

ADELAIDE
FESTIVAL **AF**

EDUCATION RESOURCE

Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare



Youth and Education
Program Partners





Suitable Year Levels

Year 9 – Year 12

Genre

Theatre

Background Information

Forced Entertainment has been around for over 40 years and has a reputation for creating durational works productions that

last for 6 to 24 hours or longer. Their productions have also been produced exclusively for video or live streaming.

The idea of imagined action and descriptive performance is critical to understanding and appreciating this work. Audiences should be prepared to suspend their disbelief and use their imagination to help co-create the theatrical events of the story with the performers.

Synopsis

A salt and pepper pot for the king and queen. A ruler for the prince. A spoon for the servant. Lighter fluid for the Innkeeper. A water bottle for the messenger.

One by one, over 8 days, Forced Entertainment performers condense every Shakespeare play ever written into a series of 36 intimate and lovingly made miniatures, played out on a one

metre table-top using a collection of un-extraordinary everyday objects.

The Company have long had an obsession with virtual or described performance, exploring in different ways over the years the possibilities of conjuring extraordinary scenes, images and narratives using language alone. In an unusual new direction for the company, *Complete Works* explores the

dynamic force of narrative in a simple and idiosyncratic summary of Shakespeare's comedies, tragedies, histories and late plays, creating worlds as vivid as they are strange.

Forced Entertainment's *Complete Works* is the first time they've approached the Shakespearean legacy. The result is a levelling of the plays and a celebration of storytelling and theatre itself.



Curriculum Links

This education resource has been developed with links to the Australian Curriculum. Activities have been created to reflect each of the achievement standards, depending on the year level, including content descriptions within each learning area and the general capabilities. The resource aims to provide teachers with information to help prepare students before attending the performance, as well as structured learning activities for the classroom after viewing the performance.

General Capabilities

The Arts Learning Area has a natural link to the elements of the General Capabilities. Specific learning activities have been linked with the following icons:



Drama

Years 9 and 10 Drama

- Refine and extend their understanding and use of role, character, relationships and situation
- Extend the use of voice and movement to sustain belief in character
- Learn that over time there has been further development of different traditional and contemporary styles of drama and that dramatists can be identified through the style of their work, as they explore drama forms
- Explore meaning and interpretation, forms and elements, and social, cultural and historical influences of drama as they make and respond to drama
- evaluate actors' success in expressing the directors' intentions and the use of expressive skills in drama they view and perform
- build on their understanding from previous bands of the roles of artists and audiences as they engage with more diverse performances

SACE Stage 1 Drama

Understanding and Exploration

UE1 Understanding and exploration of dramatic roles, conventions and processes.

UE2 understanding and exploration of dramatic ideas, texts, styles, and/or innovations.

Critical and Creative Thinking

CCT1 Creative thinking and experimentation in the development of dramatic ideas.

CCT2 Analysis and evaluation of dramatic ideas, products, and technologies.

SACE Stage 2 Drama

Knowledge and Understanding

KU1 Exploration and understanding of dramatic theories, texts, styles, conventions, roles, and processes.

KU2 Understanding and evaluation of the artistic and cultural value of local, global, contemporary, and/or historical drama.

Critical and Creative Thinking

CCT1 Creative thinking and experimentation in the development of dramatic ideas.

CCT2 Analysis and evaluation of the student's own drama-making and others' dramatic works, styles, and/or events.

Creative Application

CA3 Integration of theory and practice to make meaningful dramatic outcomes.

English

Year 9 and 10 English

Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They interpret, create, evaluate, discuss and perform a wide range of literary texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade. These include various types of media texts, including newspapers, film and digital texts, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, dramatic performances and multimodal texts, with themes and issues involving levels of abstraction, higher order reasoning and intertextual references.

SACE Stage 1 English

Knowledge and Understanding

- KU1 Knowledge and understanding of ideas and perspectives explored in a diverse range of texts.
- KU3 Knowledge and understanding of ways in which texts are created for a range of purposes and audiences.

