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**The Beauty of Movement: A Comparative Study Between Physical Theatre
and Realistic Movement in Non-Verbal Storytelling.**

ADPA6000: Independent Project

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Academic year: 2025-2026

BA Acting Level 6

Acknowledgement of AI Use

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Abstract

This research explored how movement styles influence audience perception by comparing physical theatre and realistic movement in performance. The aim of this project was to investigate how exaggerated, stylised movement and natural everyday movement communicate meaning, emotion, and story to audiences. This project used a practice-based methodology in which two versions of the same performance were created: one using physical theatre techniques and the other using realistic movement. After watching both versions, audience members completed a feedback form to share their responses. The finding results suggested that both styles have different strengths.

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Introduction

This dissertation is about how different styles of body movement in acting affect the audience. I want to investigate two main styles: physical theatre and realism. Physical theatre uses movements that are big, exaggerated, and stylised. On the other hand, realistic movement looks natural, just like the actions we see in everyday life. My main goal is to see how these two different ways of moving change the audience's emotional experience, their attention, and how they understand the performance.

I decided to choose this topic because of my own personal experience as an actor. Last year, I had a great opportunity to act in a comedy play at Douglas College. In this play, I performed the role of Arlecchino in a traditional style called Commedia dell'Arte. This specific role showed me how important physical expression really is. Arlecchino is a character who does not rely on spoken dialogue to communicate. Instead, he uses mostly movement, gestures, and improvisation. Even without using words, I found that his actions could talk to the audience very clearly. I was able to create moments of humor, high energy, and strong engagement just by moving my body.

Experiencing this firsthand was very surprising for me. It made me realise that body movements and gestures can sometimes "speak" just as effectively as normal dialogue. They can show the true meaning, the deep emotions, and the personality of a character. I was very fascinated by the silent moments in the play. When Arlecchino moved, it captured everyone's attention and brought a lot of life to the stage. These actions felt powerful and memorable to the audience. Because of this, I started to reflect on why some acting performances feel stronger or more interesting than others. This curiosity led me to ask a big question: do audiences respond differently to physical theatre compared to realism theatre?

To answer this question, I need to look closely at both styles. Physical theatre focuses heavily on storytelling through movement, visual imagery, and rhythm. It encourages actors to share their ideas and emotions mainly through their bodies, instead of through spoken words. Because the movements are often exaggerated, they do not look like normal life. This allows the audience to use their imagination

and interpret the meaning in multiple ways. It might seem unusual at first, but it can provoke curiosity and make the audience think deeply.

In contrast, realism theatre has a different goal. It aims to present life exactly as it is experienced in everyday situations. In realism, the movements are natural, the actions are familiar, and the dialogue sounds like ordinary speech. This style creates a strong sense of authenticity. It allows audiences to easily understand the story and the emotions on stage. Realistic movement is usually immediately accessible and easy to follow. However, because it looks so normal, it might not always create the same strong imaginative response as physical theatre does. Exploring this difference is a key focus of my research.

To investigate how audience react, I designed a practical experiment. I created two short performance videos. One video demonstrates physical theatre, and the other demonstrates realistic movement. Both videos tell the same story, but they use completely different movement styles. By showing these videos to viewers and observing their reactions, I can get real insight into how people perceive different performance styles. Some people might feel more comfortable watching realistic movement because it looks like everyday life. Other people might find the unusual movements of physical theatre more interesting.

By analyzing the audience responses, I can carefully consider how the style of movement changes the audience's enjoyment and understanding. Overall, this dissertation brings together my personal reflections, practical experience, and the observation of audience responses. By looking at my own performance and exploring how the audience feels, I aim to gain a deeper understanding of how movement works as a storytelling tool. Through this research, I hope to show the differences between physical theatre and realism in a clear way. I want to demonstrate how both styles offer unique opportunities for creative expression on stage.

Literature Review

This research explores the differences between physical theatre and realistic movement in performance. Both of these approaches use the actors' bodies as the main tool to convey meaning, emotions, and stories, but they do this in very different

movements. Physical theatre often focuses on exaggerated movement, strong visual storytelling, and stylised physical expression. In contrast, realism focuses much more on natural behaviour, everyday actions, and psychological truth. Understanding these deep differences is very important to this project, as the practical performances will directly compare both physical theatre and realistic movement within the exact same story. To understand how these styles affect the audience, it is necessary to look at the history, training methods, and theories behind both physical theatre and realism.

Physical theatre is a performance style that places the human body at the very centre of storytelling. In traditional theatre, the story is usually told through spoken words. However, instead of relying mainly on dialogue or spoken text, physical theatre performers use movement, gesture, rhythm, and spatial relationships to communicate their ideas and emotions. According to Murray and Keefe (2007), physical theatre focuses heavily on the expressive potential of the human body and looks at how physical movement can be used creatively to build a narrative and a character. This means that the actor's body becomes the primary tool of communication on the stage. Through careful and creative movement, performers can create a specific atmosphere, show complex character emotions, and build symbolic meaning without necessarily using any words at all.

