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Performance studies language of performing arts

Performing arts is a combination of the three art forms, dance, drama and music. We looked at how they can interlink. They interlink through the use of common language.

They also interlink through the process:

- Warm up
- Stimulus
- Brainstorms
- Make decisions
- Improvise
- Rehearse
- Refine
- Perform
- Evaluate

For our small group pieces, we were given a stimulus, a picture by Salvador Dali, "The persistence of memory."

This gives the idea of time, hard objects becoming floppy. You can see the Spanish coast, and in the sea a whale like creature can be seen.

Small drama piece

Our drama was very serious; we used different techniques to begin. We went to a dark, quiet room to sit or stand in a circle. We stood in a circle and kept in focus for 10 minutes thinking of serious, negative thoughts

Warm ups for group pieces

Before every performance we completed either a physical, mental or vocal warm up. For the physical warm up, we stretched everything starting from the head down to our feet.

Shoulder circles

1. Stand straight with your feet slightly apart and knees bent.
2. Circle your shoulder round 8 times.
3. Do this clockwise and again clockwise.

Arm circles

1. Again stand tall with feet slightly apart and knees bent again.
2. Circle your arms clockwise and anticlockwise.
3. Do this 8 times.
4. Repeat this with the other arm.

Shoulder stretch

1. Stand tall with feet again and knees bent.
2. Put arms parallel to the ground across the front of the chest.
3. Bend the right arm up and using the left forearm, push the left arm closer to your chest.
4. Repeat with other arm.

Groin stretch

1. Sit with both feet towards you body making sure the soles of your feet are together and your knees are pointing out.
2. Resting your hands on your feet, slowly place your knees to the ground.

Vocal warm up

We sang scales to warm up our voices. We did some low humming; we also practised the punctuation of our vowels. We practised our breathing by taking in a deep breath, holding it and then breathing out. Then finally we did some facial exercises, by opening our mouths wide and stretching our faces.

We also played some drama games to build up the trust in the group. We stood in a circle and leant back to see how much we trusted each other. Another game we did was standing with a partner in a line facing them. Then we held their hands while someone jumped on us to see if they trusted us.

You could use these in dance or drama. We used the line game in our firework dance.

Dance warm up

We did a dance warm up.

- We put both our arms in front of us.
- We swung one back, then put them together again.
- Then we swung back both in a circle and bent down.
- We also did the drama warm ups.

You should always warm up before performing. In drama it is important to warm up, to get yourself motivated, in dance it is important so that you do not strain any muscles and to get the blood flowing and it is important in music so that you do not strain your voice.

You need to warm up physically, mentally and vocally before you can start any performance.

Using the stimulus, we discussed the decisions and ideas as a group. For our pieces we used the brainstorming to help us come to a decision of what we were going to do.

Brainstorming for small pieces

Improvisation

For our music piece, we involved everyone in a song. We improvised with different instruments, drums maracas etc. We had a tick tock which played throughout the whole song. The texture thickened. We tried harmonies in the middle of the song but they did not work so we put them at the end of the song instead.

For dance, we had lots of different lifts which were improvised throughout rehearsals. We worked together and alone and in pairs showing different relationships. There was a lot of action included in the piece also.

Our drama piece just came together itself, although we knew we had to make it more effective and create more tension. We used staging and people stood and people sat down. We were going to use mirrors and a screen at the end, but after improvisation we decided that the piece was more affective without the screen and we could not get any mirrors.

Motif is a repeated action. In the motif of the dance piece we used lots of reoccurring sequences. For example when we did punches in the fighting scenes this also created a great amount of action, using martial arts fighting techniques to make the dance entertaining. When doing our dance, we had good relationships with each other we worked on our own in two's and as a three against Craig (who was representing time). We used different levels using high and low lifts, sometimes we would be on the ground and also using different dynamics, starting slow in some parts and fast in the fighting scenes. Using all of these features we decided to do an abstract piece, using lifts and time trying to catch up with us as we try to escape time but we soon realise that you can never escape time.

When we showed our dance to the rest of the class they gave us feedback so that we could change it. They told us there was lots of action, there were good relationships together and against Craig. Our dynamics needed improving, we had a good use of space but we also needed to concentrate more.

