

ADELAIDE
FESTIVAL **AF**

Grand Theft Theatre

Resource developed by Zoe Tidemann 2024

Images: Wild Hardt

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Youth & Education Program Partners





Suitable Year Levels

Year 10 – Year 12

Warnings

Strong language
Drug references
Sexual references
Depictions of violence

Genre

Theatre

Background Information

Grand Theft Theatre was originally commissioned for the 2022 Melbourne Fringe Festival, where it won the prestigious Best Theatre award. Experimental performance company Pony Cam has teamed up with David Williams to re-examine and re-perform those theatrical moments that have forever changed us.

Moments from Hotel Pro Forma, Sidetrack Performance Group, The Rabble, Gob Squad, Roarawar Feartata, The Hayloft Project, Hofesh Shechter, Forced Entertainment and a bunch of other companies you wouldn't recognise by name.

An irreverent resuscitation of the performances you thought were lost to time.

Synopsis

Six theatre makers recreate 12 moments of theatre that changed their lives, re-examining and re-performing those theatrical moments that have forever changed us. In painstaking detail, they commit *Grand Theft Theatre*, irreverently resuscitating performances you thought were lost to time.

From moments from shows that toured the world. Moments from shows that nobody saw. Moments from shows adapted from movies. Moments that redefined our ideas of gender, age, & disability. Moments that left us softly weeping in the dark. Together, those moments will be unpicked into the here and now, polluting the space with their messes, perverting their bodies with

their intentions, and dismembering their theatrical legacies that were forged with love, sweat, accidents, fights, resistances, loneliness and fake blood.

Grand Theft Theatre is a crazily ambitious, extremely silly, and epically low-fi ode to the theatre legacies we collectively carry, and those personal memories that we desperately need to share.

Themes & Ideas

Why Theatre?

'David Williams and Pony Cam's *Grand Theft Theatre* is the closest we'll get to an answer to "Why theatre?'" (Martha Latham. 2022.)

When popular entertainment-games, streaming services, Tik Tok-serve societies desire for story in an immediate and addictive way, theatrical traditions struggle for survival. And so we come back to an enduring question- why theatre?

Grand Theft Theatre explores what makes memorable theatrical work through a post-dramatic lens. A highly adept ensemble re-tells their favourite moments in theatre in an inventive, moving, and unpredictable fashion. Simultaneously they acknowledge the dramatic foundations they spring from. Furthermore, the methods they use to re-enact the stories are a masterclass that reveals the rigour of the creative process.

Whether you have seen the original work is immaterial. The answer to 'Why theatre?' is brought home to the audience moment by moment. We are brilliantly reminded of the mischievous, powerful, illusive and enduring nature of this human art form.

Storytelling

'From the checking in ritual through to the end of the piece we are invited as an audience to reflect on our own moments of theatre, and to connect with one another and share our stories.' (Emma Green. 2022.)

Grand Theft Theatre was commissioned by the Melbourne Fringe for its 40th year. It is an ode to stories shared in theatres universally. The performers revel in retelling their favourites and their rapture graciously extends to the audience. In an immersive way, they too become a part of the storytelling throughout the performance and enter the playful confusion of unravelling the mystery of what makes a memorable story. While endlessly comic and blisteringly entertaining, it is a strong conversation starter for why sharing stories is part of our DNA, and why it is so powerful to be in the same room with people when the stories are being told.

Memory

'*Grand Theft Theatre* is a sensitive and intelligent exploration of the vital role memory plays in keeping theatre alive.' (Cameron Woodhead. 2022.)

In *Grand Theft Theatre*, we are given access to the memories of the performers as they, in front of our eyes, bring their theatrical memories to life. These memories are woven with their own personal narratives, and like any enduring memory, have shaped their identities and connect them to their past. By nature of the recall of these moments in time that left such imprints on the minds of the artists, the audience become captivated, mesmerised and downright laugh out loud entertained. In the process, one could possibly begin looping new versions of their own memories in their imaginations and the intricacies of perception, emotion and the passage of time combine to spark our creativity and bring us immense joy.

Grand Theft Theatre embraces a way of engaging with the audience and inviting them to recall what makes theatre special to them. In doing so it challenges the notion of why we value experiences and challenges us to wonder how we take those moments into our lives, if at all.

Production

Set Design

The set design for *Grand Theft Theatre* underpins the immersive nature of the performance. It also mirrors elements of Grotowski's concept of a Poor Theatre and Peter Brook's groundbreaking book, 'The Empty Space' as it is clear that this production recreates the wonders of many worlds in the most basic of spaces with a reliance on the actors in that space.

