on theatre research about the selected topic.

**Materials:** laptop & videos, Magic Box signs, content-less scenes

**Preparation:** upload videos, print magic box signs and content-less scenes.

**Starter:** “Does all acting have to be realistic? Why or why not?” (10 minutes)

After a minute or two, allow them to give some of their ideas out loud. Have a short discussion about this. Then explain that we are going to focus on physical theatre today. Contrary or in line to what you may have thought, physical theatre is a type of theatre that does not rely on realism, or realistic movement. Here is a definition.

* **Physical theatre** is a form of performance in which movement and physicality of the body has a predominant part in the narrative of a piece. This type of theatre often has close links with contemporary dance, Comedia dell'arte and mime. (http://www.birmingham-rep.co.uk/participate/resource-packs/i-was-a-rat/physical-theatre/)

*Transition*

Let’s watch an example!

**Hook:** Watch Robin Hood (10 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hI9t86hDNC0>

*Discuss*

1. What is unique about this?
2. In what ways did they use their bodies to communicate things to us as an audience?
3. How is this different than psycho-physical acting?

*Transition*

There are many ways to approach physical theatre. One of the ways, is through viewpoints, which we have already studied. So, in way you are all kind of experts already! In your theatre 1 class, each of you studied pantomime as well. Even though there are many different theories we could dive into, but instead we are going to build and expand upon the ones you already know.

For your notes, the principles we are going to focus on today are

1. Pantomime
2. Abstract movement
3. Viewpoints

Transition

Let’s start with pantomime! Can someone describe what this is?

**Warm-Up:** Magic Box (10 minutes)

*Purpose:* To warm them up to using their bodies to show different objects and emotions.

Step 1: Gesture for the students to come on the stage, and get into a circle. Pantomime everything. Then show the following signs or placards:

1. In front of me there is a box!
2. It is a magic box!
3. It is magic because it is invisible.
4. It is also magic because it can hold ANYTHING inside it.
5. (Think Mary Poppins.)
6. Each of us gets to choose something from the box…
7. And show the rest of the class what it is.
8. Do not talk or make noise while you do so.
9. I’ll go first!

Step 2: Demonstrate pantomiming taking something out the box, making sure to take your time and be very specific. Take something obvious out- like a baseball and bat. When you are done, pantomime passing the box to the student next to you.

*Discussion*

1. What are some important rules of pantomime that we should remember as we continue to explore physical movement?

**Activity 1:** Making objects, sets, and settings with our bodies and voices. (10 minutes)

*Purpose:* to practice using abstract movement to make concrete things.

Step 1: Have the students begin walking around the space. Explain that you are going to call out a setting of a story, then say 1-2-3 Go. When the teacher says go, the students will all begin making some kind of gesture, movement, or still image that they feel represents that setting. We are going to start by exploring ways our bodies can do this. Let’s try it. The first setting is: **Mountain.** As you are walking think about the different sounds you would hear, the different animals that would be there, and the different activities that would be happening there. Think about the different shapes you would see. Ready? 1-2-3- Go!

Step 2: Continue doing your gesture, movement, or still image, but now find a way that all of you can be doing your movements and images together, making one mountain. Maybe find people who are doing similar things. The goal is to unite the class in making one mountain.

Step 3: Do the same for a beach, a tropical ocean, and a corn field. Direct students in how they can make a more cohesive setting.

*Discussion*

1. What is the benefit of using our bodies to show settings and props instead of using backdrops, physical props, etc.?

*Transition*

Physical theatre is also about finding ways to express things by utilizing the expressive powers of our body. Viewpoints is a great way to do this. We are going to play around with viewpoints again, but we are going to do so in a more abstract way than we have before. Go ahead and return to your seats because I want to show you one more video quickly.

**Instruction 1:** Abstract movement (15 minutes)

Can someone define abstract movement?

* Movement that carries a lot of meaning (explores themes, denotes places, activities, etc.) but isn’t realistic.

Step 1: (If time) Watch Tightrope dance (3:00-4:45)

Preface video. This is a short scene created for a community outreach project called “Built.” It is all about the challenges Americans face when trying to find a place to live, including poverty, prejudice, food deserts, etc. It was created as part of an interactive game to raise awareness about these issues. Here we see two people trying to pick out a house.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0Ek3xK8HUo>

*Discuss*

1. In what ways did they use their bodies to express themes, and abstract emotions?

**Activity 2:** Practice Abstract movement.

Step 1: Have the students get onto the stage again, and find a partner. Tell them that I want them to find a frozen image with their partner to express, “anger.” Take a minute to think or discuss it. Ready? 1-2-3 Go!

