

Professional practice for performance

Workshop Leading

During this module my group was required to design a one-hour dance lesson for primary school students aged 10 to 11. We introduced ourselves to the children and gave the lesson's purpose before we began. Honey initiated, forming a circle to make sure everyone felt involved. Finlay, Honey, and I then spread out among the group. The children were able to engage in conversation and felt at ease with us, once we introduced ourselves and completed an ice breaking activity (sharing our favourite colours). We asked the children to spread out around the room for Finlay to lead the warmup. This included giving each hip-hop move a number 1 to 4. The students had to memorise the moves linked to each number, ready to complete the move when called. This benefited them because it enabled them to learn the routine, as we ensured that the moves would feature in the routine correctly. Following the warmup, we taught the main routine, which I led with help from Finlay and Honey, who were positioned so the students could see one of us from every angle in the room. After they learnt the routine, we separated the students into two groups, to let their classmates watch and support each other in a safe and friendly environment. We then ended the class in the same formation as we started. We asked for feedback and opinions on the session. The children responded by giving thumbs up, middle or down. My group and I thought this was a great idea for us to gauge what we could improve on but also see to positive points of the session.

The intension of this class was to introduce them to the dance styles commercial/Hip hop whilst having fun. Hip Hop foundations was used and introduced in the warmup and throughout the class. The reason for this is, it's a way to help the children get out of their comfort zone and engage in physical learning more frequently. We also focused on coordination skills, musicality and confidence. We hoped that we could encourage them to take up dance as an after-school activity or even just having fun and letting go in the lesson. I researched to be prepared beforehand and found that "Focusing on rhythm and building repetition into choreography" will help the students learn and work with musicality.

In conclusion, this teaching module was useful for a student who would like to become a teacher but maybe not as much for those who want to become a professional performer. I feel that the amount of time spent on this module was far too long. I found that by the end of the 9 weeks, we didn't have anything to do in the dedicated sessions.

Before we arrived at the school, we were told that we would have a big room to accommodate the students to have enough room to dance however, as we arrived, it emerged that we had been allocated a much smaller room. We needed to adjust to this to make sure the students were still able to participate, be comfortable and safe. Overall, I feel that this module should be revised as we could have completed it in a shorter timeframe.

Placement

The next part of this module was to complete a placement. I had previously booked to work on 'The Polar Express' in Aberystwyth, but due to a rearrangement in the schedule beyond my control, I had to find another placement. 'Dimensions Performance Academy' was my choice. Throughout the week, I had the opportunity to step into the shoes of a fulltime dance teacher and assistant teacher. It was a chance for me to share my passion and skills with others and to help them grow as performers. I assisted a class with Jessie Thornton and choreographed and taught my own class which was extremely beneficial to me to see how I could hold myself in a class and deliver a professional lesson. Over this period, I worked four days which was a total of 14 hours. I was dedicated to being engaged in learning and trying to enhance my skill set for the industry. I assisted different types of classes this week such as commercial, technique classes, drama classes.

Challenges I faced and overcome

The biggest challenge I faced was learning how to communicate to all ages of students in the different classes. I taught ages from 4-22. It was very beneficial not only for me, but also for the students as they got work with a different teacher, with a different teaching method and diverse genres. This will help them pick up choreography faster and adapt faster to a new style of teaching in the future. Linked to this, some students had learning difficulties, but I adapted my teaching style to accommodate this. I broke down the movements and taking time by using visual demonstrations and offering my help when needed. I found that rewarding them at the end of class for behaving well helps build their confidence in the lesson. I found it difficult to find a placement that was as exciting as my first choice, however, I quickly found another company, in which I was able to expand my knowledge in a different part of the industry. Before embarking on my placement, I found a website that widened my knowledge and helped increase my understanding of how to talk to children effectively.

In conclusion, I would have loved to go with my first option of the 'Polar Express' because it would have been a valuable experience to be able to shadow a cast in the professional industry. However, I found working with all kinds of different students showed me and gave me the confidence in myself that I can work/teach a diverse range of dancers.

The Rocky Horror Show

In this module, we spent five weeks creating a show, on which, we collaborated with the level six Musical Theatre course. I was very excited to start this process, but also nervous at the same time, as we had to learn how to sing and harmonise. My course and the Musical Theatre course have never collaborated before, but as the five weeks went by, we grew more comfortable with each other. Before the rehearsals started for this production I had no understanding of the show and was quite frankly lost when talking about the characters, I decided a great way to solve this was to watch the filmed version with Tim Curry and “The Rocky Horror show live from the west end (2015)”. Instead of a portraying a normal ensemble cast, we had to portray the roles of the phantoms. We all had a rough idea of what they were going to be like, but we liked having them feel like the unknown. In the creative process, we had to learn to move together as one, which is called ‘flocking’ but also, show our different character personalities within the group. The flocking method is a skill used for spatial awareness and concentration. I feel that as a cast we achieved it. Throughout the show the phantoms were used as props such as tree branches, a car and a door. This creative choice was very innovative and showed the audience the versatility of the phantoms. The question I wanted the audience to think about was “who are the phantoms?” which was stated as the unknown. Richard described the phantoms as a ‘Greek Chorus’ that showcases the audience emotions and thoughts.

Challenges I faced and overcome

My biggest challenge throughout this process was singing, I felt vulnerable in the first couple of weeks while learning the songs and singing them out loud. As time went on, I became comfortable with the people around me. I concurred this by making friends and connections with the Musical Theatre course and they supported me throughout. Another one of my challenges was dancing and singing simultaneously, which all came down to stamina training. This was difficult because I’ve never had to do this before, so it was completely new to me. I overcame this by coming in early to warm up and did cardio training while singing. This was very beneficial, as this is now a new career path for me.

As a company we performed four shows over two days, however, not all shows were perfect. In our first show, there was a show stop as we had a power trip with the lights. We initially kept going, but we were suddenly stopped by our stage manager Amy. She informed the audience and the cast members that the show would have to stop and start

up again slowly. As an individual, I think I handled the show stop very well, as I listened to instructions and stayed calm while they fixed the technical difficulties. Most of the cast members also handled it very well, whereas some did not. We had to work as a team to calm everyone down and let the lighting team figure out the problem. As much as the show stop was an inconvenience, it was a good insight into the professional world and to see how a true professional would handle this situation.

Overall, I found this module very useful, as it was a great way to get an insight to what I want to pursue as a career. I found it motivating to be around a cast that have the same aspirations and mindset as me. I feel like all the challenges I faced during this time were solved and overcome and as soon as the show came along, I was able to relax and enjoy what we created as a company.

Bibliography

<https://howtowhizakid.com/how-to-teach-children-to-dance/#:~:text=1%20Teaching%20dance%20to%20young%20children%20requires%20adapting,a%20memorable%20and%20enjoyable%20learning%20experience%20for%20children>.

Whiz, A. (2024). *How To Teach Children To Dance - How To Whiz A Kid*. [online] How To Whiz A Kid -. Available at: <https://howtowhizakid.com/how-to-teach-children-to-dance/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2025].

<https://worldclassteachers.co.uk/talk-children-effectively/>

Anon, (2017). *How To Talk to Children Effectively - World Class Teachers*. [online] Available at: <https://worldclassteachers.co.uk/talk-children-effectively/>.

<https://youtu.be/rYZOFZrghqE?si=OEaRCdhKhzlu25ZP>

Youtu.be. (2025). Available at: <https://youtu.be/rYZOFZrghqE?si=b8h2TulyR2mRk47i> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2025].