One of the most influential practitioners connected to the development of physical theatre is Jacques Lecoq. Lecoq developed a well-known training system for actors that focuses deeply on movement awareness, rhythm, balance, and the observation of the world. His approach encourages actors to explore how the body can fully express deep emotions and complex ideas through physical action. Lecoq (2013) believed that actors should observe the movement of the world around them, including nature, animals, and everyday human behaviour, and then use these observations as the main inspiration for their performance.

For example, performers in his school might explore how the wind blows, how water flows, or how different animals move. After observing this, the actors then translate those specific natural qualities into theatrical movement. If an actor studies how a cat moves, they can use that smooth, quiet energy to play a sneaky or clever character. This detailed process helps actors develop a much deeper understanding of how physicality can communicate meaning.

Lecoq (2013) also emphasised the importance of play, imagination, and physical creativity in actor training. In his teaching, actors often work with improvisation and physical exercises to discover completely new ways of moving. A famous part of his teaching is the "Seven Levels of Tension." This teaches actors how to hold different amounts of energy in their muscles, from being completely relaxed like a jellyfish, to being extremely stiff and stressed like a tight spring. This method encourages performers to develop a strong physical awareness and a deep connection between their body and their emotion. Because of this strong focus on movement exploration, Lecoq's work has heavily influenced many modern physical theatre companies and training programmes around the world.

Another extremely important practitioner who explored the use of stylised movement in theatre is Vsevolod Meyerhold. Meyerhold worked in Russia and completely rejected the naturalistic style of theatre that was very popular during his time. Instead of making the stage look like a normal living room, he believed that theatre should transform reality rather than simply copy it. Meyerhold wanted the audience to remember they were watching a creative piece of art, not just watching normal life.

To achieve this, Meyerhold developed a famous training system known as biomechanics, which focuses on very precise and structured physical movement. In this system, actors must train their bodies carefully in order to perform highly controlled and expressive actions on stage (Leach, 1989). Biomechanics includes a series of physical exercises that are designed to develop an actor's coordination, balance, rhythm, and physical awareness. These exercises help actors learn exactly how to control their bodies and create very clear, sharp physical actions.

Meyerhold believed that exaggerated or stylised movement could actually make emotions clearer and much more powerful for the audience. Instead of trying to appear natural or relaxed, actors who use biomechanics focus on displaying strong physical form and high energy. They move almost like athletes or dancers. This bold approach clearly shows that movement itself can become a powerful language in the theatre.

Another influential practitioner in physical theatre and dancer is Pina Bausch. She is known as the developer of Tanztheatre, a form that combines dance, drama, and emotional expression. Bausch said "I love to dance because I am afraid to speak.

When I move, I could feel” (Climenthaga, 2008), which reflects her focus on using movement as a main tool of communication. Her work often uses deeply emotional movement, and with a very physical style in her performances. It does not just focus on the beauty of movements, but on expressing real emotions. Her performances also allow the audience to create their own meaning from the movements, as they are often open to interpretation without relying on dialogue.

While practitioners like Lecoq, Bausch, and Meyerhold emphasise big stylisation and expressive physical theatre, realism in theatre focuses much more on everyday behaviour and psychological depth. Realistic acting attempts to create a perfect illusion of real life on the stage. To do this successfully, the actors' movements and actions should appear completely natural and believable, very similar to how regular people behave in real, everyday situations.

One of the most influential practitioners in this area of theatre is Konstantin Stanislavski. Stanislavski developed a famous system of actor training that focuses on finding emotional truth and understanding the character's motivation. In his approach, actors must deeply explore the inner life of a character, including their hidden thoughts, their feelings, and their main objectives. Physical actions are then directly connected to these inner motivations (Stanislavski, 2008).

For example, if a character feels nervous or worried about a secret, their body language may show this truth through small gestures, such as nervously fidgeting with their hands or avoiding eye contact with other actors. These small, subtle physical details help make the performance feel very authentic to the audience. Stanislavski believed that actors should not simply imitate everyday behaviour from the outside. Instead, they must understand the deep psychological reasons behind each action. This means that every small movement on stage is carefully considered and strongly connected to the character's psychological state. His system has had a massive and strong influence on modern acting training, especially in realistic theatre and modern film performance.

The core ideas of realism were later developed even further by the acting teacher Uta Hagen. Hagen focused very strongly on truthful behaviour and ensuring believable character actions on stage. She believed that actors must carefully

observe real life and use these daily observations to create realistic performances (Hagen and Frankel, 2008).

Hagen encouraged her actors to ask very specific questions about their characters, such as: where are they, what do they want, what is their relationship to the other people, and why do they behave in certain ways? In Hagen's approach, physical actions on stage often come directly from everyday tasks and normal situations. For example, simple actions such as sitting down in a chair, opening a door, or picking up a small object can actually reveal a lot of information about a character's true emotions and intentions. If a character is angry, they might put a coffee cup down on the table very hard. If they are sad, they might hold the cup slowly and stare at it. By focusing on these small, relatable details, actors can create performances that feel completely natural and relatable for audiences. Hagen's work clearly highlights how realism relies heavily on subtle movement rather than big, exaggerated physical expression.

