

Chapter 16

Dance/Drama

NCEA Level 1 Drama material covered in this chapter includes Achievement Standard 90008 (Drama 1.3) 'Demonstrate knowledge of a drama/theatre form through a practical presentation', by understanding:

- What dance/drama involves, some research into dance/drama in different cultures and possible ideas or themes for your own dance/drama.

Dance/drama is an excellent way of exploring stylised drama.

Drama and dance have been combined with other art forms for centuries and in many different cultures.

Kathakali

An interesting form of dance/drama is 'Kathakali', a classical dance/drama of Kerala, South India, which dates from the 17th century and is rooted in Hindu mythology. Kathakali has a unique combination of literature, music, painting, acting and dance.

Kathakali was used to tell classic stories and used ritual and elaborate props and costumes.



A traditional Kathakali dance/drama

Kathakali is only one type of dance/drama and it has its own set of key features. You may not relate your presentation to a particular culture, but it is useful to see how you can combine the art forms within one performance.

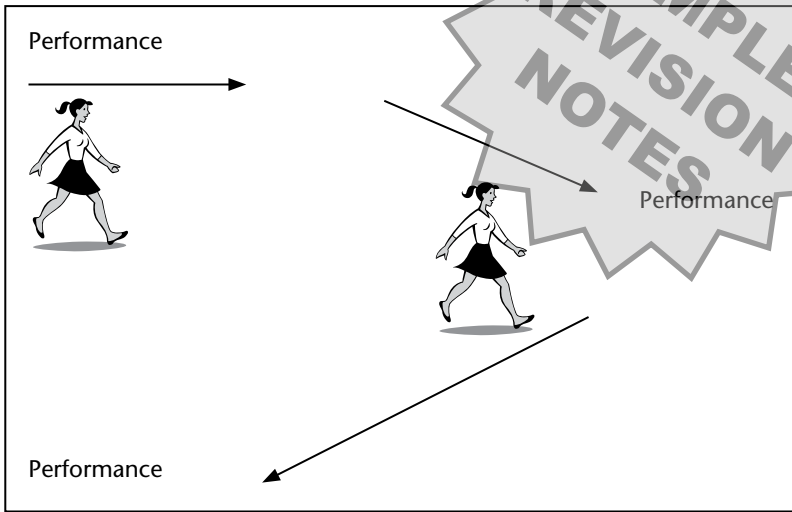
Practical presentation

Key features:

- *Theme or storyline* – there needs to be some depth to your work, either by telling as a story or by representing a theme.
- *Symbolism* – movements need to mean something, they will represent emotions or people or events.
- *Technique* – need to make your piece flow well; this could be done with clever linking of scenes or stages by using certain movements.

Promenade performance

The audience can move with the performance. They may have to get up and walk to the next acting space so that they can see the performers. It helps if blocks are used to create levels so that sightlines are improved.



Activity 21A: The performance venue

- Think of one production/live theatre event that you have seen this year. It could be a piece of class work if you have not been to the theatre yet.
 - Where was the performance venue – theatre, school hall, etc?
 Now consider the way the audience was seated.
 - How did this affect your opinion of the performance?
 - Could you see and hear clearly?
 - Were you close to the actors?
 - Did you feel involved?
 - Were you comfortable?
- Technical aspects:
 - What lighting and sound did the performance use? How did this affect the overall performance?
 - Were there any special effects?
 - If the performance did not use lighting or sound, can you think of any ways they could have been used to enhance the performance?

It is important in all the technical/production roles to think about the sightlines for an audience.

Example

Theatre in the round cannot use tall sets which obstruct the view of one side of the stage.

Activity 21A: The performance venue

Following are example answers based upon 'The Junebug Symphony' at The St James Westpac Theatre in Wellington.

1. I saw 'The Junebug Symphony' at The St James Westpac Theatre in Wellington. The theatre was quite old and ornate and gave you a feeling that you were somewhere special. It was a proscenium arch stage and we were seated very high up in the circle. This gave us a bird's-eye view of the stage and you could see everything clearly. I also had the feeling that I was so high up I could almost fall off, and this feeling of discomfort tied in with the amazing acrobatics in the show. I think that where we were seated gave us a better feel for the show. There were lots of levels used and balancing acts and it made you feel lightheaded looking down on it all.
2. The lighting used was amazing and the show totally depended on the clever techniques used. At the start they kept going to a total blackout and each time the lights went on again, there was a different thing happening on stage. It was almost like magic and the whole thing would not have worked had it not been for the lighting.

This was also the same for the sound. They used special effects to complement what was happening on the stage. At times, some of their tumbling routines were done to music and it made it funny listening to the sounds and watching the actors' facial expressions.

Activity 22A: Research and practical tasks

1. You could interview older relatives that may have had more contact with people involved with WWII. You could look up WWII in books and on the internet. You could consider war today and what is currently going on. You could ask your history teacher at school – they will be able to give you a lot of information and sources. Visit your local library for information and look back through newspapers.
2. A possible list of tasks when designing lighting:
 - Read the play and make notes as to what is required.
 - Check all equipment – bulbs/gels, etc.
 - Get used to the lighting desk.
 - Consider the different atmospheres you are trying to create.
 - Discuss/liaise with the director and actors to see what is required and offer your own ideas.
 - Feed back ideas into the main group.
 - Think about colours used to enhance the atmosphere/mood.
 - Make a plan/diagram of the stage, marking out where the action takes place for particular scenes.
 - Divide the stage into squares, indicating which light will fall onto each area.
 - Rig lights.
 - Check with the colours of the staging and costumes in case they will change with the lights.
 - Make sure you have a technical rehearsal.

analyse (27): examine critically.

annotated (104): made notes upon.

apply (3): put to use.

appropriate (1): suitable.

articulation (5): part of using technique of voice; the way you say and pronounce words.

beats of action (103): when a text is divided into 'beats', there are different sections where the character has a different motivation for action.

beats of emotion (104): when a text is divided into 'beats', there are different sections where the character has a different motivation for displaying different emotions.

canon (14): the same movement is done by different people in a consecutive order (eg Mexican wave).

character development (85): changes made to a character from creation to performance to improve it or get it right.

circus (71): a travelling company of acrobats, trained animals, and clowns.

commedia dell'arte (72): an improvised style of comedy popular during the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, originating in Italy and involving stock characters and the use of masks.

communicate meaning (9): give meaning in a particular context.

comprehensive (123): full, complete, extensive.

concept (104): an idea

context (1): situation given, could be known or unknown.

conventions (128): ways of working or practices in drama.

convincing (1): believable, firmly persuasive.

cue sheets (116): plans a designer would use to complete a technical role (eg lighting cues for a production); identify when and how a particular effect is used.

demonstrate (27, 49): show.

describe (145): give an account or detailed description.

develop (7): cultivate, grow, unravel, progress, unfold, expand.

devised (118): drama that is developed for performance, usually without originating from a script, created and developed.

discuss (129): explain with some analysis and examples.

drama (1): a type of drama (eg NZ) or a specific time period (eg Elizabethan).

drama techniques (85): tools an actor uses (eg voice, body, movement and space).

dramatic chorus (41): group of actors use their voices and/or movements at the same time, acting as one body to create an effect or comment on the action in the play.

dress rehearsal (117): a rehearsal in which the actors use costumes; usually happens near to the first actual performance date.

effective (1): convincing, powerful, potent.

elements (28): key ingredients of drama (ie time, role, space).