Analysis

- A1 Evaluation of the relationship between purpose, audience, and context and how they shape meaning.

Stage 2 English

Knowledge and Understanding

- KU1 Knowledge and understanding of ideas and perspectives in a range of texts.
- KU2 Knowledge and understanding of ways in which creators of texts use a range of language features, stylistic features, and conventions to make meaning.
- KU3 Knowledge and understanding of a wide range of ways in which texts are created for different purposes, audiences, and contexts.

Analysis

- A1 Analysis of ideas, perspectives, and/or aspects of culture represented in texts.
- A2 Analysis of language features, stylistic features, and conventions used in texts, and thoughtful evaluation of how these influence audiences.



Performance Literacy

As students engage with and view live theatre, they develop a deeper understanding of the language of performance art. They develop literacies allowing them to 'read' the gestures and movements of a performer, and an understanding of the intention of the set, costume, lighting design and reflect on how they contribute to the narrative. Students consider the intended meaning of the choreographers, playwrights, directors and/or artists' in choosing a setting, character, or artistic form as well as what they are looking to communicate through their work.

Attending live theatre and responding to performances, addresses the criteria for Literacy in line with the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities.

...students become literate as they develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to interpret and use language confidently for learning and communicating in and out of school and for participating effectively in society. Literacy involves students listening to, reading, viewing, speaking, writing, and creating oral, print, visual and digital texts, and using and modifying language for different purposes in a range of contexts.

Art is a means of expressing emotion, a way of transmitting feelings, culture, beliefs and values between the creators and performers of the work and the audience or viewers. Some art is created for the explicit purpose of eliciting a strong emotional response from the audience and

there is a myriad of emotions that students will experience when they are viewing live performance from happiness to anger, surprise, annoyance, and confusion, just to name a few.

The **Before the Show** activities are designed to support students to develop these literacy skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to their Adelaide Festival experience.

The **After the Show** activities are designed to provide students with the opportunity to discuss, analyse and comprehend their responses to the show. Having a strong knowledge and understanding of theatre terminology will support students and extend their vocabulary as they describe their theatre experience with authentic language.

Theatre Etiquette

The French word *l'etiquette*, meaning 'requirements for proper behaviour', was adopted by English speakers in the middle of the 18th century. This can sound a bit formal but understanding theatre etiquette helps an audience understand what to expect and how to get the most out of their theatre experience.

Depending on the age of an audience the expectations can vary. Theatre designed for very young audiences will have different expectations and will often invite and encourage participation. However, as the content becomes more complex and audiences mature, there is an expectation that students will have developed an understanding of the difference between enthusiastic participation and thoughtless disruption.

Group discussion: Why does it matter?

Students to talk about the theatre being a shared space and respecting other audience members attending the performance.

- Discuss the shared role of audience and performer, each is dependent on the other to ensure a great performance.
- Remind students that just as they can see the performers, the performers can see them!
- As a class exercise, compile a list of all the roles and tasks it takes to bring a live performance to the stage.

- What experiences have they had when their engagement with the performance was compromised by others in the audience?
- What is the role of the audience? What responsibility do they have to the performers on stage?

Theatre protocols to share with students

When in the foyer they should:

- Go to the toilet before going into the theatre.
- Follow the directions of the front of house staff.
- Turn off mobile phones.
- Wear a mask if required.

When the lights go down:

- This is a sign the performance is about to start. It is time to end chats and be quiet.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- No eating in the theatre. Only water bottles are allowed.

For senior students writing the review in the darkened auditorium can be disturbing for the performers, particularly if using a mobile phone as a torch. Plus, all the performers can see is the top of the student's head. *Why would this be disturbing for the performers?*

Photographing and filming is not permitted because:

- It can disturb the actors on the stage and break their concentration

- Intellectual property is paramount. The production on stage is the intellectual property of the theatre company therefore no photographs or filming is allowed.
- You will be missing the detail you cannot see through the viewfinder

Five broad groups of children whose responses as audience are characterised as:

- **Technicians** – children who are more interested in the technology than the performance, deconstructing the performance techniques employed in the show.
- **Narrators** – children who talk through the performance, asking questions, commenting on actions.
- **Dramatists** – children who immediately imitate what they see, participating through their own actions.
- **Mystics** – children who are completely engrossed in the sensory aspects of the experience.
- **Spectators** – children who hover around the edges, playing with whatever they can find, apparently not engaged, but often able afterwards to recall what they saw.