On entry to the 'theatre', the audience are met with scattered chairs and those chairs move around in the 'breaks', symbolising the ever-changing potential of a theatrical space. By the end of the performance, the audience are on stage, completely immersed in the storytelling, wondering how to travel back down the lane of memories paved before them.

Dramatic Structure

'No house light dim, no scuffling as people get comfy or shuffle to their seats. The lines between pre-show and show-show are blurred to the point that most of us have not even taken a seat.' (Martha Latham. 2022.)

When defining the structure of *Grand Theft Theatre* it is important to indicate that it falls into the style of Postdramatic Theatre, which has evolved since the 1970s and more recently as a solidified concept introduced by German theatre scholar Hans-Thies Lehmann in his 1999 book "Postdramatic Theatre."

It refers to a type of theatre that

moves beyond traditional, plot-driven, and character-focused dramatic structures. In postdramatic theatre, the emphasis shifts away from a linear narrative and well-defined characters towards a more fragmented, non-linear, and visually oriented performance. This form often explores the theatricality of the medium itself, blurring the boundaries between different elements such as text, movement, sound, and visual elements, and may prioritize the experience and engagement of the audience over conventional storytelling. Postdramatic theatre challenges established norms, encouraging experimentation and a reevaluation of the traditional conventions of dramatic performance.

Grand Theft Theatre tells its audience immediately that what they are to experience is unconventional. They enter the space, are given a name tag to fill out, are greeted by performers milling around, checking tickets and props and selling drinks, and see chairs randomly set around the space. In a performance during the Melbourne Fringe in 2022, a reviewer recalls that, all of a sudden, creator David Williams came on stage, did an acknowledgment of country and started talking about a work by Forced Entertainment while some of the other performers emerged from around the space and began a movement sequence, speaking over the top of him, and with that, the show was off and away.

An immersive and participatory

experience, the audience move around during the performance and in past productions, it has been recognised that a five Act structure has been followed, giving the audience breaks between sections, and gifting a clear nod to Mr Shakespeare himself.

Dramatic Form/Convention

DEvised THEATRE

Devised theatre is an often collaborative and experimental form of performance creation in which the script or performance material is not pre-written but developed collectively by the ensemble. In devised theatre, the creative process typically involves improvisation, movement exercises, discussions, and other collaborative methods to generate content and shape the final production.

The term "devised" reflects the idea that the performance is not derived from an existing script but is instead devised through the collaborative efforts of the participants. This approach allows for a more organic and flexible creative process, often resulting in unique and innovative productions. Devised theatre may involve elements of physical theatre, movement, multimedia, and other non-traditional theatrical forms.

The collaborative nature of devised theatre encourages a more democratic and inclusive creative environment, where all participants contribute to the shaping of the performance. This form of theatre often emphasises the importance

of the creative journey and the exploration of ideas, themes, and stories through collective discovery.

Grand Theft Theatre is a brilliant example of contemporary theatre making in the form of devised theatre. As articulated by Samsara in the review blog 'What Did She Think,' the ensemble literally got together, everyone shared the moments in theatre, dance, and some film which left them with the strongest images or touched them on the deepest level - either emotionally or viscerally. All of these recollections have then been mashed together with a strong dramaturgical eye. The result is a loving, touching, and hilarious ode to contemporary performance making and performance makers across Australia and internationally as well.'

APPROPRIATION

In the context of theatre, appropriation refers to the practice of borrowing elements from existing works or cultures and incorporating them into a new theatrical production. This can include the use of characters, themes, dialogue, music, or other elements from pre-existing plays, literature, historical events, or cultural traditions. The goal of appropriation in theatre is often to create a new, reimagined work that may offer a fresh perspective, commentary, or interpretation.

In *Grand Theft Theatre*, the performers re-tell the stories of theatrical works that they have experienced. It is an appropriation of sorts, certainly offering wonderful opportunities for fresh perspectives and commentaries

that go beyond the stories themselves and become rich platforms for the themes and ideas in the show, such as storytelling, memory and Why Theatre?

PHYSICAL AND VISUAL THEATRE

Grand Theft Theatre is an inherently physical and visual work that relies on the synthesised dynamics of expression, movement, and the physicality of the performers to convey narrative, emotion, and meaning. It moves at break neck speed, demanding a high level of cooperation, athleticism, coordination, balance and precision. There is also expertly integrated play with props, with the ensemble creating a multi-sensorial feast which titillates mind, memory, and gag reflex in the audience!