Understanding movement is very important when analysing both physical theatre and realism. Movement constantly communicates information to the audience about character emotions, relationships, and the narrative context. One highly influential theorist who studied movement in incredible detail is Rudolf Laban. Laban developed a complex system known as Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), which helps performers clearly understand how different qualities of movement express different meanings.

Laban divided movement into several key elements, including body, space, effort, and shape. One of the most important concepts in his theory is "effort" which describes the internal quality or feeling of the movement. Effort includes elements such as weight (heavy or light), time (sudden or sustained), space (direct or indirect), and flow (bound or free) (Laban, 2011). For example, a movement that is strong in weight and fast in time may communicate deep anger or urgency. On the other hand, a movement that is light in weight and slow in time may communicate a feeling of calmness or sadness. By analysing these movement qualities, performers can better understand how their specific physical choices affect the audience's perception. Laban's work is extremely useful for both physical theatre and realism because it proves that all movement carries meaning, even very small, natural

gestures. This means that both the exaggerated movement of Lecoq and the subtle natural behaviour of Hagen can communicate important information on stage.

Another contemporary movement style that is useful for actors is the Gaga movement language, which was developed by the choreographer Ohad Naharin. Gaga focuses strongly on body awareness, imagination, and inner feelings rather than following fixed, traditional choreography. Performers explore how their bodies respond naturally to different physical sensations and imaginative instructions (Banes, 1987). This helps actors unlock their bodies and find new, organic ways to move on stage.

When comparing physical theatre and realism, it becomes clear that the two approaches use movement for very different purposes. Physical theatre often focuses on stylised expression, where movement may be exaggerated or symbolic, allowing performers to create imaginative and powerful images on stage. In contrast, realism focuses purely on behaviour that reflects normal, everyday life. In realism, movements are usually much smaller, which helps audiences believe in the character and the realness of the situation.

These completely different perspectives show that the movement style can strongly influence how audiences experience the theatre. Realistic movement may help audiences feel empathy and sadness for characters because the behaviour looks familiar and believable to their own lives. On the other hand, stylised physical movement may attract more visual attention and create strong, artistic visual images that communicate big ideas in a symbolic way.

Furthermore, research into non-verbal communication explains why audiences can understand stories without dialogue. According to Knapp, Hall and Horgan (2013), human beings are naturally trained to read body language, facial expressions, and posture to understand how other people are feeling. Because audiences do this naturally in real life, they automatically apply this skill when watching actors on a stage or in a video. Studying audience reception is a very important part of modern performance research, as it helps creators understand if their physical gestures are actually communicating the correct meaning to the viewers (Freshwater, 2009).

Although many academic studies and books discuss physical theatre and realism separately, fewer studies directly compare how audiences respond to these two

movement styles when they are used to present the exact same narrative. This clearly suggests that further investigation is needed to truly understand how the movement style may influence audience interpretation and emotional engagement. For this exact reason, this project directly explores how the same story can be performed using two different movement approaches: one version using physical theatre techniques and another version using realistic everyday movement.

In conclusion, the literature clearly shows that both physical theatre and realism use the human body as an incredibly important tool for storytelling. Physical theatre emphasises stylised movement, visual imagery, and expressive physicality. Practitioners such as Jacques Lecoq and Vsevolod Meyerhold perfectly demonstrate how exaggerated movement can create powerful theatrical meaning. In contrast, realism focuses on psychological truth and natural, believable behaviour, as clearly seen in the important work of Konstantin Stanislavski and Uta Hagen. By testing both of these methods in practice, this research will add practical knowledge to the existing literature on acting and audience reception.

Methodology

This practical project investigates how movement can be used to communicate meaning in performance by comparing two styles: physical theatre and realism theatre. The methodology is based on practice-based experimentation, focusing on how different movement choices influence audience understanding. The study explores whether exaggerated and symbolic movement creates stronger meaning, or whether naturalistic movement allows audiences to connect more easily with characters and situations. Since physical theatre relies heavily on storytelling through movement rather than dialogue, I chose to develop the physical theatre version first. I began by creating a storyline that was divided into three clear scenes, and then I researched physical theatre techniques to support my development process. During this preparation, I consulted with my professor, Jonathan. He advised me to begin practising in a studio space early in the process so that my body could become familiar with movement exploration. He also strongly recommended recording every single practice session. This was incredibly useful advice because sometimes

movements can appear very meaningful on camera, even when you were not consciously aware of doing them in the moment.

Working with other students was also a very important part of the practical process. Students from the SDP program assisted me in set design, lighting, filming, and general production support. As a team, we created a storyboard to organise the sequence of movements and plan the camera angles for filming. This storyboard guided the filming process and confirmed that each scene had a clear structure. This collaborative environment was highly beneficial, as it allowed me to focus more fully on developing the movement and acting for both the physical theatre and realism versions.