Ask your students which group they think they would be. Does their response match your observation?



Themes and Ideas

Universal Themes

Each play deals with different themes, ideas and issues. However, Forced Entertainment's approach to retelling and recounting the narrative in a condensed way helps the audience to make links between the concerns of each play and their relevance to the context of the audience. This is particularly valuable and accessible for audiences who are unfamiliar with Shakespeare's plays or finds the original texts and language challenging.

Imagination and Described Action

The unusual staging of the retelling of these plays, using mundane items in place of actors almost as puppets on a small table top

as a stage, forces the audience immediately to engage their imagination and suspend their disbelief. Sauce bottles, glasses, chocolate boxes and salt and pepper shakers are transformed into a host of characters as needed through the description of the action provided by the narrator. The narrator invites the audience to become part of the experience of collective theatre-making by engaging their imagination to believe in what has not been staged but rather suggested through language.

Storytelling

The Company has a long-standing fascination with the power of words, language, description and narrative. In Complete Works, six actors are responsible for

telling the story of a number of Shakespeare's works. Each story is told by one actor sitting at their table-top stage. The stories are told in contemporary English with the occasional reference to the original Shakespearean language. The focus is on the describing narrative, telling and exploring the thematic concerns, central characters and dramatic action of the stories. Each actor has their own storytelling style and techniques meaning that audiences who go to a number of sessions presented by different performers over the season will see a variety of storytelling approaches. The intention is that audiences will see past the mundane objects standing in for actors and, through the power of storytelling, engage with and care for the characters and their plight.

Production

Set Design

Miniatures

The performers in Complete Works create miniaturised representations of the set and characters using mundane and un-extraordinary everyday items. The stage itself is a small table. The audience is forced to imagine the set, location, action and action through the descriptions provided by the performer.

Characterisation

Described Characterisation

The actors narrate and recount the details of Shakespeare's plays rather than perform them. In a sense, they use the objects which represent the characters almost as a form of puppetry, but the focus is on the storytelling. Through their storytelling, each actor uses their own vocal techniques to help the audience understand the characters' traits and objectives.

Dramatic Structure

Recount and retelling

Rather than performing the whole play, the performer presents a shortened and synthesised retelling of the story. In recounting the significant events and characters of the story, the performer focuses on the essential elements of the narrative structure and arc of the story.

Durational work

The company presents the complete works of Shakespeare over the course of the festival showing 3-4 plays per day, but not in a continuous chunk of time. The audience, therefore, may see one or more stories a day or a series of stories over a number of days. The durational aspect of this theatrical style is what interests the company, and the episodic presentation sets them apart from other theatre companies.

Dramatic Form/Convention

Object Theatre / Table Top Theatre

Sometimes referred to as Object Puppetry, Object Theatre uses everyday or found objects to create a story. Objects may be used in the performance in the context for which they are intended, or they may be transformed into something else which requires the performer and audience to work together to inspire their collective imagination.

Any object can become a puppet and this abstract style of theatre provides opportunities for playfulness and comedy, metaphor, irony and symbolic and poetic thinking.

While Object Theatre performances may be performed on full stages and integrate a range of other design and technical theatrical elements, often, as is the case with Complete Works, performances are presented on a tabletop with one narrator manipulating and

portraying the 'object-characters'.

Performers may look at how features such as the shape, size, sound, material or possibilities for movement of an object could help symbolise or represent characters, their traits or objectives. There may also be no symbolic justification at all for an object to represent characters and the performer, through their manipulation of the object and their narration, transforms the object into the character or thing they want the audience to imagine and believe that it is.