Step 2: Now find another way, a less natural or realistic way to express anger. Take a minute to think/discuss it. Ready? 1-2-3 Go!

Step 3: Now let’s try expressing heartbroken. You can decide one character is heartbroken if that makes it easier. Take a minute to think/discuss. Ready? 1-2-3 Go!

Step 4: Now try another way of showing this.

\*Give the students feedback. Make sure to let them know if they are doing abstract, symbolic movement as opposed to realistic movement.

Step 5: Give feedback.

**Assessment/Activity 3:** Expressive movement and gestures (25 minutes)

*Purpose:* To practice using their bodies to make abstract things.

We are now going to practice using abstract movement a text. Remember, this can include pantomime, but it should be much more than that. Think of the symbolic movement in the Tightrope video.

Step 1: Get into your groups for the final scene. With your partner, discuss ways in which movement could be a part of your scene. Are there climatic moments that could be portrayed through movement? (Ex. Fights, disagreements, realizations, etc.) Are there ways you could use the body to show the environment? Think about how you can incorporate the viewpoints.

Step 2: Make a decision, and begin choreographing and practicing! Remember, what you choreograph must be able to fit within the scene.

Step 3: You have 10 minutes to figure out a way to tell this story (or part of the story) with abstract movement. It isn’t a silent scene, but the narrative should be told via movement and not words. It doesn’t need to be long, only 30 seconds to 1 minute in length.

* If they are having a hard time finding a place to start, instruct them to create still images of major climatic moments, or of high emotional moments. Then find ways to bridge those images together with movement.

Step 4: Allow each group to perform. Give written feedback of how they are doing.

*Discussion*

1. What are the pros and cons of this acting method?

**Assessment Scoring:** Students will receive 20 participation points for the day. They will get another 5 points for the starter.

**Adaptations:** Students who have difficulty speaking in the discussions can write down responses on a piece of paper. Extended time to answer verbally will be provided by the teacher. Students who may need extended time to rehearse may perform next class.

**Lesson 6:** Physical- Social/Cultural: Bertolt Brecht

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of the Verfremdungseffek (alienation) techniques by rehearsing a short scripted scene using this effect.

**Standards:**

TH:Cr3.1.II.b. Use research and script analysis to revise physical, vocal, and physiological choices impacting the believability and relevance of a drama/ theatre work

TH:Pr5.1.II.a. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

TH: Re7.1.II.a. Demonstrate an understanding of multiple interpretations of artistic criteria and how each might be used to influence future artistic choices of a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cn11.2.II.a. Formulate creative choices for a devised or scripted drama/theatre work based on theatre research about the selected topic.

**Materials:** “V” Effect Slide show, 40 “V” Effect jig saw activity notes, 40 short scenes

**Preparation:** Print jig saw and short scene things.

**Starter:** Write on the board: “Where does the emotion originate from in psychological acting, psycho-physical acting, and physical acting?” (10 minutes)

*Transition*

We are now finishing up physical theatre and moving onto the last acting method we’ll focus on in this unit, the physical-social acting method. We are going to focusing on the practitioner Bertolt Brecht.

**Instruction 1**: The “V” effect (10 minutes)

Present a slide show. Then ask the students

* In what ways do you see this differs from Stanislavski’s psychological acting?
* Is this realistic?

**Activity 1**: Gestus Warm-up (10 minutes)

Step 1: Place in pairs at opposite sides of the room. Then ask them to shout nursery rhymes across the room to each other – all at the same time! Can they really hear? NO! Explain that they have to rely on body / gesture to get across the rhyme itself. Watch how the movements become bigger. Then tell them that it is a matter of life and death importance that the rhyme is communicated (e.g. secret code in war). Then repeat the exercise and examine use of gesture.

*Discuss:*

1. How does it convey the importance of the message?
2. What did they do to help convey the meaning when words were limited? This difference is GESTUS.

**Activity 2:** Gestus Practice (10 minutes)

Step 1: With a partner, decide on two opposite things, for example: Romeo and Juliet / summer and winter / cat and mouse / sweet and sour / war and peace / rich and poor. Now, decide on two opposite gestures for them that somehow express how they feel about each other. They need to be opposite emotions though. For example, if I was doing Romeo and Juliet, Romeo might gesture towards Juliet in a manly commanding way. Juliet then would walk towards him more submissively, making herself small as she does so.

