



UNIT 7

STAGE
OF
mind

7. DANCE AS A NARRATIVE TOOL

This unit is designed to explore the ways in which dance can be used as a powerful storytelling device in the context of musical theatre productions. Through different exercises and activities, the participants will learn how to develop dance arrangements that seamlessly integrate with the overall narrative of a production, using movement to convey emotions, themes and ideas that enhance the audience's experience.

Dance has a rich history as a form of non-verbal communication, and it remains a vital aspect of many cultures around the world. As a performing art, dance has the unique ability to convey complex ideas and emotions through physical movement, making it a powerful tool for conveying narrative and enhancing the audience's understanding of a story.

7.1. Learning outcomes

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

- ▶ Learn to effectively use body work, mindful movement and meditation to balance and strengthen their bodies.
- ▶ improve their listening skills and ability to interact with partners in a physical setting.
- ▶ develop non-verbal communication skills, work as part of an ensemble, and understand the needs of their fellow performers.
- ▶ prepare their bodies for dance exercises through stretching and toning.
- ▶ Improve their imagination and creativity while organizing concepts and ideas.

7.2 Theoretical background / Approach

The theoretical framework of this training unit is based on three pillars that emphasize the natural and organic movements of the body. These pillars are the authentic movement discipline, the Body-Mind Centering, and the Alexander technique.

Authentic movement is a practice that encourages individuals to listen to their bodies and move in ways that feel authentic and natural. Body-Mind Centering involves the exploration of the different systems of the body and their role in movement and expression. The Alexander technique focuses on alignment and the release of unnecessary tension in the body.

The beauty of these techniques is that they are approachable for learners of all levels, regardless of their experience in dance. The focus is not on perfection, but on movement that is both meaningful and pleasurable. Through this approach, participants can discover their unique movement idiosyncrasies and use them to enhance their storytelling abilities.



7.3 Learning and teaching methods

Throughout this training unit, participants will have the opportunity to explore and practice the three pillars of movement theory: authentic movement, the Alexander technique, and Body-Mind Centering.

The authentic movement discipline is an improvisational movement practice that focuses on connecting the physical needs of the body with the subconscious. Participants will learn to trust their bodies and move in a way that feels natural and intuitive.

The Alexander technique emphasizes releasing tension in the body and developing fluidity and mobility. Through guided exercises and instruction, participants will learn how to move with ease and grace.

Body-Mind Centering is an integrated approach to movement, the body and consciousness. It involves developing patterns and using body language to describe movement and the relationship between the body and mind. Through this method, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the connection between their body and their emotions.

In addition to these practices, participants will engage in a variety of learning and teaching methods, including group discussions, partner exercises, and individual reflection. By utilizing a range of teaching techniques, this unit provides a comprehensive and immersive learning experience for all participants.

7.4 Detailed unit description

Knowing the trajectory and source of the Authentic Movement, Alexander technique, and Body-Mind Centering is essential for participants to understand the methodologies used in the training unit. The Authentic Movement was developed in the 1960s and 1970s by dancer and DMT pioneer Mary Whitehouse. Influenced by Carl G. Jung's ideas on the subconscious and symbolism, Whitehouse conceived the Authentic Movement as a form of active imagination with the body. She focused on finding a bodily expression that represented the essence of the individual, independent of volition and mind. With Authentic Movement, individuals move while a therapist observes.

Janet Adler, a pupil of Whitehouse, continued to develop the technique and introduced the "Discipline of the Authentic Movement," which includes the role of the observer or witness. The Alexander technique, on the other hand, is a method that aims to change movement habits in daily activities. It is a practical method that improves ease and freedom of movement, balance, support, and coordination. The technique teaches the appropriate amount of effort for specific activities, giving more energy for all actions. It is not a series of treatments or exercises but a re-education of the mind and body.

The Alexander technique originated as a vocal training method for singers and actors in 1890. Its founder, F. Matthias Alexander, discovered that the efficient and natural functioning of the respiratory mechanism was the basis for successful vocational education. His respiratory re-education method evolved into a conscious change of bad coordination habits, including movements, positions, and breathing. Alexander discovered that habits, whether physical or mental, are psychophysical in nature. He observed how excessive habits of tension and inefficient coordination affect how we feel and think. His technique eventually evolved into a comprehensive psychophysical re-education method, which he called "The use of the body."

Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen developed Body-Mind Centering (BMC) as an approach to well-being based on the deep development of our psychophysical capabilities, integrating the work of body, movement,



and consciousness. The BMC study is a creative and innovative process that tightly interlaces science and experience, suggesting the embodied study of anatomic, physiologic, psychophysical, and evolutionary principles. The material is explored within an aperture environment, curiosity, and self-discovery, in which each person is the student and the study material, simultaneously. The main objective is to be open to and embrace innate knowledge, enjoying, and discovering the ease and comfort underlying the transformation processes. BMC allows a wider consciousness of corporal patterns, movement, psycho perceptive, and relational aspects, and offers alternative ways to feel, think, move, and interact with the world.

In conclusion, these three methodologies approach the body and movement as a whole, recognizing the integration of body, mind and voice. By incorporating these practices into training, participants can develop their creative potential for movement and explore its possibilities. These methodologies generate positive dynamics for all participants, promoting well-being and enhancing their physical and mental abilities.

7.5 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 improved their non-verbal communication skills, interaction with partners in a physical setting, teamwork and empathy. Through the proposed exercise they should also have enhanced their imagination and creativity while organizing concepts and ideas.

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.

7.6 Additional resources

- ▶ Dennis, A (2002). *The eloquent body: The physical formation of the actor*. Nick Hern Books. London.
- ▶ Garre Rubio, S. & Pascual, I. (2009). *Cuerpos en escena*. Fundamentos. Madrid.
- ▶ Pérez Royo, V. (2008). ¡A bailar a la calle! Danza contemporánea, espacio público y arquitectura. Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca. Salamanca.
- ▶ Wigman, M. (2006). *El lenguaje de la danza*. (Murias Vila, C. Trans.). El Aguazul. Madrid. (Original work published in 1966)



7.7 References

- ▶ Alextech1940 (2009, January 11). Short Introduction to the Alexander Technique by Marjorie Barstow [Video]. Youtube. <https://youtu.be/isz5XVqFrFU>
- ▶ Bainbridge Cohen, B. (2004). *Dance and Body-Mind Centering* [DVD]. Contredanse Editions
- ▶ Bainbridge Cohen, B. (2012). *Sensing, Feeling, and Action: The Experimental Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering*. Wesleyan University Press. United States.
- ▶ Brett Hershey. (2014, February 6). Introduction to the Alexander Technique with Brett Hershey [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/-6mvib8iXaQ>
- ▶ Chodorow, J. (1991). *Dance Therapy and Depth Psychology – The Moving Imagination*. Routledge. London.
- ▶ Feldenkrais, M (2010). *Embodied Wisdom: The Collected Papers of Moshe Feldenkrais by Moshe Feldenkrais*. North Atlantic Books. United States.
- ▶ Judith Stern. (2011, December 13). Judith C. Stern's introduction to the Alexander Technique [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/7WZ9f3oLE6w>
- ▶ Jung, C.G & Chodorow, J. (1997). *Jung on Active Imagination*. Princeton University Press. United States.
- ▶ Pallaro, P. (1999). *Authentic Movement. Essays by Mary Starks Whitehouse, Adler and Joan Chodorow*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. London.

7.8 Unit activities

7.8.1 Introduction exercises

EXERCISE NAME: THE HANDKERCHIEF AND THE ANIMALS

Exercise number: 1

Aims of the exercise

- Interact physically with other members of the group
- Pay attention to the instructions provided by the facilitator
- Work on the individual and collective listening.

Focus level: Low

Energy requirement: Medium

Materials: A silk or other light fabric handkerchief



EXERCISE NAME: THE HANDKERCHIEF AND THE ANIMALS

Duration: 10-15 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator divides the participants into two equal groups, which are placed facing each other.
- ▶ The members of each group, without being heard by the rest, will decide the number that will correspond to each one (depending on the number of people in the group). When they have their number, they will stand with each group facing each other, with the handkerchief in the center, and wait for the facilitator to give them instructions.
- ▶ The facilitator will call out a number and name an animal. The individuals on each team with that number will run to claim the handkerchief but moving in the manner of the animal the facilitator has said.
- ▶ For example, they may say the number 3 and a snail. The two individuals who have chosen 3 as their number will move towards the handkerchief like a snail. Points will be given to the team that claims the handkerchief.
- ▶ The exercise will be carried out until one of the two teams wins, and in this way, participants will warm up and prepare in a playful way for the following activities involving movement.