For more information about Object Theatre thedramateacher.com/object-theatre/

Imagined or Described Action and Virtual Performance

Forced Entertainment has an interest in creating imagined or 'virtual' performance whereby something on stage doesn't actually happen but is described in such a way that it 'comes to life' through the act of imagining. They also refer to this as Described Action performance.

By asking the audience to imagine a whole series of events, actions and characters without actually staging them, they intend to engage the audience's imagination making the audience active co-creators of the theatrical event rather than passive spectators. This intended audience response is reminiscent of Bertolt Brecht's Verfrumdungseffekt or Alienation Effect in which his aim was to 'make the familiar strange'

and detach the audience from deep emotional engagement with the characters. Brecht's manipulation of literary, technical and performance techniques served to continuously break the illusion of theatre to consistently remind the audience that they were watching a play. In doing so, the audience became active participants in the theatrical experience and their focus would shift to considering the political or social message of the play.

For more information about Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre and Alienation techniques thedramateacher.com/epic-theatre-conventions/

In Complete Works, the performers speak directly to the audience consistently breaking the fourth wall, one of the hallmarks of Brecht's theatre of alienation. The fourth wall is a convention of realistic theatre where the actors and audience imagine there is an 'invisible wall' between the characters and the audience: actors perform with a sense of not being aware of the audience allowing the audience to be spectators and look into the characters' world. Then the fourth wall is broken by performers speaking directly to the audience, the illusion of theatre is fractured and the relationship between the actors and the audience becomes more intimate.

One-hander (solo show) and Storytelling

Each of the stories in the Complete Works series is performed by only one actor, or narrator, who has the challenge of synthesising the main action of the play into a 45 minute described retelling, manipulating the 'object-characters' and engaging the audience in the

theatrical experience. In solo shows, the actors often vary the pitch, tone, volume and pace of their vocal delivery to capture the essence of each character and to make characters distinct. Other aspects of the production, like lighting and sound, also become significant in establishing location, time or atmosphere. In Complete Works, symbolism in choice of object chosen for the 'object-actors' is also critical in helping to convey meaning. Each performer has their own specific approach to creating characters and engaging the audience through their performance and they may even vary these techniques depending which story they are telling. Central to high-quality storytelling, though, is the nature and intimacy of relationship that the performer is able to create with the audience.





Suggested Tasks

BEFORE the show:

Questions to put to your students

- The company describes their performance style as 'described action.' What do you think this means? What are your expectations of this performance style?
- What do you think are the challenges of a solo performer? What specific skills do you think are important for a solo performer?
- In this production, the storyteller uses household objects in place of actors to represent characters and performed on a miniaturised set: a table top. What do you think will be important in order for the performer to engage the audience in the performance?
- List the characters in the play/s you are viewing and research their character traits, personality and objectives in the play.
- If the characters in the play were a household item, what would they be? Why?

Year 9 and 10 DRAMA

AC9ADR10E01: investigate use of elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

ENGLISH

AC9E10LE01: analyse representations of individuals, groups and places and evaluate how they reflect their context in literary texts by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors



Literacy



Critical and Creative Thinking

AFTER the show:

Questions to put to your students

- What was something you found surprising about the production and/or the performances?
- How did the performer make specific moments a dramatic event through their storytelling?
- What moments in the performance had the greatest impact on you as an audience member? What contributed to this?
- The company refers to their performance style as 'described action'. What do you understand about their chosen style after seeing the performance?
- What are the limitations of the company's choice to work with miniaturisation (ie small scale stage, objects in place of actors etc)?
- What opportunities does the company's choice to working with miniaturisation provide?
- The performance utilises many techniques that alienate the audience from the story. What alienation techniques did you notice? How did they impact the storytelling?
- In Table Top Object Theatre, characters are represented by household objects. How did specific objects represent particular characters? Why do you think the company chose these specific objects?
- How has seeing this performance challenged your preconceptions about the play/s and/or Shakespeare?