PARTICIPATORY THEATRE

Grand Theft Theatre falls into the category of participatory theatre, also known as interactive or immersive theatre. Participatory theatre is a form of performance where the boundaries between performers and spectators blur. It aims to create a more immersive and dynamic experience, fostering a sense of community and shared participation. It can take various forms, including site-specific performances that take place in non-traditional venues, further enhancing the immersive nature of the experience. This form of theatre often encourages a sense of collaboration, empowerment, and social engagement among participants.

IMPROVISATION

Improvisation in theatre refers to the spontaneous creation of dialogue, action, or scenes without a script or pre-planned

structure. Actors engage in improvisational performance by reacting and responding to each other in real-time, often relying on their creativity, wit, and teamwork. Improvisation can be used as a rehearsal technique, a form of performance in its own right (as seen in improv comedy), or as a tool for generating material that may later be incorporated into scripted productions.

In one review published from the 2022 Melbourne Fringe season, the writer expresses that 20- 30 % of the performance is improvised. They suggest that the 'performers aren't just performing the act of memory, you can see them genuinely stop and dig into their skulls as they try and recall the work they saw in detail'. In addition to this, as a part of the devising process, improvisation and the ability to use the associated skills in the creation of ideas and new works is crucial and an extraordinary part of a performing artist's arsenal.

EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE

With a show that is described as a heist, with all the spoils that come with theatrical hijinks, breakneck pace and side splitting laughter, nothing is sacred in *Grand Theft Theatre* and traditional theatrical conventions are turned upside down. Mashed together are adaptations and appropriations of avant garde and postdramatic revolutionaries like Pina Bausch, Gob Squad, DV8, and Forced Entertainment and it is most certain that the work falls into the realms of what is known as experimental theatre.

Experimental theatre is a genre of performance that pushes

the boundaries of traditional theatrical conventions, challenging established norms in terms of structure, content, and presentation. In experimental theatre, artists often prioritise innovation, exploration, and the breaking of theatrical norms over adherence to conventional storytelling or dramatic forms.

Key characteristics of experimental theatre may include non-linear narratives, abstract or symbolic elements, unconventional staging, use of multimedia, and a focus on the sensory experience of the audience. The goal is often to provoke thought, evoke emotions, and engage the audience in a more visceral or intellectual way than conventional theatre.



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:



Literacy



Critical and Creative Thinking



Personal and social capability



Numeracy

Drama

Year 10 Drama

Students refine and extend their understanding and use of role, character, relationships and situation.

Students draw on drama from a range of cultures, times and locations as they experience drama.

Students 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.

Students explore meaning and interpretation, forms and elements, and social, cultural and historical influences of drama as they make and respond to drama.

Students evaluate actors' success in expressing the directors' intentions and the use of expressive skills in drama they view and perform.

Students build on their understanding from previous bands of the roles of artists and audiences as they engage with more diverse performances.

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

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

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

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.

IB Theatre

Standard and High Level – Collaboratively creating original theatre:

- Students reflect on their own personal approaches, interests and skills in theatre. They research and examine at least one starting point and the approaches employed by one appropriate professional theatre company, and consider how this might influence their own personal approaches.
- Students respond to at least one starting point and engage with the process of transforming it collaboratively into an original piece of theatre.
- Students participate in at least one production of a collaboratively created piece of original theatre, created from a starting point, which is presented to others.

High Level – Creating theatre based on theatre theory:

- Students research and examine the various contexts of at least one theatre theorist.
- Students practically explore at least one theatre theorist collaboratively and engage with the process of creating a piece of theatre based on their theory.
- Students create, present and evaluate at least one theatre piece based on an aspect(s) of a theatre theorist's work they have explored.



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 *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?

Suggested Tasks

BEFORE the Show: Questions to put to your students



Critical and Creative Thinking

Use the questions to generate discussion about the themes, ideas and dramatic forms in *Grand Theft Theatre*.

- Do you think memories are important? Why?
- How do we keep memories alive? How do we share memories? Who do we share them with?
- Do you have a memory that you often share? Why is that memory important?
- *Grand Theft Theatre* recreates moments experienced at the theatre. What do you think could be special about these moments?
- What is the relevance of theatre in 2024? What are the points of difference compared to other art forms and popular culture?
- What comes to mind when we consider the terms 'experimental' and 'immersive' in regard to theatre?

Discussion: The work of Pony Cam and David Williams

As a way to prepare students for the work they are going to experience, teachers can discuss the collaborators- Pony Cam and David Williams- through engaging with their websites, or 'digital footprints' as Pony Cam call them.

Teachers can extract key ideas from sections of the website, and deconstruct them in discussion, preparing their students for the experimental, devised, and immersive nature of the performance and discussing the creators motivations behind making the work that they do.