EXERCISE NAME: THE MESSAGE TRAIN

Exercise number: 2

Aims of the exercise

- Relaxing and toning the body.
- Stimulate communication between participants and work on the feeling of being part of a cast.
- Learning to pay attention to the needs of other participants.

Focus level: Low

Energy requirement: Medium

Materials: None

Duration: 10-15 minutes



EXERCISE NAME: THE MESSAGE TRAIN

Instructions:

- ▶ Participants form a circle and turn to the right to look at their partner's back.
- ▶ The facilitator invites them to massage their partner from the lower body, starting at the feet, moving to the ankles, knees and quadriceps. Then they are told to move on to gently massage their partner's back, neck, arms and head. They continue by massaging their partner's scalp and, at the end, wipe their partner's back from top to bottom to finish.
- ▶ It is very important to encourage participant to say if they feel uncomfortable with the exercise. Consent and boundaries are important when participants engage in activities that involve physical contact and closeness. The level of touching should depend on them and should never be imposed.

EXERCISE NAME: STRETCHINGS AND MUSCULAR TONICITY

Exercise number: 3

Aims of the exercise

- Stretching and toning the body, warming up for the following exercises.
- Improve concentration by imitating the facilitator's movements and listening carefully to instructions.

Focus level: Low

Energy requirement: Medium

Materials: None

Duration: 15 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator guides the session through a verbal description and demonstration, and the participants imitate the movements.
- ▶ First, they will warm up their joints, move their ankles, knees, hips, shoulders and neck. Next, they will raise their arms, interlace them around the head and pull sideways to stretch the trunk and rib cage.
- ▶ The facilitator asks participants to walk around the room, when the facilitator says 1, participants will jump; when the facilitator says 2, participants will fall to the floor without hurting themselves and get back up, and 3 means run. To walk again, the facilitator says 0.
- ▶ The facilitator can change the individual actions to adapt them to the group.



7.8.II Core exercises

EXERCISE NAME: CREATION OF A GROUP CHOREOGRAPHY

Exercise number: 1

Aims of the exercise

- Promote imagination and creativity.
- Improve teamwork and participants' communication skills.
- Develop the ability to create and remember simple choreography.

Focus level: Medium

Energy requirement: High

Materials: None

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator invites the participants to find a place in the classroom with enough space to investigate their body movements. Each person has to perform five simple movements with their body, being clear about where each movement starts and where it ends.
- ▶ Afterwards, teams of five people will be formed to work together to create a simple choreography with the five movements they have performed before. Each group will arrange the movements in a sequence to create a choreography of twenty-five movements.
- ▶ Taking turns, each group will go on stage to show the rest of the group their choreography with as much clarity of movement as possible.

EXERCISE NAME: THE MIRROR

Exercise number: 2

Aims of the exercise

- Work in pairs on non-verbal communication.
- Learn how to work in space, respecting the space of other participants.

Focus level: Medium

Energy requirement: Medium



EXERCISE NAME: THE MIRROR

Materials : Equipment for playing music

Duration: 15 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator plays instrumental music and invites the participants to place themselves in pairs facing each other, as in a mirror.
- ▶ In each pair, one of them will be A and the other B. A will begin to lead the movement and B will follow. It is important to point out that the rhythm of each pair will be different, because each one has its own learning rhythm.
- ▶ The facilitator indicates that in addition to moving laterally and forwards and backwards, they can also move up and down, even lying on the floor. When they have assimilated all these guidelines, the facilitator can indicate that they can start moving around the room, taking into account the movements of the other participants and being careful not to bump into each other.
- ▶ After a while the roles can be changed, so that B leads and A follows.
- ▶ To finish the exercise, each member of the pair is asked to try to guide and let themselves be guided by communicating with their partner through the body, in a non-verbal way.

EXERCISE NAME: EXPLORING NATURAL MOVEMENT: A SENSORY JOURNEY

Exercise number: 3

Aims of the exercise

- Develop the imagination and creativity.
- Promote the flow of the thoughts without judgment.
- Explore movement and sensory experience.
- Encourage participants to be aware of their surroundings and their own bodies while moving and exploring the senses.