Year 9 and 10 Drama

AC9ADR10E01: investigate use of elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

AC9ADR10D02: reflect on their own and others' drama or practices to refine and inform their use of elements of drama, conventions and/or approaches to shape and sustain dramatic action

Year 9 and 10 English

AC9E10LE01: analyse representations of individuals, groups and places and evaluate how they reflect their context in literary texts by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors

AC9E10LE03: analyse how the aesthetic qualities associated with text structures, language features, literary devices and visual features, and the context in which these texts are experienced, influence audience response



Literacy



Critical and Creative Thinking

Activity 1: Transformations

These warm-up activities are common in drama classes as vehicles for seeing opportunities for things to transform or become different from the obvious. In 'What Are You Doing', students perform an action and then transform it to something else when asked what they are doing. In 'Object Transformation', students find creative possibilities for an object beyond the obvious.

What Are You Doing?

- One student starts performing the action of a mundane activity, for example, washing their hair.
- Another student approaches them and asks 'What are you doing?'
- The first student responds saying they are doing something completely different, for example, 'I'm making a pizza.'
- The second student begins performing the action of making a pizza until a new student approaches them and asks what they are doing, to which they respond with a different action again, for example 'I'm mowing the lawn.' The third student then begins the action of mowing the lawn.
- The game continues until all students have had a turn.
- You could break bigger classes into smaller groups of say 5 or 6 and keep the game going until all students have had two or three turns.

- The idea of this game is for students to think abstractly about possibilities for actions and to accept the offers for improvisation that are made by other actors.

Object Transformation

- Students stand in a circle.
- The teacher begins the game by holding up an everyday object, for example, a ruler, and declares it to be something else. They then demonstrate using the object as what they described it to be. For example, 'This is not a ruler, it's a telescope,' and then holding up the ruler as though they are looking through a telescope.
- The teacher passes the ruler to the next person who declares 'This is not a telescope, it's a...' and transforms it into something else. For example, 'This is not a telescope, it's a hair straightener' and begins straightening their hair with the ruler before passing it on to the next person to transform it into something else.
- The game continues until all students have had a turn at transforming the object.
- Encourage students to go with the first thing that comes to them, even if logically it doesn't make sense. There are no right or wrong answers. They are only limited by their imagination and what is appropriate in the classroom context.

Variation: Place a sheet of fabric on the floor in the middle of the circle. Students enter one at a time to transform the material (perhaps it becomes a dress, a baby, a river, a ghost, a plane, a Christmas tree) but this time the transformation is made without any words actions only.

TASK: Reflection.

Discuss which transformations were the most interesting or unexpected and how the performer successfully transformed the object in their performance.

What was difference between the verbal and non-verbal version of the game?

How did being told what the object was impact your capacity to imagine the transformation?

In the non-verbal version of the game, how did you notice your role as the audience change in order to believe the object transformation?

Year 9 and 10 Drama

AC9ADR10E01: investigate use of elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

AC9ADR10D01: develop performance skills and/or techniques to manipulate elements of drama and/or use conventions to communicate the physical and psychological aspects of roles and characters consistent with intentions

AC9ADR10C01: improvise and devise drama, and interpret scripted drama, using elements of drama and conventions to shape and manipulate dramatic action and convey intended ideas, perspectives and/or meaning

Year 9 and 10 English

AC9E10LA07: evaluate the features of still and moving images, and the effects of those choices on representations



Literacy



Critical and Creative Thinking

Activity 2: Storytelling and Imagination

The capacity of the audience to engage their imagine is as important in this work as the strength of the performer's imagination to tell the story. Furthermore, these stories are extremely well-known and dense in terms of their literary features, language, characters and action. The performer's task of reducing the play to 45 minutes requires a thorough knowledge of the story and being intentional and concise in their language and retelling.

Students begin with a story that they know well and that they think the rest of the class will have some knowledge of, this could be a novel, a film, a television series, a play. Or, perhaps they work with a current class text that you are studying or have recently studied.