The practical acting process started with structured warm-up exercises to prepare my body for intense movement. These exercises focused on grounding, breathing awareness, and building a strong body connection. I used floor-based breathing work, stretching, body bouncing, vocal release, and gradual transitions into standing positions. This preparation helped increase my body awareness, relaxation, and physical readiness for movement exploration.

In addition to traditional warm-ups, I used exercises from the Gaga movement language taught by Rachael Osborne. This practice helped develop my sensitivity to body awareness and movement control. As Banes (1987) explains, Gaga focuses on using improvisation and imagination to generate movement, rather than following fixed, traditional dance steps. During this process, I allowed my body to respond naturally to sensory images and internal feelings. For example, I explored how my movement changed when I imagined different physical situations, such as moving through thick water, feeling heavy pressure around my body, or being heavily restricted in a small space. The performer might imagine being fully submerged in water, trapped in thick mud, or encased in concrete, and then explore how the body would naturally respond in such extreme conditions. This practice helped increase my body awareness and encouraged much more spontaneous and organic movement. It also supported the development of expressive physical theatre by emphasising internal sensation and full-body engagement rather than planning movement in advance.

To develop my physical expression further, I applied the Seven Levels of Tension technique created by Jacques Lecoq (Lecoq, 2009). This method focuses on exploring different levels of physical tension in the body, ranging from complete, heavy relaxation to extreme, tight tension. By practising across these different levels, I learned how variations in muscle tension influence character expression and emotional intensity. For example, low tension created relaxed and calm states, while high tension supported dramatic and stressful moments.

Most of my movement exploration was conducted primarily through improvisation. During improvisation, I experimented with pace, space, level, and movement quality to discover how physical actions could communicate emotions. Through this process, I observed that movement itself does not have a fixed meaning; rather, meaning is created through the context, the actor's intention, and the audience's interpretation. After improvising, I selected the movements that best represented each emotional state within the storyline. These movements were then practised repeatedly in each scene to examine how effectively they communicated meaning. Throughout this process, I made adjustments when certain movements did not clearly support the narrative. Some movements that I initially considered unsuitable were later found to be effective, demonstrating that this stage required constant experimentation, refinement, and continuous evaluation.

After successfully completing the physical theatre version, I developed a realism version based on the exact same storyline. Unlike the physical theatre approach, this version focused strictly on naturalistic actions rather than metaphorical or exaggerated movement. The realism theatre methodology was mainly based on the acting system developed by Konstantin Stanislavski, which emphasises creating truthful and believable performances (Stanislavski, 2008).

I used Stanislavski's techniques, such as emotional memory and the "magic if," to help generate genuine emotional responses. These methods encourage actors to imagine themselves in the character's exact situation and draw on their own personal emotional experiences, allowing their reactions on stage to feel authentic and realistic. The realistic movement in this version was based purely on everyday actions such as walking normally, sitting, and using natural gestures, enabling the audience to observe the performance as if it reflected real life. I also used the concept of the fourth wall, which helped me remain fully focused on the stage world

rather than directly engaging with the camera or the audience, which greatly strengthened the sense of realism.

To make this successful, observation was an important research tool. This process involved watching people in real-life situations and analysing their physical responses, which could then be applied to create realistic character movement on stage. Particular attention was given to very small details such as human posture, tiny gestures, movement speed, and natural body language, as these elements strongly contribute to creating believable character behaviour. After collecting this research, the next step was to organise these observations into a practical process to develop the character's movements.

The intention of the filming process was to keep the storyline, emotional journey, and scene progression completely consistent, while changing only the style of movement. The physical theatre version used exaggerated movements, while the realism version was based on everyday actions. By presenting both versions in a similar structure, it allowed for a direct, fair comparison between the two performance styles. The aim was to allow audiences to watch both and decide which movement style they found easier to understand and more emotionally accessible.

In addition to the practical creation process, audience feedback was an important part of this project. After completing both the physical theatre and realism versions, the performances were shown to viewers in order to gather their responses and opinions. The purpose of collecting audience feedback was to understand how both movement styles communicated meaning, told stories, and engaged the audience without using dialogue, but through movement alone. It also aimed to explore which style viewers found more engaging and meaningful. Audience responses were collected through a feedback form that I created. The form included several questions about both performance videos. For example, participants were asked: before watching the videos, which style do you expect to be more engaging? How did the physical movements affect your imagination or interpretation of the performance? Did the realistic movements help you feel emotionally connected to the character, and why or why not? The questions were designed to help answer the main aim of this project, which explores how audiences perceive and respond to two contrasting approaches to movement: physical theatre and realistic movement. This

method allowed viewers to share their opinions and reflect on aspects of the performances that are important to the research. Participants were also asked to describe their impressions of each version, including which movement style they found easier to understand, more emotionally engaging, and more interesting to watch. Audience responses were particularly useful for exploring how viewers experienced each movement style and whether they found one more engaging, emotionally powerful, or visually interesting than the other.