Step 2: Have the groups perform their gestures for another pair.

*Transition*

Gestus is one of the most important parts of this acting method that you need to know, however, many elements go into creating the “V” Effect.

**Activity 2:** Jig Saw- “V” Effect (30 minutes)

Step 1: Get into your groups for the final assessment. Have them get out their scripts and discuss:

1. How and where could you use gestus in your script?

Practice this for 2 minutes. After two minutes explain that there are other ways to “alienate the audience” although for our purposes, gestus is the most important.

Step 2: Hand each group the V-Effect reading material. Explain that they have 10 minutes to read the material as a group. Afterwards they should discuss

1. How could you use some of these techniques as well as gestus in your scene?

Step 3: Tell the students that they are going to present 30 seconds to 1 minute of their scene using at least 3 of the ideas they came up with from the “V” effect reading. They have 10 minutes to put it together together. They are allowed to change the script, add to it, or take away from it in any way they see fit. In short, their scene must contain gestus and 3 other theatrical devices.

* Explain that they don’t need to worry about the tech things as much (lighting, etc.) Focus more on all the other things.

**Assessment:** Perform! (10 Minutes)

Step 4: Perform for the class. Give written feedback.

**Assessment Scoring:** Students will receive 20 participation points for the day. 5 will come from participation in the activities and the other 10 will come from participation in the discussions. They will get another 5 points for the starter.

**Adaptations:** Students who have difficulty speaking in the discussions can write down responses on a piece of paper. Extended time to answer verbally will be provided by the teacher. Students who may need extended time to may perform next class.

**Devices 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.

**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 PowerPoint 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.

For example, a married couple are arguing and the wife is very upset. If the actress held up a placard saying ‘I’m miserable’ that wouldn’t tell us anything about the character that we didn’t already know. However, if her placard said ‘I’m having an affair’ or ‘I’ve never loved him’ the audience would be forced to consider other aspects of their relationship and to think about deeper reasons behind her tears.

# Brechtian staging

# Multi-roling

Multi-roling is when an actor plays more than one character onstage. The differences in character are marked by changing voice, movement, gesture and body language but the audience can clearly see that the same actor has taken on more than one role. This means the audience are more aware of the fact that they are watching a presentation of events. Cross-sex casting is also possible in Epic theatre as we don’t need to suspend our disbelief.

# Split-role

This is where more than one actor plays the same character. For instance, the actor playing the main character might rotate from scene to scene. This keeps that character representational and inhibits emotional involvement and attachment on the part of the audience.

# Minimal set / costume / props

Set, costume and props are all kept simple and representational. Elaborate costumes might mean that the sense of theatre, of pretending to be something else, was lost.

Brecht did believe in [**historicism**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zwmvd2p/revision/5#glossary-z6twhyc) as a convention ofverfremdungseffekt. Although mise-en-scène or the stage setting was minimal, there was always a sense of authenticity to production elements apart from a little sound and lighting. For example, Mother Courage’s cart in the National Theatre production is stocked full with realistic props that Mother Courage would need for authenticity. The cart is the fifth member of the family according to Brecht so there are examples of props being as important as characters in his plays.

# Symbolic props

Often one item can be used in a variety of ways. A suitcase might become a desk, or a car door or a bomb.

# Lighting

Brecht believed in keeping lighting simple as he didn’t want the production values to overshadow the message of the work. He believed in using harsh white light as this illuminates the truth.However, many modern productions do use lighting effects. The important thing is that the audience still see the theatre, so often they will see production personnel, such as backstage crew, in action on the stage rather than hidden.

# Song and dance

This is a good way to ensure that the audience sees the theatre and are reminded of the fact they are watching a play. Often in Brechtian theatre the style of the music and the lyrics jar, they don’t seem to fit together in style. This distances the audience further.

It’s worth listening to the song ‘Mack the Knife’ from The Threepenny Opera by Brecht and Kurt Weil. Notice how the musical arrangement and melody are upbeat and joyous, yet the lyrics are sinister and dark. This is a very Brechtian approach. One of the most famous lines from this work would still appeal to a modern audience: Who is the bigger criminal: he who robs a bank or he who founds one?