- Students record details the narrative elements of their chosen story in a table or other graphic organiser against the headings Plot, Setting, Conflict, Resolution, Characters
- Students record on a timeline the narrative arc of the story: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, Resolution

TASK: Using their planning documents from the activities above, students have 15 minutes to write a recount that retells the synopsis and action of the story. They should aim to convey a sense of the narrative elements and narrative arc in their story telling.

- Rehearse a reading of your story to share or present to the class. Consider vocal performance techniques in your storytelling eg pace, pitch and tone, diction, emphasis, character voices, perhaps even accents in order to create a sense of the characters, mood and action.
- What props could be symbolic of characters and settings in the story? How could these same props transform to become different characters, objects or even set pieces as needed?
- Rehearse and present a version of your story whereby the props take place of characters employing the techniques of Object Theatre.

Year 9 & 10 Drama

AC9ADR10E01: investigate use of elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

AC9ADR10D01: develop performance skills and/or techniques to manipulate elements of drama and/or use conventions to communicate the physical and psychological aspects of roles and characters consistent with intentions

AC9ADR10C02: rehearse and refine drama making deliberate aesthetic choices to unify dramatic meaning

AC9ADR10P01: perform improvised, devised and/or scripted drama to audiences, using performance skills and conventions to shape the drama.

Year 9 & 10 English

AC9E10LA03: analyse text structures and language features and evaluate their effectiveness in achieving their purpose

AC9E10LE03: analyse how the aesthetic qualities associated with text structures, language features, literary devices and visual features, and the context in which these texts are experienced, influence audience response

AC9E10LE05: analyse how text structure, language features, literary devices and intertextual connections shape interpretations of texts

AC9E10LY07: plan, create, rehearse and deliver spoken and multimodal presentations by experimenting with rhetorical devices, and the organisation and development of ideas, to engage audiences for different purposes in ways that may be imaginative, reflective, informative, persuasive, analytical and/or critical



Literacy



Critical and Creative Thinking

Activity 3: Objects as Characters

Warmup 1 – Object Hot Seat

Collect a number of different everyday objects, enough for each student in the class to work with one object each. Students are given an object each and are asked to imagine that they are archaeologists hundreds of years from now. On their latest dig, they have discovered this object. After they present their object to the class (or small group), other participants ask questions of the object. The presenter should answer these questions as though they are the object. This activity is about starting to personify objects and to imagine and give them human qualities and capabilities.

Warmup 2 – This Is Me...

Students take it in turns to hold up one object from the selections and present it to the class using the sentence starter 'This is me. I am a... because...' naming the object they have identified with and a reason for their choice.

- If you are studying a play or a text, students could repeat this activity aligning characters from the text to an object with reasons for their choice.

Warmup 3 – Object Endowment

This is a fun storytelling activity that has the potential to transform objects through creative storytelling. Students sit in a circle and a small selection of objects are placed in the centre. Students take it in turns to select an object and tell the group (improvise) a short fictional story about how the object they have chosen saved their life. It is important in this activity to keep the number of objects limited to encourage multiple transformations of the same objects and therefore broaden storytelling and creative possibilities for object transformation.

TASK: MOVING OBJECTS

In this task, students look at intrinsic and extrinsic movement opportunities for their object-characters. Intrinsic movements are those movements that are suggested by the object and its usual functions, for example, we know intrinsically that you can twist the top functioning part of a pepper grinder. Extrinsic movements are those movements we can impose upon or manipulate an object to do, for example, rolling a pepper grinder across a table, moving it to make it look like it is ballroom dancing, or using it as a rolling pin.

Year 9 & 10 Drama

AC9ADR10E01: investigate use of elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

AC9ADR10D01: develop performance skills and/or techniques to manipulate elements of drama and/or use conventions to communicate the physical and psychological aspects of roles and characters consistent with intentions

AC9ADR10D02: reflect on their own and others' drama or practices to refine and inform their use of elements of drama, conventions and/or approaches to shape and sustain dramatic action

AC9ADR10C01: improvise and devise drama, and interpret scripted drama, using elements of drama and conventions to shape and manipulate dramatic action and convey intended ideas, perspectives and/or meaning

AC9ADR10C02: rehearse and refine drama making deliberate aesthetic choices to unify dramatic meaning

AC9ADR10P01: perform improvised, devised and/or scripted drama to audiences, using performance skills and conventions to shape the drama.