Result

After sending out the survey, I gathered audience feedback through questionnaires ranging from rating questions (1-5) to open-ended questions. Feedback surveys are about two styles of movements: one using physical theatre movement and the other using realistic movement. I used this survey to understand how audiences felt about their engagement, emotional connection, and understanding of both performances. Research results showed that physical theatre performances have received highly positive feedback. 100% of participants agreed that exaggerated movements increased audience engagement, and 100% also agreed that stylised performance made the show more engaging. Furthermore, 82% agreed that physical theatre allowed them to interpret the stories however they wanted, showing that the use of expressive movement allows audiences to engage with the performance through personal interpretation rather than relying just on realistic behavior. Responses to the open-ended questions reflected this perspective as well. Many participants found physical theatre performances both visually interesting and affective at communicating the performance's purpose. Others noted that stylised movement can make the piece more entertaining and allow for artistic creativity.

However, a small number of viewers said that some physical movements could be slightly difficult to interpret. This showed that because physical theatre used abstract movements, it may be difficult for the audience to interpret the meaning of certain gestures.

Participants reacted positively to the realistic movement, particularly in terms of emotional communication and clarity of storytelling. The research results showed, as

shown in Figure B1 (see Appendix B), 82% of participants agreed that realistic movement made the story easier to understand. Additionally, Figure B2 (see Appendix B), 73% of participants agreed that fine gestures and body language could effectively convey the characters' emotions. However, a smaller proportion (55%) felt that realistic behavior helped them to better connect emotionally with the characters. The open-ended responses that some participants commented that the realistic movement felt natural and relatable, helping them better understand the characters' emotional states, while others said that the realistic style made the story clearer and easier to understand.

When comparing engagement, 82% of participants said that physical theatre performances attracted more attention than realistic version, explaining that exaggerated and stylised movements in physical theatre are very effective in captivating audiences.

Overall, the results show that the two styles provide different experiences for the audience. Physical theatre works better for keeping the audience captivated, while realistic movement helps in emotional expression and understanding the story.

Discussion

One of the essential findings is that physical theatre is highly effective at captivating audience attention. The results of this study show that all participants agreed that exaggerated and stylised gestures increased audience engagement, showing that physical theatre uses expressive body movement to convey meaning and maintain audience focus.

The result of this study suggested that movement and physical expression can be effective ways to communicate ideas and emotions in performance. By using exaggerated movements, actors can convey meaning in ways that go beyond natural behavior. As a result, the audience may become more engaged with the performance and interpret the meaning in their own way.

However, the results also show that the abstract style of physical theatre can sometimes make meaning unclear. Some participants mentioned that some movements were difficult to understand. While abstract movement can encourage creativity and imagination, it can also make the story unclear for some audience members.

In contrast, the results show that realistic movement helps audiences understand stories and emotions more clearly. Participants said that natural movement and behavior made the performance easier to understand and helped convey the characters' emotions better.

A comparison between these two styles shows how audiences perceive these performances differently. Physical theatre focuses on visual impact and creative interpretation, while realistic performance focuses more on emotional connections and natural behavior.

Overall, the results showed that both styles have different strengths. Physical theatre captivates and stimulates imagination, while realistic movement conveys emotions and makes the story easier to understand.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this study, I had one question: "Why was my silent performance as Arlecchino so effective?" I wanted to explore whether exaggerated, physical theatre could be more effective than realistic movement relying on natural, everyday actions. After filming two versions of the videos and gathering feedback from 15 participants who watched each, I am pleased to say I have found the answer I was looking for.

The feedback on the physical theatre video has been generally positive. Almost all respondents commented that it was very visually engaging because the movements were so different from what we see in everyday life. The audience is immediately captivated. However, a lot of people who watched the physical theatre version found some of the movements confusing. The physical theatre movements were not what people normally do so a lot of people had a time figuring out the specific story of the physical theatre that I was trying to tell. Physical theatre is good at grabbing attention and making the audience think. It may not always be the best way to communicate a clear message.

On the other hand, the realistic movement video was quite different. Viewers said it was easier to understand what was happening because the movements felt real and familiar. When I did things like looking down or taking a step back, the audience could immediately tell how my character was feeling. They could sense if my character was scared or sad or nervous. The realistic version was not as fancy as the

physical theatre version, but it showed emotions and stories more clearly. The realistic movement video was good, at showing people something they could understand and relate to.

Looking at all the feedback, I have learned some things. I now realize that there is no one best technique in acting. The choice of style depends on what the actors want the audience to experience. If the goal is to captivate the audience and engage their imagination with the show, then the physical theatre would be the right choice. But, if you want to create a clear emotional connection and understand the story easily, then realism is better. The choice of style is about what effect you want on your audience. Physical theatre can help with that impact. Realism can help with making a connection.

This project has made me see how powerful the human body in storytelling. I used to think that acting was about saying and memorizing lines. Now I know that words are not always necessary. Our bodies can show how we are feeling and tell stories without saying anything. This project has helped me become a real actor and I am excited to use what I have learned in my next performances.