# Spass

Spass literally translates as ‘fun’. Brecht wanted to make his audience think. He realised that while we are laughing we are also thinking. So much so that the playwright Eugène Ionesco called him a ‘postman’ because he was always delivering messages! However, Brechtian work isn’t boring and it’s definitely not always serious either. Even if the message itself is serious Brecht realised that comedy could be an excellent way of engaging the audience and forcing them to think about issues.

Spass was also an excellent way to break the tension. Brecht needed to break rising tension to stop the audience from following characters on their emotional journey. It might be used in the form of a comic song, [**slapstick**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zwmvd2p/revision/7#glossary-zthjpv4) or physical comedy or even a stand-up routine. It’s ‘silliness’ in effect but often makes strong social comment in the way it’s used in the treatment of a serious subject.

For example, a very serious work addressing suicide might break the action at a key moment in a character’s unhappiness to break into a[**parody**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zwmvd2p/revision/7#glossary-zhpqn39) of an American advert:

*Are you feeling low? Depressed? Think there’s no way out? Then you need new ‘End it All’...*

The poor taste of this would be shocking for an audience. But it actually highlights the pain of depression through contrast and black comedy. The audience will laugh and then question **why** they laughed.

# Gestus

Gestus, another Brechtian technique, is a clear character gesture or movement used by the actor that captures a moment or attitude rather than delving into emotion. So every gesture was important. Brecht and his actors studied photographs of the plays in rehearsal to ensure each moment worked effectively. Could the audience tell by the actor’s gestures alone what was happening in the scene?

Brecht didn’t want the actors to be the character onstage, only to show them as a type of person. For example, the boss who is corrupt and smoking a fat cigar as his workers starve is representative of every boss who profits through the exploitation of others. For this reason Brecht will often refer to his characters by archetypal names, such as ‘The Soldier’ or ‘The Girl’.

The interpretation will be built on the character’s social role and why they need to behave as they do, rather than looking inwardly at emotional motivation. So we judge the character and their situation, rather than just empathising with them.

Gestus is also gesture with social comment. For example, a soldier saluting as he marches across a stage is a gesture. But if he was saluting as he marched over a stage strewn with dead bodies, it would be Gestus as a social comment about the type of person he represents. Mother Courage’s silent scream in the face of her son’s dead body is strange. Therefore we think of why she must hide her feelings rather than losing ourselves in the emotion. We react asthinking human beings as Helene Weigel – Brecht’s wife and partner in work - puts it.

**Lesson 7:** Review

**Objective:** Students will be able to use the basics of four separate acting techniques by doing activity station exercises to rehearse each acting technique with their final scenes.

**Standards:**

TH:Cr3.1.II.b. Use research and script analysis to revise physical, vocal, and physiological choices impacting the believability and relevance of a drama/ theatre work

TH:Pr5.1.II.a. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

TH: Re7.1.II.a. Demonstrate an understanding of multiple interpretations of artistic criteria and how each might be used to influence future artistic choices of a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cn11.2.II.a. Formulate creative choices for a devised or scripted drama/theatre work based on theatre research about the selected topic.

**Materials:** 40 Final Assessment rubrics, projections of scene list and scene-acting method list, 2-3 print outs of each of the final scenes, Acting method station sheets, 3 tablets, 35 card stock papers (for placards), markers for placards.

**Preparation:** Get rubrics, finals scenes, acting method instruction sheets printed. Assemble all of the materials for each of the stations before class, and set up.

**Starter:** Write on the board, “What relationship does the actor have to the audience in psychological acting, psycho-physical acting, physical acting, and physical-social acting?” (5 minutes)

Allow them to share their answers. They should get something like

* Psychological Acting: unaware, fourth wall (usually)
* Psycho-physical acting: unaware, Fourth wall (usually)
* Physical Acting: Could be anything. Unaware or Aware
* Physical-Social Acting: Direct connection, total awareness

This is important to know because it will is crucial to blocking. Speaking of which, today we are going to assign scenes and start preparing for the final assessment!

**Instruction 1:** Final Assessment Info (10 minutes)

Step 1:Pass out the final assessment rubric papers. Remind them that the final is 2 part. They will be acting a short scene, as well as writing a 1 page paper. Let’s start off by talking about the paper**.** (Go over the assignment and rubric. Ask for questions.) Remind them that this paper is worth more than the final performance, and explain why again.

Step 2:Then discuss the requirements for the final scene.