Focus level: Medium

Energy requirement: High

Materials : Equipment for playing music

Duration: 15 minutes



EXERCISE NAME: EXPLORING NATURAL MOVEMENT: A SENSORY JOURNEY

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator will play music without lyrics and explain the exercise.
- ▶ Participants are invited to find a spot in the space.
- ▶ The facilitator will guide them through different senses, starting with hearing, then touch, taste, smell, and finally, sight.
 - ▶ For the sense of hearing, the facilitator may ask participants to listen carefully to the music playing and try to identify different sounds and instruments.
 - ▶ For the sense of touch, the facilitator may ask participants to focus on the sensation of their body against the floor, or to explore different textures and sensations by touching objects or surfaces around them.
 - ▶ For the sense of taste, the facilitator may ask participants to imagine different tastes and flavours.
 - ▶ For the sense of smell, the facilitator may provide scented objects or ask participants to imagine different smells and describe them to the group.
- ▶ For the sense of sight, the facilitator may ask participants to open their eyes and focus on different objects or colours around them, or to imagine different visual scenes in their minds.
- ▶ Participants are invited to explore and move in response to the sensory experiences, being mindful of their surroundings and their partners.

EXERCISE NAME: EXPLORING NATURAL MOVEMENT WITHOUT JUDGEMENT

Exercise number. 4

Aims of the exercise

- Promote the exploration of natural and genuine movement, fostering creativity and self-expression.
- Overcome the barrier of judgments, promoting self-acceptance and self-confidence.
- Promote body awareness and mobility, encouraging participants to pay attention to their physical sensations and movements.

Focus level: Medium

Energy requirement: High

Materials: Equipment for playing music



EXERCISE NAME: EXPLORING NATURAL MOVEMENT WITHOUT JUDGEMENT

Duration: 15 minutes

Instructions:

- Participants are invited to find their place in the room.
- The facilitator plays the music (it can be with or without lyrics) and explains the exercise. The purpose is to explore the natural and genuine movement of each participant overcoming the barrier of boredom and judgments.
- Participants will have the possibility to stay in one place or move around. The body moves as it needs to and, after they have enough time to pay attention and energy to the body and its mobility, they will stop that movement and make it smaller and smaller until it disappears completely.

7.8.III Closure exercises

EXERCISE NAME: REFLECTION WALK AND TALK

Exercise number: 1

Aims of the exercise

- Learn to balance active listening and effective communication.
- Foster empathy and understanding, by learning how to actively listen to others and validate their experiences.
- Develop stronger relationships, by building trust.

Focus level: Low

Energy requirement: Low

Materials: None

Duration: 10-15 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ The participants are invited to walk around the space individually, reflecting on their experience of the training session.
- ▶ After a few minutes, they pair up with someone and share their reflections with each other.



EXERCISE NAME: REFLECTION WALK AND TALK

- ▶ In the pairs, participants take turns to share where they felt comfortable, where they experienced discomfort, what they liked the most, and what they would like to repeat.
- ▶ After each pair has shared, they can take a moment to ask any questions or offer feedback to each other.
- ▶ As a group, participants can come together and share any overall reflections or insights that emerged from the activity.
- ▶ This activity allows participants to reflect individually before sharing their thoughts with someone else. Share the experience in pairs encourages participants to hear different perspectives. Finally, the group can come together and discuss any common themes or insights that emerged.

EXERCISE NAME: PAINT THE MOVEMENT

Exercise number: 2

Aims of the exercise

- Learn to have critical awareness.
- Know how to have a time with oneself.
- Decide whether or not to share something personal.

Focus level: Low

Energy requirement: Low

Materials: Paper sheets and art materials

Duration: 30 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ After one of the long-duration exercises of movement, the facilitator can invite the participants to reflect on their experiences through art.
- ▶ The facilitator provides participants with paper sheets and art materials, such as coloured pencils or paint.



EXERCISE NAME: PAINT THE MOVEMENT

- ▶ Participants find a comfortable spot in the room and begin to create a visual representation of how they felt during the session. The facilitator encourages participants to focus on how they started and how they finished the movement exercise, and to use colour, shape and texture to express their internal experiences.
- ▶ Once the participants have finished, the facilitator invites them to share their artwork with the group, if they feel comfortable doing so.
- ▶ This exercise allows participants to engage in a nonverbal form of reflection, which may be more comfortable or expressive for some individuals. By using art materials, participants can create a visual representation of their experiences and feelings, which may help them gain insight and understanding. Sharing their artwork with the group, if they choose to do so, can also promote a sense of connection and community among the participants.

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