Personal Reflection

During the rehearsal process, I noticed that much of the research I had studied could be applied in practice. However, during the actual performance, I often allowed my body to guide the movement rather than strictly following the planned choreography. Although I had designed specific gestures and movements for each scene, when performing I relied more on instinct and feeling, allowing the movements to emerge naturally. At times, it felt as though my body was telling the story on its own.

I also became more aware of the stage environment during the performance. The lighting, the space, and the atmosphere of each scene influenced how I moved. Instead of focusing on how the movement should look, I concentrated on what the body felt compelled to express in that moment.

In the physical theatre version, I explored how exaggerated gestures could communicate emotions clearly. For example, when expressing fear, I used my whole body by raising my shoulders, stretching my arms, and shifting my weight to make

the emotion more visible. These larger gestures helped emphasise the emotional state and created a stronger visual signal for the audience. In contrast, the realistic movement version felt simpler and more instinctive. Natural actions, such as covering my face with my hands or stepping back slightly, were enough to communicate fear. These gestures are familiar actions that audiences often recognise from everyday life, which made the performance feel more natural.

Performing physical theatre movements was more challenging because the gestures are not always based on everyday behaviour. Movements often need to be enlarged or stylised in order to communicate emotion clearly. Realistic movement, however, felt more natural to perform because it reflects patterns of behaviour that people already understand from daily life. Practising Gaga exercises was helpful for developing the physical theatre version. Responding to imagined physical situations, such as moving through water in the ship scene or exploring body movement in the jungle scene, helped me discover movements that felt organic and expressive. In contrast, the realistic movement relied more on observing natural human behaviour, and grounding exercises supported this style.

Collaboration with other students was also a key part of my learning. Working alongside peers in designing props, costumes, lighting, and filming allowed me to focus on my movement while seeing how each contribution affected the overall performance. Sharing ideas and receiving feedback from others helped me explore new movement possibilities and understand how different elements combine to create a cohesive performance. This experience reinforced the value of teamwork in creative projects and taught me the importance of communication, flexibility, and trust in collaborative work.

If I had a chance to develop this performance again, I would like to make my body more flexible so that my movements could look smoother. I enjoyed working on this project, but sometimes I felt that my body was not flexible enough to perform all the movements I imagined. In the future, I would like to train my body more to improve my ability to perform this style of movement. Additionally, if I developed this project again, I would prefer not to perform it as a solo piece. I would like to work with a partner, as collaborating with another performer could help generate new movements and explore more ideas together.

Overall, reflecting on this process showed me that the body can be a powerful tool for storytelling. Through different movement styles, the body is able to communicate emotions and ideas in ways that words alone cannot. Combining practice-based experimentation, observation, and collaboration allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of movement as a creative and expressive medium.

Challenges in the Project

One challenge in this project was how to make movement communicate clearly without using dialogue. This was challenging because I had to create movements from basic gestures and sometimes exaggerate them, which did not feel comfortable at first. I was worried that the audience might not understand the story. In physical theatre, movements can be symbolic and stylised, which means different viewers may interpret them in different ways.

Another challenge was maintaining fairness between both versions of the performance. It was important to keep both versions at a similar level in terms of energy, structure, and storytelling, even though the movement styles were different. Both versions followed the same story and emotions, but they used different movement approaches. Since there was no dialogue, the main way to keep them comparable was by keeping the same actions while changing the movement style. Therefore, it was important to make sure that both performances felt balanced and equal.

One of the main challenges of this project was developing gestures that could clearly convey meaning without dialogue. In this performance, the story must be told primarily through gestures. If the gestures are not clear or sufficiently meaningful, the audience may not understand the story. In physical drama, much of the storytelling relies on the actors' bodies; therefore, performers must have a high level of awareness and control over their bodies, including posture, rhythm, muscle tension, and the quality of movement.

Collaboration with other students was also a challenge, as in this project involved several roles such as, filming, puppet creation, prop making, lighting, and set design. Because each person had different responsibilities to take care of but because we worked together as a team so coordinating schedules and communication needed to be a clear planning. Scheduling rehearsals can sometimes be difficult because everyone has different responsibilities and opinions. For example, as an actor, I need time to rehearse scenes, but preparing visual elements such as sets, lighting, and props also requires time from other team members. Since these tasks cannot be rushed, it can sometimes be challenging to coordinate schedules so that everyone can work efficiently.

In addition, each collaborator had their own ideas about the scenes they wanted to create. Because of this, communication between the set designer and the actors was important. As an actress, I needed to understand what each scene conveyed so that I could perform and tell the story in a way that fit the designed environment. Clear communication helps everyone to work together smoothly. If any problems arise during the work process, we can consult and resolve them together as a team.

What I learn from this experience

I have learned how to solve problems by myself, especially when collaborating with a group of people. One of the first things I learned was the importance of communication. Communication is essential when you are working with a group because you need to talk to each other manage your responsibilities and time and respect each other. I believe these things are very important because without communication, good time management, and respect, it is difficult to work effectively as a team. Personally, I know that I do not usually like speaking in front of people that I am not close to. Because this project involved working with other people, so I tried to respect everyone and talk to them when I needed to. For example, I spoke with my teammates when we needed to discuss or update each other about scenes or performance ideas.

