

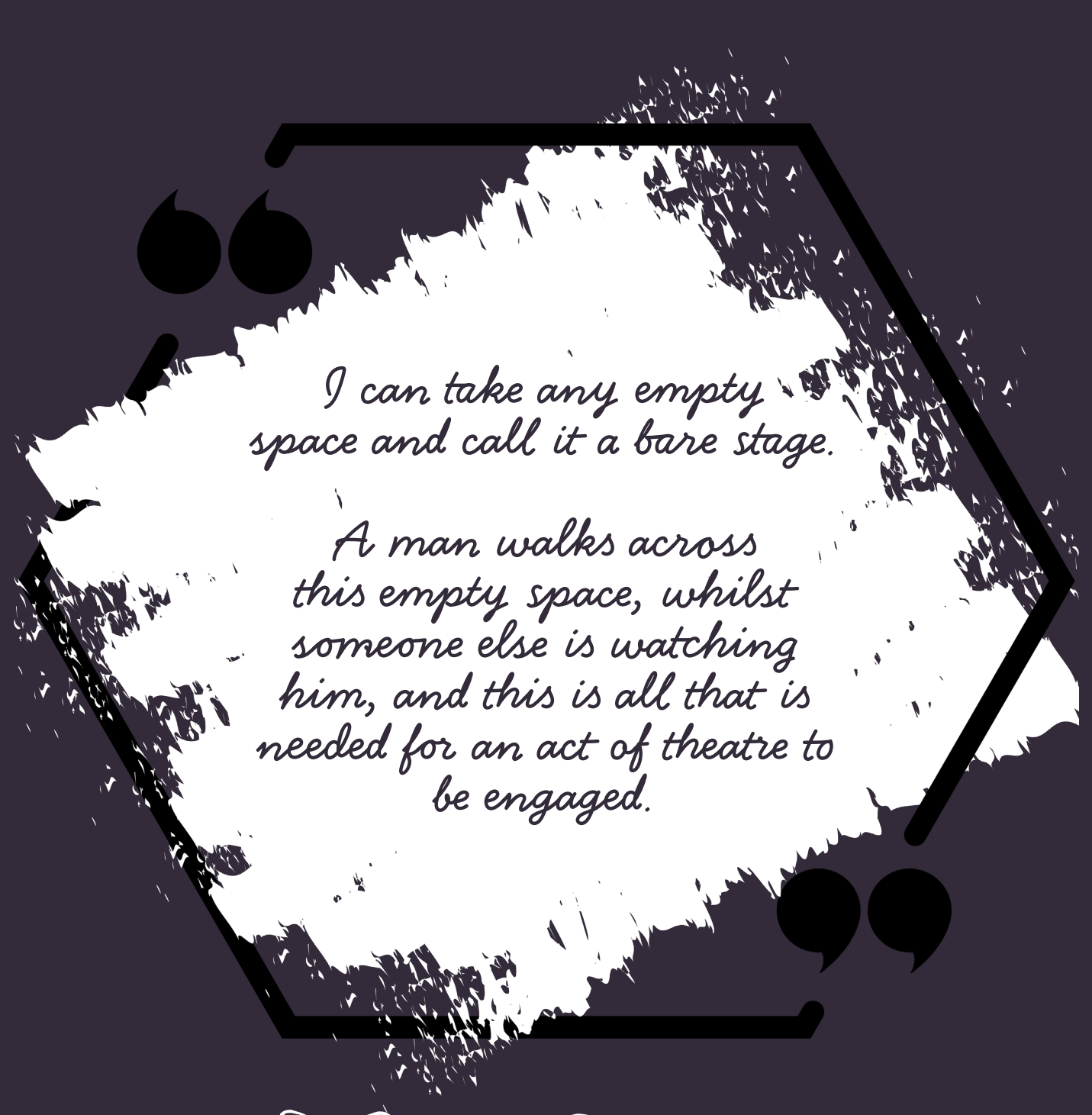


OUR CURRICULUM



D R A M A

PHILOSOPHY & NARRATIVE

The quote is presented on a piece of white, torn-edge paper that is tilted slightly to the right. The paper is set against a dark, textured background. The text is written in a black, cursive script. There are four black speech bubble shapes: two at the top left and two at the bottom right of the paper. The quote itself is centered on the paper.

*I can take any empty
space and call it a bare stage.*

*A man walks across
this empty space, whilst
someone else is watching
him, and this is all that is
needed for an act of theatre to
be engaged.*

Peter Brook

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Theatre is a collective experience of the human condition that transcends time and space to bring 'the best that has been thought and said' into the here and now.

Drama is created by the interaction of creative minds: the writer, director, actor, designer and audience all play a part.

Being in the physical space together allows us to hear the heart-beat of existence; to breathe the air of another human's experience; to taste the subtle transformative shifts in direction that can only exist because we share them together.