For our drama piece there is no spoken dialog in our piece. We had to stay focused and concentrate for our characterisation. To do the physicality we had to clear our heads, and think of things which will keep us serious such as deaths this is also how we warmed up. The atmosphere was very tense and seemed uncomfortable because nobody moved and it looked as though we had had an argument. We were sat or stood on different levels of staging staring at the audience for the whole piece. Our idea was to show the concept of wasting time, making the audience feel uncomfortable and confused.

When we analysed our piece we thought of some improvements such as:

- Putting a screen at the back of the room with facts that could have occurred while watching such as deaths per minute or second.
- Maybe walk around every now and again to add effect and make the audience puzzled and left confused.
- Or maybe just turning our heads again for effect and confusion.

We wrote a song for music. The song told us about how important our time is and how we should not waste it and take things for granted like a lot of people do. In it Craig plays the guitar, I play the maracas, Amy plays the drum, Becky used claves to make a tick tock noise which is played to start, throughout and to finish the song and David used a rainmaker. There was a rhythm and a melody to our song, the harmony is minor, as it is quite a sad, serious song.

The stimulus for our whole group piece was fire safety. We had to use dance drama and music, to make an effective piece of work which would appeal to a year 9 group to warn them and make them aware of the dangers of “fire”. We sat in a group and brainstormed ideas which would appeal to our audience. We then made a decision and came up with an idea which we all agreed on. We decided as a group to look at fireworks because it was around the time of bonfire night. That was not the stimulus though.

Brainstorms for group piece

We had made initial storyline about a young girl who is out with her friends when she has a firework thrown in her face. By using song and dance we showed how she coped and how people treated her after the accident had happened.

To get this idea we started by getting together as a group and discussing ideas. Our group ideas were:

- A game show (comedy)
- Fireworks burnt face
- Trapped in fire
- 4 stories explained
- Middle light heated.
- Teenagers
- Safety

We then got our storyline.

We made some improvements:

- We used a strobe light in parts of the dance to create an atmosphere.
- We changed the number of people in the dance.
- We were going to perform the piece as a rehearsal.

We started the piece with freeze frames. Her friends stood together, her family together and the nurses, and doctors together. As a member of each group gave their views on the incident we did three different freeze frames.

Then we used our own bodies as props to make an ambulance by working together; we used people as the sides, the doors and the chair in the ambulance. We got this idea from Bertolt Brecht.

In the scene where Charlotte is in hospital we created a hospital room using our bodies as props again, people were the hospital bed, a drip and an instrument table. Also in a waiting room we became tables and chairs, as the surgeon delivered the news to Charlotte's family about her disfigured face. In this scene her friends and family each do a monolog about how they feel for Charlotte and if they will stand by her. There are some positive comments but also some negative comments for example off her boyfriend, Pete and some friends.

We wrote a list of songs which we could use:

- Candle in the wind
- If only I could turn back time
- If I could turn back the hands of time

- Yesterday

We decided to sing Yesterday.

So we sang “Yesterday” by the Beatles putting in harmonies and using different techniques to make the song effective.

After that we choreographed a dance to Daniel Bedingfield’s song “Iv gotta get thru this” to show how the event occurred.

At the end of this piece we used the line game (one of our warm ups) to catch Charlotte.

There is a classroom scene next. Helen who threw the firework in Charlotte’s face comes into the classroom, the class blank her and Pete shouts at her.

Then there are interviews where a few of her friends are questioned including Helen, they each have a monolog delivered to the audience. We improvised by sitting in a line and having conversations while Helen walked in and we blanked her.

The performance ends with a song which we wrote about how her life has changed but the scares will not.

We wrote words and Anna wrote music and we put it together to create our final song.

When we watched our group performance back we noticed many things.

- We were very disciplined for example when creating the ambulance, we worked together and was able to do it very well and made it look good.
- In the song “Yesterday” we started to loose the timing and we sang the song too slow.
- During the dance, we were very focused throughout, although we need to time the strobe light better to make it more effective, as it doesn’t always work.
- The classroom scene needs to be stronger, louder and clearer.
- When watching the interview scenes we could see the contrast in characters for example we had Craig who gave us the story how it was, Pete who was very angry, Helen who was guilty and then Alex brought some comedy to it but didn’t really tell us anything.

- People who were doing the news reports during the song should maybe come forward and speak louder, or we should whisper “your life will” instead of singing.