

A group of dancers in motion on a stage, with a large white text overlay reading "UNIT 6". The dancers are wearing various costumes, including a white ruffled top and a purple tank top. The background is dark, and the lighting is dramatic, highlighting the dancers' movements.

# UNIT 6

STAGE  
OF  
mind

# 6. EXPLORING SENSORY PERCEPTIONS

## THROUGH MOVEMENT

In this unit, the facilitator will guide participants through a series of exercises and activities that are specifically designed to enhance their sensory awareness. By exploring each sense individually, participants will learn to distinguish between sensory input and perception. The goal of these exercises is to develop a deeper understanding of the senses, and to leverage that knowledge to improve performance in dramatic contexts. Throughout the unit, participants will work to identify the physical and emotional senses of a given character in a scene, and to draw on their own sensory experiences and memories to bring depth and authenticity to their portrayal of that character.

### 6.1 Learning outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, participants of the training program will be able to:

- ▶ develop a greater sense of bodily awareness and presence
- ▶ identify and differentiate between the physical sensations and the interpretation of those sensations (perception)
- ▶ recognize how the senses are utilised in movement and spatial awareness
- ▶ apply their understanding of sensory perception to enhance their real-world experiences and performances.

### 6.2 Theoretical background / Approach

Human perception and experience of the world is multi-sensorial. Our perceptions and sensations are influenced not only by our immediate environment but also by our memories and imaginations. In this training unit, participants will develop a deep understanding of their own sensory experiences and how their bodies interact with the world around them.

The unit begins by focusing on individual observation of bodily sensations and gradually moves towards external perception. Through movement exercises, participants will explore how their senses inform their movements and interactions with the environment. They will also engage in group movement exercises to investigate how sensory awareness impacts social interactions in shared spaces.

These techniques will then be applied to character work, with participants using their own sense memories to inform their performances. Mindfulness techniques such as breath work and observation will be used to bring individuals into the present moment of sensory awareness.

This training unit draws upon both Stanislavski's sense memory and kinetic awareness and Boal's work on sensory awareness and movement. By developing their sensory awareness, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the human experience and become more nuanced and authentic performers.



## 6.3 Learning and teaching methods

The learning and teaching methods in this training unit are workshop-based and collaborative. The facilitator will lead grounding and self-observation exercises to assist participants to bring their awareness and focus to their senses, followed by theatre games and energy-releasing exercises designed to build group connection and get participants moving. Stretching and range-of-motion exercises will prepare participants for more physical work. Throughout the workshop, participants will develop their awareness of their senses through observation and movement, both individually and in groups, and apply this knowledge to their performance work.

The teaching method emphasizes active listening, discussion, and sharing of observations and responses. Participants will be encouraged to elaborate on their observations and to explore their understanding of their senses and movement. The facilitator will foster an environment of support, flexibility, and sensitivity to adapt the activities to the individual needs of participants, with alternative options available as necessary. All activities are optional and non-obligatory, and the facilitator will encourage participants to investigate their interests and enhance their understanding.

## 6.4 Detailed unit description

The aim of this module is to bring participants' focus to the senses and deepen their understanding of how the senses and movement relate to each other, enabling them to access their own sense memories when performing as a character. By developing their sensory awareness, participants will improve their ability to be present and responsive in the moment, enhancing their performance skills.

The module uses drama games to build group cohesion and a feeling of comfort working within a group. Through a combination of individual observation and group activities, participants will cultivate their ability to remain present in the moment. By discerning and examining their five senses, they will acquire a greater awareness of the diverse types of information that are utilized during movement through space. In exercises where vision is eliminated, participants will activate their other senses and foster imaginative development.

Once the participants understand how they use their senses, they can apply it to performance. By analysing a script or story, they will choose a character and imagine what the character is feeling physically and emotionally. Drawing on their own sense memories, participants will bring those sensations and emotions into their performance of the character.

As sensory work can bring up strong emotions, the module will conclude with fun games that relieve tension and calming exercises to help participants centre themselves in their bodies. The facilitator will prioritize the emotional safety of the group and provide alternative options for any exercises that may trigger discomfort.

## 6.5 Unit assessment

Assessment should be tailored to each individual's competencies, experience and expectations, considering the unique challenges they may face. Upon completion of the delivery of this unit, participants should have gained a better understanding of the connection between sensory perception and movement. They should have improved their ability to differentiate between sensation and perception, and their ability



to use their own sense memories to support their performance of a character. They should also have improved their coordination and increased their strength and flexibility.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed activities in improving the above-mentioned participants' competencies, questionnaires can be used. These questionnaires can allow the participants to express whether they perceive that they have improved their skills in these areas. Additionally, at the end of each session, time should be allocated to discussing these topics to enable participants to share their experiences with their peers.

In the framework of this training programme implementation, it is expected to have a professional familiar with the participants present during the sessions to support the facilitator and to provide objective assessment to ensure that the training is achieving its intended goals.

## 6.6 References

- ▶ Boal, A (1992). *Games for Actors and non-Actors*. Routledge. New York.
- ▶ Stanislavski, C. (2013). *An Actor Prepares*. Bloomsbury Academic.