**Activity 1:** Basic script analysis (10 minutes)

**Activity 2:** Acting Method Stations (50 minutes)

Step 1: Explain to the students that we are now going to apply the acting principles we’ve learned to the scenes we’ve been given. We need about 3 groups per station. It doesn’t matter which one you start at because you are going to go to each one of them. They should follow the instructions on the paper that is on the wall. They have 10 minutes at each station. When the teacher rings the cow bell, the students should change stations. Here are the basic activities that will be happening at each station. At the end of the lesson there are the actual flyers you should hang.

Station 1: Psychological Acting

* Identify different tactics in your script, and write them in. Then find 1 way you can incorporate sensory memory and 1 way you can incorporate emotional memory. Mark those in your script.

Station 2: Psycho-physical Acting

* One partner at a time will do the psychological gesture exercise. The other partner will take pictures to create a flip book, or progression of the psychological exercise.

Station 3: Physical Acting

* Video Tape: Choreograph a small abstract movement sequence that can be incorporated into your scene.

Station 4: Physical-Social Acting

* Find a way to use Gestus in the scene. Take a picture with some kind of placard to accompany it.

I know that we have already done these with your script, but I want you to find a new way to incorporate the acting method into your script.

As they are going around to each station, walk around and help students who look like they are in need help. Make sure to keep track of the time!

*Discussion*

1. What was it like applying all different acting methods to one scene? How did the scene change?

**Conclusion**

Explain that now the students will receive their acting method assignment. No one will be doing the psychological method because you all already have a lot of experience with that. Project the following:

**Psycho-physical Scenes**

Barefoot in the Park

Our Town

Odd Couple

**Physical Scenes**

Barefoot in the Park

Clean House

**Physical- Social Scenes**

Antigone

Measure For Measure

Tell them that they only have 1 1/2 class periods to get this scene down, so it would be best if they came to class memorized next class.

**Assessment Scoring:** Students will receive 20 participation points for the day, and 10 points for completion of all the review activities. They will get another 5 points for the starter.

**Adaptation:** Students who have difficulty speaking in the discussions can write down responses on a piece of paper. Extended time to answer verbally will be provided by the teacher. Students who may need extended time to finish this activity may come in during the MAP period, or finish next class. This may require they have a shorter scene than other people.

# Station 1: Psychological Acting Method

Goal: To mark up script with tactics and sense/emotional memory notes.

Step 1: Identify different tactics your character uses in your script. Write them down in the script.

\*\*Reminder: Tactics are what a character does in an attempt to achieve their goal. They need to be in the pure verb form (to \_\_\_\_\_\_) and must go through another person. ‘To walk away’ is not a tactic. ‘To avoid’ is. For example:

(to force) Sally: Give back my ball!

Tommy: Sorry, don’t want to.

(to soften) Sally: (puppy dog eyes) Pretty please???

Step 2: Then find 1 way you can incorporate sensory memory and 1 way you can incorporate emotional memory. Mark those in your script. For example:

Jenny: Do you always eat pizza for breakfast?

(emotion: Nostalgia) Susie: Not since Henry died. It was the only breakfast he ever ate.

(emotion: sympathy) Jenny: Oh. I’m so sorry for your loss.

# Station 2: Psycho-physical Acting Method

Goal: To make a visual flip-book showing the psychological gesture character preparation exercise.

Step 1: Decide which line of dialogue most directly encompasses your objective.

Step 2: Now, think of a way to show through an expressive gesture what your character’s objective is. Do this gesture over and over (at least 8 times.) Have your partner take a picture with the tablet of you doing this.

Step 3: Continue doing your psychological gesture, but begin saying the line you choose in step 1. Have your partner take a picture of you doing this too.

Step 4: Continue both of these things, but gradually let your gesture become more realistic. Do this until you feel you have been able to incorporate the psychological gesture effectively. Have your partner take a picture during this final stage.

Step 5: Switch partners, and do the activity all over with the second partner.

# Station 3: Physical Acting Method

Goal: Choreograph a small abstract movement sequence that can be incorporated into your scene, and record it!

Step 1: With your partner, discuss ways in which movement could be a part of your scene. Are there climatic moments that could be portrayed through movement? (Ex. Fights, disagreements, realizations, etc.) Are there ways you could use the body to show the environment? Think about how you can incorporate the viewpoints.

Step 2: Make a decision, and begin choreographing and practicing! Remember, what you choreograph must be able to fit within the scene.