Pony Cam ponycam.co/Home

Alternative Facts altfacts.com.au

Discussion: Showcase Victoria Performance Profile – *Grand Theft Theatre*

Teachers can provide a glimpse into the performance by visiting Showcase Victoria's Performance Profile. Students can watch a short clip from the production and discuss the elements of drama at play. There are also short snippets from reviews for students to discuss and consider what may lie ahead!

For Senior Drama students, this website also provides valuable industry insight relevant to Company and Production as it markets the production for prospective festivals and other performance platforms. You can see a breakdown of venue format, budget, technical specifications and marketing.

Showcase Victoria Performance Profile – *Grand Theft Theatre*

showcasevictoria.com.au/production-profiles/grand-theft-theatre

Drama Years 9 and 10

ACADRR052: Evaluate how the elements of drama, forms and performance styles in devised and scripted drama convey meaning and aesthetic effect

SACE Stage 1

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

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

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

SACE Stage 2

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.

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

IB Theatre

Standard and High Level: Collaboratively creating original theatre-

Students reflect on their own personal approaches, interests and skills in theatre. They research and examine at least one starting point and the approaches employed by one appropriate professional theatre company, and consider how this might influence their own personal approaches.

AFTER the Show

Activity 1: Memory Snapshots

Objective: Explore the theme of memory present in *Grand Theft Theatre* using improvisation and devising techniques.

Materials Needed: Open space for movement, slips of paper, writing materials. Optional music or soundscapes.

Instructions:

Discussion: Begin by discussing the concept of memory with the students and how it was represented and explored in *Grand Theft Theatre*. Investigate how memories can be vivid, fragmented, or even distorted. Emphasise the emotional and sensory aspects of memory.

Warm Up: Conduct a brief physical warm-up to prepare students for improvisation, movement and expression. This could include stretching, breathing exercises, or a quick game to energise the group.

Memory Recall: Distribute slips of paper to each student. Within a given timeframe, have them write down a significant or memorable moment from their own lives without revealing the content to others. Collect the paper once complete.

Improvisation Setup: Explain that the class will engage in a series of improvisations inspired by the memories shared. Draw one card from the container at a time, read the memory without revealing the author, and use it as a starting point for an improvisational scene. Encourage students to focus on embodying the emotions, relationships, and environments associated with the memory.

Pairs or Small Groups: Divide the class into pairs or small groups. Assign each group a memory from the collected paper. Instruct them to collaboratively improvise a scene that explores the memory. Encourage the use of body language, facial expressions, and spatial relationships to convey the emotions and dynamics involved. Optional integration of music or soundscapes to enhance the atmosphere and emotional resonance of the improvisations.

Reflection and Discussion: After each improvisation, facilitate a brief discussion. Ask the performers about their creative choices, how they interpreted the memory, and how their improvisation related to the theme of memory. Also, encourage the audience to share their observations.

Whole Class Reflection: Bring the class back together for a final reflection. Discuss common themes or patterns that emerged in the improvisations. Explore how the activity deepened their understanding of memory and its portrayal in a dramatic context. Examine how the work they made reflected what they saw in *Grand Theft Theatre*.



Critical and Creative Thinking



Literacy



Personal and social capability

Target: Year 10 Drama (also appropriate for Senior Drama and IB)

ACADRM047: Improvise with the elements of drama and narrative structure to develop ideas, and explore subtext to shape devised and scripted drama.

ACADRM048: Manipulate combinations of the elements of drama to develop and convey the physical and psychological aspects of roles and characters consistent with intentions in dramatic forms and performance styles.

ACADRM049: Practise and refine the expressive capacity of voice and movement to communicate ideas and dramatic action in a range of forms, styles and performance spaces.

ACADRM050: Structure drama to engage an audience through manipulation of dramatic action, forms and performance styles and by using design elements.

ACADRM051: Perform devised and scripted drama making deliberate artistic choices and shaping design elements to unify dramatic meaning for an audience.

Activity 2: Responding to *Grand Theft Theatre*

This activity is a framework to generate discussion for SACE Stage 1 Drama and links to all three content areas in the course- Company and Production, Understanding and Responding to Drama and Drama and Technology. It is designed to support students to respond to the theatrical work they experienced through investigation, analysis, research and reflection, and use the ideas and discoveries to inform the dramatic processes they engage with throughout their studies. It can form a robust basis for their Assessment Type 2 – Responding to Drama task.

Use the following points as a guide for discussion and deconstruction. Have the students record their ideas so they can draw from them in the future.