## 6.7 Unit activities

### 6.7.1 Introduction exercises

<b>EXERCISE NAME: MEET AND GREET</b>
<b>Exercise number:</b> 1
<b>Aims of the exercise:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm-up the group, synchronize energy and encourage team building.</li> <li>• Break the ice and connect with a sense of fun and playfulness to free up the group and create a positive and inclusive atmosphere.</li> <li>• Provide a dynamic and interactive way for team members to learn about each other while also promoting physical activity.</li> </ul>
<b>Focus level:</b> Medium
<b>Energy requirement:</b> High
<b>Materials:</b> None
<b>Duration:</b> 10 minutes



## EXERCISE NAME: MEET AND GREET

### Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator asks participants to spread out in the space and demonstrates the 'greeting' with someone from the group. The 'greeting' between two people consists of making eye contact, doing a handshake, and each person saying their first and second name.
- ▶ When the facilitator says "go," instruct participants to move around the space and find someone to conduct the greeting with. Each pair should make eye contact, shake hands and introduce themselves with their first and last names. Once the exchange is completed, they should move on to a new person to greet and repeat the process.
- ▶ The facilitator can call out "freeze," and all participants must freeze in place. When the facilitator says "go," participants start from where they left off and continue greeting new people.
- ▶ The facilitator can change the speed of the greetings by calling out "fast" or "slow." Participants must follow the steps of the greeting (eye contact, shaking hands, and introducing themselves with their first and last names) while calling out the names clearly. Encourage them to try doing it as quickly and as slowly as possible.
- ▶ The group returns to a normal pace and is asked to continue making "greetings". However, this time, participants can only let go of the first person's hand when they have a second hand in their grip. This ensures that participants are always shaking at least one person's hand as they move around the room greeting each other.

## EXERCISE NAME: 5 SENSES

**Exercise number:** 2

**Aims of the exercise:** Improve focus on the senses

**Focus level:** Low

**Energy requirement:** Low

**Materials:** None

**Duration:** 10-15 minutes



## EXERCISE NAME: 5 SENSES

### Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator invites participants to walk randomly around the room, always walking towards an empty space.
- ▶ When the facilitator says 'stop', participants stop where they are and close their eyes.
- ▶ The facilitator guides participants through a sensory awareness exercise, asking them to focus on their senses one by one. For example, "What can you feel in your body? What can you smell in the air? What can you taste in your mouth? What can you hear around you?" The facilitator may ask participants to name a certain number of things for each sense.
- ▶ Afterward, the facilitator asks participants to open their eyes and focus on what they can see. They may ask if their sense observation has changed what they perceive.
- ▶ The facilitator asks participants to move around the room again, and then calls 'stop' to repeat the exercise in a different part of the room.
- ▶ During the exercise, the facilitator encourages participants to be present in the moment and to focus on what they can perceive in the room and outside the room, using all their senses.

## EXERCISE NAME: STRETCHES AND SHAKE-OUT

**Exercise number:** 3

### Aims of the exercise

- Stretch all the muscles in the body and increase strength and flexibility.
- Increase awareness of the body and how it moves.
- Promote focus and concentration.

**Focus level:** Low

**Energy requirement:** Medium

**Materials:** None

**Duration:** 10 minutes

### Instructions:

- Participants are gathered in a circle and asked to follow these instructions:
  - ▶ Start by standing in a neutral position with feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent, pelvis slightly tucked and shoulders relaxed.



## EXERCISE NAME: STRETCHES AND SHAKE-OUT

- ▶ Begin by reaching your arms upward and out in a circular motion, as if climbing a ladder.
- ▶ Roll your shoulders forward and back, using a swimming motion as an alternative.
- ▶ Roll your head from one shoulder to the other, loosening your neck muscles.
- ▶ Rotate your wrists, elbows, ankles and knees in one direction and then the other, loosening up your joints.
- ▶ Rotate your hips in a slow circular motion, like hula-hooping.
- ▶ Slowly lower your head down to your chest, allowing your arms to hang loosely and your legs to stay firm but relaxed. Take three deep breaths in this position, then slowly raise your upper body back up to an upright position on the final breath.
- ▶ Rub each major muscle area of your body, starting with the head and working down.
- ▶ Shake each hand and foot 8 times, calling out the numbers as you do so.
- ▶ Repeat the shaking exercise by shaking each hand and foot, reducing the number by 2 each time.
- ▶ Finish with a final shakeout of the whole body to release any remaining tension.

