

The Curious Incident and Physical Theatre - Year 8

Key Terms

<i>Gestare</i>	A gesture may be something small but can have emotional impact or it can be a movement that defines a character.
<i>Cannon</i>	something occurring one after another.
<i>Stance</i>	This is associated with strength as the body could radiate assertion and authority or weakness by stance, incorporating posture.
<i>Unison</i>	Timing your movements with those of other people. .
<i>Stillness</i>	Sometimes stillness amongst movement can be equally effective.
<i>Precision</i>	Movements must be rehearsed and precise for a polished production.
<i>Proximity</i>	How close or far you are from your co-performers can be a source of very powerful impact.
<i>Harshness/Tenderness</i>	Used here as umbrella terms to focus on the fact that in physical work the gestures and bigger movements come together to express the emotions of the piece.

Plot summary

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time follows the story of Christopher Boone, a 15 year old, who is exceptional at Maths but finds people confusing. The play opens with Christopher discovering a dead dog in his neighbour, Mrs Shears', garden. Despite his father, Ed, warning Christopher not to get involved, Christopher decides to investigate the death of the dog. In doing so he discovers that his mother is not dead as his father had told him, but alive and well, living in London. He also discovers that it was his father who killed the dog.

Christopher feels that his father is a murderer, who he cannot trust. He can no longer live with him and so he bravely travels to London to find his mother. Christopher has difficulty settling into his new life in London and returns to Swindon to take his A-level Maths exam. The play ends with him passing the exam and the realisation that he can do anything he puts his mind to.

Context

- The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time is an adaptation by Simon Stephens of the original novel by Mark Haddon. Published in 2003, the novel quickly became a huge success. Many readers discuss and recognise Christopher as having autism or Asperger's syndrome. This, however, is never mentioned directly in the novel. Haddon also states that he did very little research into the topic of autism whilst writing the book.
- Mark Haddon approached Simon Stephens to adapt the book for the stage. Stephens used the dialogue from the novel as the driving force for the adaptation. He felt that its popularity was due to the play being a story about family and bravery. The play was first staged in 2012 at the National Theatre. It was very popular with audiences and has since moved to the West End and Broadway.

Physical Theatre Origins

- The origins of contemporary Physical Theatre can be found both in the Greek theater of antiquity and in Italian Commedia Dell'arte, which, within a context of folk culture and popular presentation, developed Europe's first independently organized theatre companies. Movement is seen as universal, like mime and masks, and therefore knows no language (or other) barriers to understanding what's on stage.
- Mina Tinaburri, the artistic director of the Atelier for Physical Theatre, is widely regarded as a path-breaking instructor and director in a new generation of Physical Theatre

What is Physical Theatre?

- Physical theatre is a genre of theatrical performance that encompasses storytelling primarily through physical movement.
- PT encompasses elements of dance, mime and gesture to tell a story, without words, often accompanied by music or sound.
- The Curious Incident uses PT to physically represent Christopher's struggles and experiences of living with Asperger's.
- PT and its creation requires both creativity and discipline as actors will be experimenting with different types of movement and how do complete this safely on stage.

Key Themes

Autism/ Aspergers
Movement
Emotion on stage

DEVISING TECHNIQUES

Starting to create your own piece of theatre.

BRAINSTORM

As a group, discuss the themes that you want to explore in the play. Brainstorm stories that involve the characters experiencing each theme.



CHARACTERS

Start by creating the characters. Too many devised pieces fail because the characters have not been carefully thought out. Name each character and talk about their personality and relationships.



FREEZE FRAMES



Create freeze frames that depict crucial moments in the character's life. These can then be incorporated into your play later on.

MUSIC



Find a piece of music that represents your theme, either lyrically or through the dynamics or texture. Use the music to create a movement sequence that shows the mood of a character.

STRUCTURE

Create a flow chart of the story and highlight the key scenes. Experimenting with the structure may help you create a more imaginative and original play.



IMPROVISE

Improvise a scene in every rehearsal. Don't just talk things through. Try to improvise a scene using different styles. A scene may work better as a comedy even though it was originally a drama.



MONOLOGUE



In a group, think of one word each that describes your character. Then on your own, use the list of words (in the order they were said) to write a monologue for your character.

REFLECT



At the end of a rehearsal, reflect on what you have achieved and what needs to be done next. Set aims and assign jobs for the next session. Create a rehearsal schedule and stick to it.