Theatre can act as pure, joyous entertainment, social commentary or social reform: it is a powerful live creative medium that cannot be forgotten easily. The emotional connection is not tangible, but resides in the shared experience between two human beings in one space.

As an actor, we step into the shoes of the breadth of humanity, and live their experience in the moment. Like all of the Arts, upon entering the stage, actors leave themselves exposed to very personal criticism that requires them to develop resilience, courage and conviction.

KEY STAGE THREE

Year 7

The journey starts with an overview of the history of theatre, as only when we understand where we have come from, can we appreciate where we are, and see the potential for where we could travel to.

Our detailed exploration of theatre history begins with Greek Theatre, a genre widely recognised as being the origins of contemporary drama. Whilst texts themselves are the opening focus with consideration of Aristotle's unities and the tragic hero, we also practically explore the genre through a range of theatrical techniques including tableaux, transitions and thought tracking to create performances that exemplify this ancient form. We bring to life hubris, nemesis, anagnorisis, peripeteia, hamartia and catharsis through performing extracts from Sophocles' *Antigone* and begin to evaluate the structure of the text: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement.

We then transform the depth of the text onto the stage, creating the exciting possibilities of physical theatre before focussing on voice through the theatrical performance of chant, choral speech, call and response, rounds, dithyramb and stichomythia. We learn how to evaluate extracts of *Antigone*, including the National Theatre live recording: watching theatre at its best is as important as reading texts from the canon.

The journey continues as we progress from the Greek age to the Egyptians and the invention of puppetry: an ancient form of theatre where puppets were used to animate and communicate the ideas and needs of human societies. Students are led by the needs of the audience as they develop their creative design skills as well as developing the art of scriptwriting with a specific target audience and purpose in mind to perform a piece of Theatre in Education.

Konstantin Stanislavski, the seminal Russian theatre practitioner guides us through the next leg of our voyage of discovery as we explore Naturalism and the need to 'Love art in yourself and not yourself in art.'

Emotion memory, magic if, circles of attention and given circumstances all contribute to the understanding of how 'The theatre infects the audience with its noble ecstasy.' Of course the key to mastery of Stanislavski's system is through application, as students create, perform and evaluate work informed by his methodologies.

Diane Samuels' softly spoken tragedy *Kindertransport*, a play exploring the experience of a German Jewish child sent to Manchester during the Second World War, and Nigel Williams play adaptation of William Golding's novel *Lord of The Flies* about societal collapse and power's capacity to corrupt are the texts used to experiment with Stanislavski's system to create and evaluate naturalistic performances aimed at emotionally engaging the audience.

KEY STAGE THREE

Year 8

Shakespeare, the 'soul of the age' (Jonson), is the focus at the start of this year. From the influence of royalty on theatre, to the importance of the Globe, looking at new genres, critical themes and character driven plot. We study Shakespeare's Renaissance play Macbeth; experiencing the fire and ice of his villains and heroes, and all things in-between. Although the original text is the foundation of the scheme we also challenge students to use creative adaptation in order to analyse the impact of varied interpretations on a modern audience. We cannot go on until we have analysed and performed Macbeth's iconic soliloquies and the beauty and power of iambic pentameter. Students evaluate various live theatre recordings including National Theatre and Splendid Productions. We use this opportunity to develop pupils as evaluative critics through written theatre review.

Shakespeare's dramatic aims and intentions are critiqued alongside a contextual understanding of the role of women in Elizabethan times, before students progress to create and justify their own dramatic aims and intentions. Students then utilise the dramatic design techniques of soundscapes, and physical theatre to create the atmospheric apparitions of the Weird Sisters upon the heath. In contrast we then explore Brecht's work; the main proponent of epic or dialectical theatre. He tells us that 'Art is not a mirror with which to reflect reality but a hammer with which to shape it.' Students experience his work on breaking down the fourth wall and the denial of a climactic catharsis through watching the live theatre recording of Splendid Theatre's Macbeth; evaluating how far his audiences were to recognise social injustice and endeavour to effect change in the world outside.

Through The National Theatre's Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, students are able to recognise and apply Brechtian *verfremdungseffekt* such as space, narration, direct address, multi role-play and split-role in order to make the familiar strange, and provoke a social-critical audience response. Developing work from the page to the stage is refined to produce more dynamic and ensemble driven performances, whilst also considering design elements to further communicate meaning by analysing and evaluating the sublime work of designer Bunny Christie.

Year 9

Teechers by John Godber OBE, one of Britain's most performed playwrights, is analysed and performed; a complex observational comedy which again presents influences from both Stanislavski and Brecht. Multi role-playing, stock characters and direct address are challenging techniques developed in this scheme. Godber describes Teechers as 'A comedy that is deadly serious', exploring the political themes of class, education and being a teenager, so inviting students to explore the possibility of subverting a genre to create specific dramatic aims and objectives in the devising work that follows.