I also needed to plan many aspects of my project in advance. For instance, I had to think about what kind of outfit I should wear so that it would suit my movements in the performance. After that, I could share my ideas with my collaborators and explain my thoughts about the costume. I also discussed other details, such as camera angles for filming the videos. Planning these things helped make the process clearer for everyone and ensured that my teammates were not confused about my responsibilities in the project. During our IP work, we also had the Professional Project module, so I had to manage my time carefully. I needed to balance my IP practical work while also working on the other project at the same time. It was quite a challenging semester because I had to organise my time very carefully in order to complete both projects. This experience made me realise the importance of time management when working on multiple projects at the same time. I had to organise my schedule carefully in order to make sure that I could complete my rehearsals, filming, and other project tasks without falling behind. It was sometimes stressful, but it also helped me develop better organisational skills.

I believe this experience helped me understand what it might be like to work in the creative industry, where artists often have to manage several responsibilities at once. Learning how to balance different projects and meet deadlines is an important professional skill. Even though it was challenging and required me to multitask frequently, I feel proud of what I was able to achieve during this semester. This experience helped me grow both personally and professionally.

As I chose to investigate physical theatre and realistic movement, I learned that nothing is perfect. Sometimes movement can be created through mistakes. At first, it was difficult for me not to create choreography for both styles of movement. However, once I understood what my story was, my body started to express it naturally through movement. Through practice, I improved my confidence and became more aware of how my body can communicate feelings and tell a story without many words.

For the realistic style, I learned that even small gestures can have powerful meaning. For example, something as simple as sitting still can express emotion, and when we stare at something, our eyes can communicate feelings as well. I realised that gestures do not always have to be big or exaggerated to be effective. Sometimes

subtle and natural movements can be powerful enough to tell the story to the audience.

However, through the rehearsal process, I gradually became more comfortable with uncertainty and allowed myself to explore different movements. Instead of trying to control every detail, I started to trust my body and respond to the emotions and ideas in the story. This helped me discover new ways of expressing meaning through physical theatre and realistic movement. Sometimes spontaneous movements can feel more honest, exciting, and powerful. By experimenting and making mistakes, I was able to develop a deeper understanding of how movement can communicate with the audience.

In the end, this experience taught me to be more open to experimentation and less afraid of making mistakes. It helped me understand that mistakes can lead to creative discoveries, and that the beauty of art can sometimes appear in unexpected moments

Conclusion of Personal Reflection

As I reflect on this project, I've grown as an actor, collaborator, and creative thinker. Working in both physical theatre and realism theatre has taught me how the body can communicate meaning and emotion. I've learned that exaggerated postures in physical drama can convey feelings powerfully, while natural movements in spontaneous drama are equally powerful.

I also learned to trust my instincts and let movement happen naturally. Experimentation and acknowledging mistakes helped me discover new ways to express myself and build confidence in my body. Improvisation became a key part of my process, showing me that creativity often comes from exploring uncertainty rather than controlling every detail.

Collaboration with other students was essential for this project. Collaborating on props, lighting, set design, and filming taught me the importance of clear communication, respect, and flexibility. Coordinating schedules, sharing ideas, and responding to feedback helped develop my organizational skills and prepared me for the realities of working in the industry.

Overall, this project helped me improve my practical skills and understand more about how movement can tell a story. I also learned the importance of trying new ideas, thinking of what I did, and working with others. I feel more confident exploring both movement styles that I have wanted to try it, expressing ideas through body language, and working with other people. These lessons will help me in my future performances.

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Appendix

Appendix A:

Video A1: Physical Theatre Performance

Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OS0RMo_nz81nWYQLvHEk-vARajWuZEN/view?usp=sharing

Video A2: Realism Performance

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fzgNFZoE4LTL860wSYO61LHoFtedBDBo/view?usp=sharing>

Appendix B: Audience feedback charts

Physical Theatre Captured Attention More

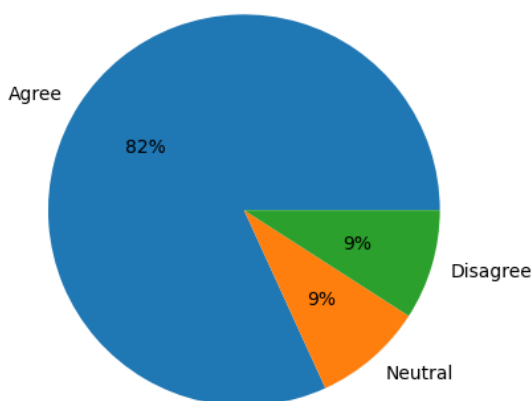


Figure B1, audience responses showing that physical theatre captured more attention.