Step 3: When you are finished rehearsing, video record it with the tablet.

# Station 4: Physical-Social Acting Method

Goal: Practice the Alienation effect by incorporating gestus into one part of your scene, as well as a placard.

Step 1: Answer the following questions

1. What political or social statement could this scene be making?
2. How can the relationships be polarized, or be made to be opposites of each other? What might that say about the message of the show?

Step 2: Start thinking of how you could use gestus (gestures) to show relationship differences between characters. How can you emphasize the person in power? How can you use gestures to make a political or social statement?

Step 3: Begin rehearsing and practicing your ideas!

Step 4: Lastly, find a way to incorporate a placard into your piece. Take a picture of you doing the gesture and with the placard.

**Lesson 8:** Rehearsal for Final

**Objective:** Students will be able to apply their understanding of an acting method of their choice by rehearsing and previewing their scenes.

**Standards:**

TH:Cr3.1.II.b. Use research and script analysis to revise physical, vocal, and physiological choices impacting the believability and relevance of a drama/ theatre work

TH:Pr5.1.II.a. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

TH: Re7.1.II.a. Demonstrate an understanding of multiple interpretations of artistic criteria and how each might be used to influence future artistic choices of a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cn11.2.II.a. Formulate creative choices for a devised or scripted drama/theatre work based on theatre research about the selected topic.

**Materials:** None.

**Preparation:** None.

**Starter:** Write on the board, “What are the acting techniques I need to incorporate into my scene?”

*Transition*

Today will be a rehearsal day. Hopefully some of you came memorized. If you didn’t, there’s still a little bit of time. You’ll have half a class period rehearsing next class period, but we will begin performances next class period.

When you feel ready, you need to preview your scene with me. I’ll give you specific feedback on things to work on.

**Activity 1:** Rehearsal!

Float around the room, helping keep students on task, answering questions, and gaging progress.

**Conclusion:** Remember, next time we will start performances, so if you weren’t fully memorized today, make sure you are next time! You’ll also have a little time to work on your scenes more.

**Assessment Scoring:** Students will receive 20 participation points for the day. They will get another 5 points for the starter.

**Adaptation:** Students who may need extended time to rehearse may come in during the MAP period, or finish next class. This may require they have a shorter scene than other people.

**Lesson 9:** Rehearsal for Final

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of different acting methods by previewing a 2 minute scene using one acting technique.

**Standards:**

TH:Cr3.1.II.b. Use research and script analysis to revise physical, vocal, and physiological choices impacting the believability and relevance of a drama/ theatre work

TH:Pr5.1.II.a. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

TH:Cn11.2.II.a. Formulate creative choices for a devised or scripted drama/theatre work based on theatre research about the selected topic.

**Materials:** 40 Rubrics for final assessment grading

**Preparation:** Print rubrics.

**Starter:** No starter.

*Transition*

Today will be half rehearsal/half performance day. We’ll also finish up any previews we didn’t get done last time. You have the next 40 minutes to practice your scenes. The last 40 minutes will be spent doing performances.

Just a reminder, your papers are due next class period.

**Activity 1:** Rehearsal! (40 minutes)

Float around the room, helping keep students on task, answering questions, and gaging progress.

**Activity 2:** Performances

After each group performs, allow the students to give verbal feedback to the groups.

**Conclusion:** Papers are due next class!

**Assessment Scoring:** Students will receive 20 participation points for the day. They will get 10 points for completing the preview. Their final performance will be graded out of 60 points.

**Adaptation:** Students who may need extended time to rehearse may come in during the MAP period, or finish next class. This may require they have a shorter scene than other people.

**Lesson 10:** Performances

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of different acting methods by presenting a 2 minute scene using one acting technique and turning in a 1 page paper on how each acting method changes and influences the scene.

**Standards:**

TH:Cr3.1.II.b. Use research and script analysis to revise physical, vocal, and physiological choices impacting the believability and relevance of a drama/ theatre work

TH:Pr5.1.II.a. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

TH:Cn11.2.II.a. Formulate creative choices for a devised or scripted drama/theatre work based on theatre research about the selected topic.

**Materials:** 40 Rubrics for final assessment grading

**Preparation:** Print rubrics.

**Starter:** Write on the board, “What acting methods or techniques that we studied during this unit were your favorite and why?”

Make sure to turn in your paper!