Our next project explores roles in professional theatre to ensure that students have a rounded knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of theatre makers. Staging styles are explored so that students are able to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each style.

Willy Russell's Blood Brothers is explored practically, allowing the students to consider the social and political themes and issues presented in this tale of nature versus nurture and the impact of class. Another blend of Stanislavskian and Brechtian performance styles, this modern classic allows for more extended analysis and evaluation of live theatre as well as taking on the challenges of interpreting and performing the iconic characters for themselves.

KEY STAGE FOUR

Willy Russell's *Blood Brothers* allows the students to further develop their understanding of this play in greater depth through close evaluation of its style and form as well as creating their own comprehensive interpretations and performance of characters and design elements.

We complete a live review of *Billy Elliot*; a play which, at times, is surreal and experimental about the miners' strike; the struggles of the angry anti-Thatcher working classes; and a young boy's passion for dance. Students analyse and evaluate the impact of both design and performance elements on the audience and develop a deeper understanding of the power of the theatre to raise awareness of key moments in our country's history.

Our creative devised work is student-led, and informed by a practitioner of their choice.

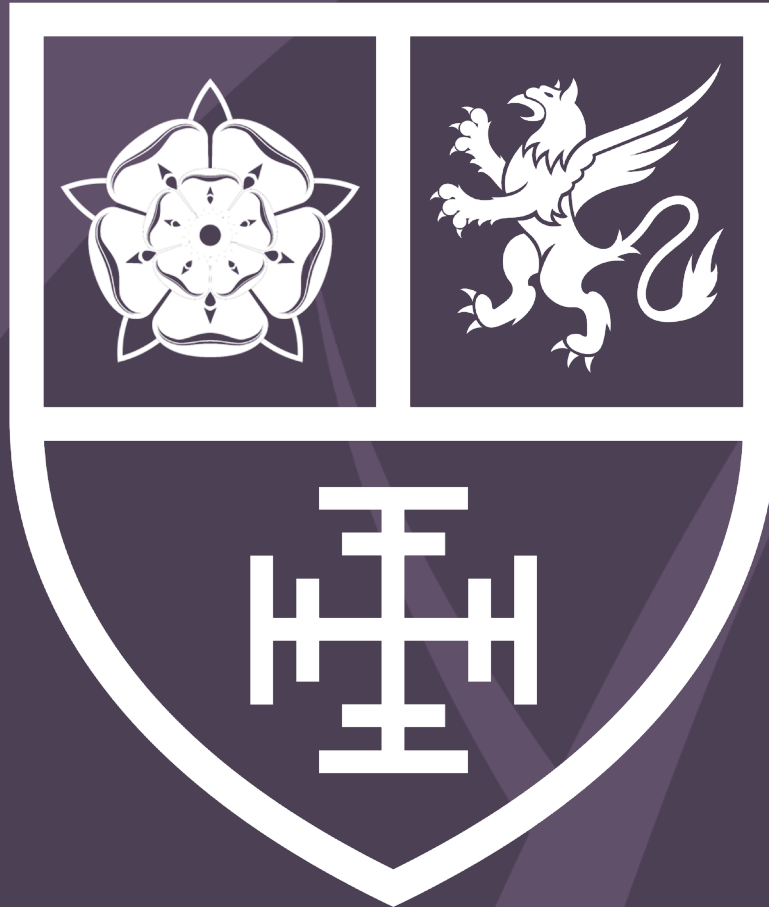
KEY STAGE FIVE

Our chosen texts are Sophocles' *Antigone*, a classical Greek play and Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*, a historicised political play about convicts sent to Australia. These choices are contrasting in style, genre and era to give students a breadth of experiences of plays and playwrights.

Our live theatre review is The National Theatre's *Othello* and Frantic Assembly's *Things I Know to be True*. These are contrasting performances which not only enrich the students' cultural awareness, but also develop their evaluative skills and further improve their knowledge of the theatre as a powerful tool in examining what it is to be human.

Scripted work consists of three performances from different plays. We consider Stanislavski, applied to the naturalistic *Be My Baby* and *Billy Liar*; Brecht, in his epic *The Good Woman of Szechuan*; Godber, in his observational comedy *Shakers*; and Berkoff, in his heightened, physical, stylistic adaptation of Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. This wide variety of styles, genres, eras and practitioners ensures that students have an excellent appreciation of the way that theatre, and its creative design, has developed to reflect and at times shape our experiences of the world.

KS5 devising work is created by the students, and informed by a practitioner of their choice.



BUILDING ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PAST
TO HELP THE CHILDREN OF TODAY
MEET THE CHALLENGES OF TOMORROW