Realism Created More Emotional Connection

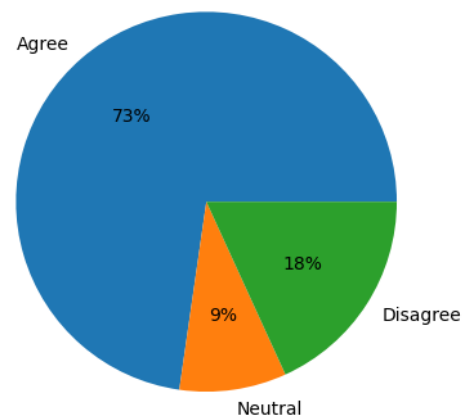


Figure B2, audience responses showing that realism created a stronger emotional connection.

Appendix C: Raw questionnaire data

A full dataset can be accessed here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1RHInGVobG1zb0IH_aeHFsOtPPrS0C6j7fLWqlQTu4sk/edit?usp=sharing

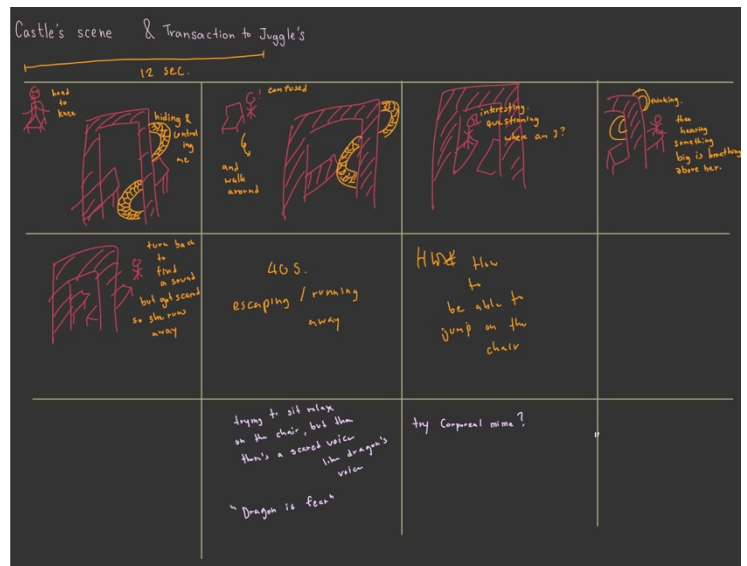
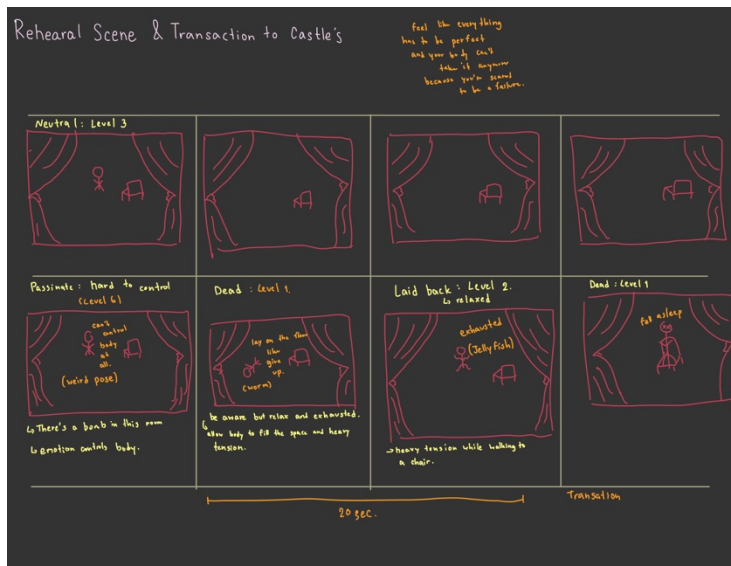
Appendix D: Audience Questionnaire

1. How familiar are you with the concept of physical theatre?
2. How familiar are you with the concept of realistic movement in acting?
3. Before watching the videos, which style do you expect to be more engaging?
4. Before watching the videos, which style do you think will be easier to understand?
5. The use of large or expressive gestures made the performance more engaging.
6. The physical theatre style encouraged me to interpret the story in my own way.
7. The stylised physical actions made the performance visually interesting.
8. How did the exaggerated or stylised movements influence your understanding of the story or character?
9. How did the physical movements affect your imagination or interpretation of the performance?
10. The natural behaviour helped me emotionally connect with the character.
11. The realistic movement style made the story easier to understand.
12. The subtle gestures and body language communicated the character's feelings effectively.
13. Did the realistic movements help you feel emotionally connected to the character? Why or why not?
14. How did the natural movements influence your understanding of the character or story?
15. I could clearly notice the difference between the physical theatre style and the realistic movement style.
16. The physical theatre version captured my attention more than the realistic version.
17. The realistic movement helped me emotionally connect with the character more than the physical theatre version.
18. Which performance held your attention? Why?
19. Did you find one style more difficult to understand? Why?

Appendix E: Scene planning

rehearsal scene

castle scene



Juggle scene

ship scene + last scene