Year 9 & 10 English

AC9E10LY07: plan, create, rehearse and deliver spoken and multimodal presentations by experimenting with rhetorical devices, and the organisation and development of ideas, to engage audiences for different purposes in ways that may be imaginative, reflective, informative, persuasive, analytical and/or critical



Literacy



Critical and Creative Thinking

- Explore different opportunities and explore how the object moves. Try varying the weight, speed, direction and flow of the possible movements*
- Explore ways you can vary the movement of the object to represent a range of different characters eg an elderly person; a child; a superhero; a villain; a giant; a fairy; a witch; an insect; a dinosaur; a police officer; a pirate; a business person; a skateboarder.

* Look at Laban's Effort Actions for some guidance as to how different movements and efforts can be created. Laban's Efforts, which emerged out of dance, are traditionally by human actors to explore opportunities for physical movement, but these can also be employed by performers in Object Theatre to personify objects. For more information about Laban's Effort Actions, see here: actorstoolkit.co.uk/ultimate-guide-to-using-laban-technique-for-actors/

Reflect and discuss:

- Which character type/s were best represented by the object? Why?
- How did you make choices about how to manipulate the movement of the object to create different character types?
- What worked? What didn't? Why?
- In what ways do the skills of the performer differ between Object Theatre performance and live action performance? In what ways are they the same?

TASK: TABLE TOP THEATRE

Students work in independently or in small groups of 2 - 5 to create their own Table Top Object Theatre performance.

In this task, students work with a chosen or given text (eg a story, play script, monologue, anecdote etc) to produce a short performance in which they manipulate and apply the techniques of Object Theatre and/or described action.

They make choices about the objects they use to represent characters, settings and themes in the performance and make informed choices about the movement and interaction of the object-characters through experimentation and exploration.

Students rehearse and refine their Table Top Theatre performances and present them to an audience

A note on these tasks for Stage 2 Drama teachers:

- The Transformations, Storytelling and Imagination, Objects as Characters, and Moving Objects activities and tasks are designed to help students explore and experiment with Object Theatre and described action performance techniques. Capturing naturally occurring evidence of student learning and experimentation with these concepts could be useful evidence for tasks in Assessment Type 2 or Assessment Type 3.
- Teachers in Stage 2 Drama may choose to use all or a combination of some of these activities and tasks as scaffolding for a combined task in Assessment Type 2 following the guidance of the Table Top Theatre suggested task whereby the student works independently to develop a concept for a hypothetical Object Theatre and/or described action performance.
- Teachers in Stage 2 Drama might use a combination of these activities and the suggestions in the Table Top Theatre task as a scaffold for the Creative Presentation in Assessment Type 3. Assessment Type 2.

About the Company

Forced Entertainment is an ensemble of artists founded in 1984. Touring and presenting their ground-breaking provocative performances across the UK, mainland Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and further afield, the group have sustained a unique collaborative practise for more than thirty years.

Led by the artist and writer Tim Etchells, the Forced Entertainment company includes designer and performer Richard Lowdon alongside performers Robin Arthur, Claire Marshall, Cathy Naden and Terry O'Connor. Over the years this core ensemble has been augmented by contributions from many guest artists and performers.

Forced Entertainment's work explores and often explodes the conventions of genre, narrative and theatre itself drawing influence not just from drama but from dance, performance art, music culture and popular forms such as cabaret and stand-up. The group operate at different scales, shifting from intimate two-performer works focused on text, to spectacular productions with large numbers of people onstage.