## 6.7.II Core exercises

### EXERCISE NAME: FOREST OF SOUNDS

**Exercise number:** 1

#### Aims of the exercise

- Focus on movement using the senses
- Build trust within the group

**Focus level:** Medium

**Energy requirement:** Medium

**Materials:** None

**Duration:** 10 minutes



## EXERCISE NAME: FOREST OF SOUNDS

### Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator asks participants to find a partner and decide who is A and who is B.
- ▶ A will choose a sound that they are comfortable repeating for a few minutes, while B will close their eyes and follow the sound their partner is making.
- ▶ A must take care of their partner and avoid taking them into any obstacles or other people. If they want their partner to stop, they stop making the repeating sound. B, on the other hand, must focus on their partners' sound, stopping when the sound stops and keeping close enough to hear their partner.
- ▶ After a couple of minutes, the partners change roles, so that B chooses a sound to guide their partner, and A closes their eyes and follows their partner's sound.
- ▶ If the group is confident, the facilitator can encourage variations in the level of the sound or distance between the partners.

## EXERCISE NAME: IMAGINARY JOURNEY

**Exercise number:** 2

### Aims of the exercise

- Stimulate the imagination through the use of the senses.
- Understand how the senses shape awareness.
- Build trust within the group.

**Focus level:** Medium

**Energy requirement:** Medium

**Materials:** None

**Duration:** 10-15 minutes

### Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator asks participants to find a partner and decide who is A and who is B.
- ▶ A will close their eyes as B leads them around the room.
- ▶ B will physically guide A around the room to create the illusion of a different space. B may use hand gestures to direct A to duck or crawl, or guide their feet as if they were ascending stairs, simulating the experience of navigating through a tunnel or cave.





## EXERCISE NAME: IMAGINARY JOURNEY

- ▶ B can enhance the immersive experience by using sound and other sensory cues to create the illusion of the imagined environment. For instance, B could fan A's face to simulate a breeze or produce wave sounds to evoke the feeling of being near the sea.
- ▶ After a few minutes the partners can change roles, with A guiding and B being led.
- ▶ When everyone has had a turn, the group is invited to sit in a circle and discuss what they experienced and observed, with a focus on the senses. The partners can also compare what places they were trying to get their partners to imagine and what their partner imagined.

## EXERCISE NAME: CONNECTING SENSE MEMORY TO CHARACTER IN PERFORMANCE

**Exercise number:** 3

### Aims of the exercise

- To identify emotions and physical sensations experienced by a character
- To identify one's own memories similar emotions and physical sensations to the character
- To bring one's own sense memory to the portrayal of the character

**Focus level:** High

**Energy requirement:** Medium

**Materials:** Excerpt from a script or other text

**Duration:** 40 minutes

### ▶ Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator asks participants to take turns reading a short excerpt from a script or other text. If written material is not suitable, a verbal discussion of a common fairy-tale or other widely known story will also work.
- ▶ Ask the participants what they think the characters are feeling in the story, both physically and emotionally.
- ▶ Participants can then be invited to choose one moment and one character in the story to focus on.
- ▶ Have the participants find a place in the room and think about what the chosen character was feeling, both physically and emotionally, in that specific moment.



## EXERCISE NAME: CONNECTING SENSE MEMORY TO CHARACTER IN PERFORMANCE

- ▶ Then ask each participant to remember a time where they experience those same emotions and a time when they had the same physical sensations. This can be one memory or a combination of different memories.
- ▶ Ask the participants to fully experience the emotions and physical sensations from their memory as they imagine the moment for the character.
- ▶ Have each participant perform the section of text containing the moment for the character they have worked on.
- ▶ Finally discuss with the participants how easy or difficult it was to connect sense memory to the character, and if they noticed any changes in their understanding or performance of that character.

### Key Terms:

**Sense memory** refers to a mental representation of the sensory details of past experiences, including their visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory and gustatory aspects.

## 6.7.III Closure exercises

### EXERCISE NAME: BREATHING FIVE BY FIVE

**Exercise number:** 1

**Aims of the exercise:** Relax and focus on the body through breath.

**Focus level:** Low

**Energy requirement:** Low

**Materials:** None

**Duration:** 5-10 minutes

#### Instructions:

- ▶ The participants are instructed to take a seat on individual chairs placed in the room, all facing towards the facilitator. They should sit back comfortably with their back well supported. If they prefer so, they can do this exercise while standing.
- ▶ Participants are instructed to take a deep, slow breath through their nose for a count of five, feeling their abdomen expand like a balloon. They are then asked to hold their breath for a few moments, before exhaling slowly through their mouth for a count of five. As they exhale, they should contract their abdomen, releasing any tension from their body.
- ▶ The exercise should be repeated five times.



## EXERCISE NAME

*CIRCLE CENTERING AND FINAL CLAP*

**Exercise number:** 2

### Aims of the exercise:

- Improve focus and concentration
- Release stress and anxiety
- Ground the body and mind

**Focus level:** High

**Energy requirement:** Low

**Materials:** None

**Duration:** 10 minutes

### Instructions:

- ▶ Have the participants stand in a neutral stance and focus on their breath.
- ▶ Ask the participants to breathe in and bring their arms around in a circle above their head.
- ▶ Then ask them to bring the tips of their fingers together above their head, flatten their palms and push down in front of their face, as if pressing down on imaginary force as they breathe out.
- ▶ Repeat three or four times until everyone feels calm and grounded.
- ▶ Once the group is grounded ask them to clap out the session all together in one big clap.



## END OF THE UNIT



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# Training Program



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