*Transition*

Today will be a performance day! Take the next 5 minutes to quickly run through scenes.

**Activity 1:** Performances

After each group performs, allow the students to give verbal feedback to the groups.

**Conclusion:** Great job! Awesome creative choices!!

**Assessment Scoring:** Students will receive 20 participation points for the day. They will get another 5 points for the starter. Their final performance will be graded out of 60 points, and their final papers will be graded out of 60 points as well.

**Adaptation:** Students who may need extended time to rehearse may come in during the MAP period, or finish next class. This may require they have a shorter scene than other people.

**Acting Techniques Paper Rubric**

DUE:

Write a paragraph on the pros of cons of using the psychological acting method, another on the psycho-physical method, another on the physical method, as well as the physical-social method. Then write out a description of what you perceive is your own acting method, or what you would like it to be. Write down steps, theories/methods you use, and/or styles you adhere to. Feel free to write about how your acting method has changed since you wrote the pre-assessment. The paper should be 1-2 pages.

1. Pros and cons of using the psychological acting method
2. Pros and cons of using the psycho-physical method
3. Pros and cons of using the physical method
4. Pros and cons of using the physical-social method
5. Describe in 1-3 paragraphs your own acting method.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Superior (20-18)** | **Excellent (17-13)** | **Good (12-9)** | **Fair (8-0)** | **Score** |
| **Knowledge** | It is clear that I understand many different methods of acting. | It is clear that I understand some of the differences between acting methods. | It is clear that I understand 1 or 2 methods vaguely, but I am confused on some of the principles. | It is clear I don’t really understand the concept of an acting method. |  |
| **Application** | I understand different acting techniques, and can make strong choices about what techniques and methods are best for me. | I have some understanding of different acting techniques, and can mostly make choices about what techniques and methods are best for me. | I understand 1 or 2 acting methods vaguely, and I can’t really articulate what is the best acting method for me. | I don’t really understand the difference between acting techniques, and so my choices about what techniques and methods are best for me is weak. |  |
| **Organization** | My paper is super easy to follow and read. All the ideas are connected, and there is no confusion. Each paragraph begins with a topic sentence and supporting evidences and statements. | My paper is a little difficult to read, but the paragraphs stay on topic. In general, you can understand what I’m trying to say. | I’ve made it so you can follow along pretty well, but it could have benefitted from going through a rewrite process. | There is no real sense of direction. It is more a jumble of notes and ideas written down than a finished paper. |  |

Total: /60

**Acting Techniques Final Scene** DUE:

Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of different acting methods by presenting a 2-3 minute scene using one of the acting methods learned in class. Students will not be graded on the time, but the content.

**Psychological Acting**: Objectives, Tactics, Emotional & Sense Memory

**Psycho-physical Acting:** Objectives, Psychological Gestures

**Physical Acting:** Objectives, Pantomime, Abstract Movement, Viewpoints

**Physical-Social Acting:** Objectives, Gestus, Alienation Effect, Social Moral or Message

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Superior (15-13)** | **Excellent (12-10)** | **Good (9-7)** | **Fair (6-0)** | **Score** |
| **Application of Acting Method** | It is clear that my partner and I used the acting techniques appropriately, creatively, and boldly in our scene. | It is clear that my partner and I used the acting techniques, but choice could have been bolder. | It isn’t clear that we understood the acting technique that well, but evidences of acting choices are seen. | My partner and I didn’t use the acting techniques we were assigned, and didn’t make choices. |  |
| **Commitment** | It is clear my partner and I worked hard to memorize, rehearse, and perform this scene. | It is clear that we put forth a good effort, but the scene could’ve used some more rehearsal. | We weren’t really ready to perform (not memorized, not rehearsed, not blocked) but evidences of acting choices are seen. | We were not ready to perform at all. |  |
| **Blocking/Movement** | Our movement was appropriate and bold for the acting method we were assigned. | Our movement was mostly appropriate for the acting method we were assigned. | Our movement wasn’t really appropriate for the acting method we were assigned, but we did make some creative choices. | We didn’t have much movement. |  |
| **Emotion and Meaning** | We portrayed strong emotions or meaning through our voice, movement, and other scene choices. | We portrayed strong emotions or meaning through our voice, movement, and other scene choices most of the time. | We portrayed some emotions or meaning, but it was few and far between. | We didn’t incorporate emotion or meaning into our scene. |  |
| **Score** |  |  |  |  | /60 |