Exciting, challenging, entertaining and questioning, Forced Entertainment has been a key player in the development of a truly contemporary theatre language, and is recognised as a world leader in the field of contemporary performance practice - contributing enormously to the growth and development of British theatre, as well as influencing several generations of younger artists who have been inspired by the work. In 2016 the group were awarded the International Ibsen Award, which honours an individual, institution or organisation that has brought new artistic dimensions to the world of theatre, joining distinguished previous winners Peter Brook, Heiner Goebbels, Jon Fosse, Ariane Mnouchkine and Peter Handke as recipients of this prestigious prize

Additional information

Each of the group's original projects is developed through a deeply collaborative process that combines writing, improvisation, discussion and rehearsal. Their focus on creating an innovative theatre with which to addresses

contemporary experience, issues and questions in a language born out of the times, has also grown organically to include gallery installations, site-specific pieces, books, photographic works and videos. The group have also created a series of improvised long durational works, lasting between 6 and 24 hours, which have played a significant part in their oeuvre since the early 90s. Live streams of these marathon performances have, since 2008, played an important role in disseminating the company's work and in building new approaches to dispersed, digital audiences.

["All of our work, for us, approaches the question of what theatre might be now, how it can speak now, how it might make contact with audiences now," says Etchells. "For us theatre is always a kind of negotiation, something that thrives on its liveness and its potential for debate and conversation..."]

Tim Etchells Biography

Tim Etchells is an artist and a writer based in the UK whose work shifts between visual art, fiction and creating original performance. He has worked in a wide variety of contexts, notably as the leader of the world-renowned Sheffield-based performance group Forced Entertainment. Exhibiting and presenting work in significant

institutions all over the world, Tim has collaborated with Meg Stuart/ Damaged Goods, Marino Formenti, Taus Mahakacheva, Vlatka Horvat, Ant Hampton, Aisha Orazbayeva, Tony Buck (The Necks) and Elmgreen & Dragset. His collection of short fiction *Endland* was published by *And Other Stories*, in 2019 and his book on Forced

Entertainment (*Certain Fragments*) is widely praised for its insights on collective performance making. Monographs on his work with Forced Entertainment and on his body of work in neon installation were published in 2023 by *Spector Books* in Germany. He is represented by *Ebensperger* (Berlin and Vienna).

Links

Forced Entertainment company website

www.forcedentertainment.com

Tim Etchells (Artistic Director, Forced Entertainment) discusses the making of *Table Top Shakespeare*:

[youtube.com/watch?v=z1PfMfu5R-E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1PfMfu5R-E)

Extracts from the *Complete Works* performances:

[youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-blz3DjyJlW7hWmHod1qB9MezbUt6c7](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-blz3DjyJlW7hWmHod1qB9MezbUt6c7)

Trailer: *Complete Works*

[youtube.com/watch?v=ZoOa1qOVwXQ&list=PL-blz3DjyJlW7hWmHod1qB9MezbUt6c7&index=11](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZoOa1qOVwXQ&list=PL-blz3DjyJlW7hWmHod1qB9MezbUt6c7&index=11)

Reviews

Exeunt Magazine: exeuntmagazine.com/reviews/review-tabletop-shakespeare-forced-entertainment-online/

Now Then Magazine: nowthenmagazine.com/articles/table-top-shakespeare

The Guardian" theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2016/mar/03/forced-entertainment-complete-works-table-top-shakespeare-barbican-london

Interviews

Tim Etchells on *Complete Works* in *Nacht Kritik*: nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11138:tim-etchells-on-live-streaming-forced-entertainment-s-durational-performances-and-complete-works&catid=53&Itemid=83

Richard Lowdon in *The Berliner*: the-berliner.com/stage/putting-shakespeare-on-the-table/

The People

Artistic Team

Tim Etchells (Artistic Director), Robin Arthur, Richard Lowdon (Designer), Claire Marshall, Cathy Naden, Terry O'Connor.

Management Team

Eileen Evans (Executive Director), Jim Harrison (Production Manager).
Social Media Communications: Nicki Hobday.

Board of Directors

Deborah Chadbourn (Chair), Frances Babbage, Adrian Friedli, Inga Hirst, Daniel Kok and Lauren Nichole Whitter



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