1. What is the name of the show, who are the key collaborators and what are their defining characteristics as theatre makers?
2. What were the main ideas, messages and/or themes in the show?
3. What artistic choices were made throughout the course of the performance?
4. What was the overall artistic impact of the performance? How did it make you feel as an audience member?
5. Which scenes or moments were memorable for you as an audience member? Why did it have an impact you? What particular element- design, performance, technical- was instrumental in creating this impact? Describe what the moment looked like, felt like, sounded like.
6. What elements of drama and theatre were manipulated by the company in these moments? Consider on and off-stage conventions. How did these elements support the ideas, messages and themes in the performance?
7. How did the company use modern and/ or traditional theatre technologies to bring their ideas to life?
8. How does *Grand Theft Theatre* connect to a real-world context? Why might it be important as a work of theatre here and now?
9. Do Pony Cam and David Williams aim to entertain, educate or both?
10. This work has been programmed in a major international arts festival. Why do you think the Artistic Director of the festival selected it? Why might it be relevant for a contemporary audience?

Activity 3: Devising Experimental Theatre

Using the work of Pony Cam and David Williams in *Grand Theft Theatre*, this extended task aims to inspire students to devise original theatrical works using experimental and immersive techniques and methods, fostering creativity, collaboration, and an understanding of the principles behind devising, experimental theatre, and immersive theatre.

The entire sequence can be followed as a dramatic process for the SACE Stage 2 Group Performance or Creative Presentation and the process and presenting components of 'Collaboratively creating original theatre' for the IB Theatre course.

Students may wish to begin from a stimulus or text to inform the devising process.



Critical and Creative Thinking

Target: SACE Stage 1 Drama also appropriate for Year 10 and 12 Drama and IB)

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

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

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



Critical and Creative Thinking



Literacy



Personal and social capability



Numeracy

As an alternative, if a complete process is not achievable, teachers can use one of the 'steps' with students for exploration of the dramatic forms in *Grand Theft Theatre*. This would work across Years 10, 11 and 12.

The activity is presented as a series of steps and timings would have to be adjusted for the teacher's context.

Step 1: Introduction and Exploration

Introduction to Concepts- Begin by discussing the concepts of devising, experimental theatre, and immersive theatre with the students. Encourage research, provide examples and explain the creative freedom these approaches offer.

Devising Workshop- Engage students in a devising workshop. This may be stimulated by a central theme, idea or shared text. Encourage them to generate ideas collaboratively, experimenting with movement, dialogue, and visual elements. The importance of spontaneity and the willingness to explore unconventional ideas can be useful reminders.

Exploration of Experimental Techniques- Introduce various experimental theatre techniques, such as non-linear storytelling, abstraction, or breaking the fourth wall. Discuss how these techniques can challenge traditional norms and enhance creative expression.

Step 2: Development and Refinement

Devising Rehearsals- Students to work as a complete 'company' or smaller 'companies', depending on numbers and task design. Companies will begin developing a short scene or segment inspired by the devised ideas from the previous step. Encourage experimentation with form, structure, and style.

Feedback and Reflection- After each company presents their initial scenes, facilitate a constructive feedback session. Discuss what worked well, what experimental elements were effective, and how the scenes might be further developed.

Step 3: Immersive Techniques and Integration

Introduction to Immersive Theatre- Explore the principles of immersive theatre, encouraging research into existing work and companies and discussing how it engages the audience and creates a more participatory experience. Share examples of successful immersive productions.

Integration of Immersive Elements- Each company incorporates immersive elements into their scenes. This could include direct audience interaction, site-specific staging, or the use of sensory elements. Encourage students to think about how the audience's perspective can be manipulated.

Step 4: Rehearsals and Refining

Rehearsals and Technical Elements- Devote this time to refining scenes, polishing immersive elements, and incorporating any technical aspects, such as sound or lighting cues.

Dress Rehearsal- Allow each group to run through their scenes in the performance space. Emphasise the importance of cohesion, fluidity, and maintaining the experimental and immersive aspects of their work.

Step 5: Performances and Reflection

Presentations – Have each group perform their devised, experimental, and immersive scenes for the class.

Post-Performance Discussion and Reflection – After each presentation, facilitate a discussion on the effectiveness of the devised, experimental, and immersive elements. Discuss what challenges were encountered and how the students navigated them. Encourage reflection on the overall experience of creating an original work using these theatrical approaches.

Target: SACE Stage 2/ IB Theatre
A version of this sequence would be appropriate for Year 10 and 11 Drama.

Activity 4: Post-Dramatic Theatre and Theorist Study

This activity is suited to SACE Stage 2 course components Evaluation and Creativity and the Creative Presentation, as well as the IB component, 'Creating theatre based on theatre theory'.

Students engage with an in depth study of Postdramatic Theatre and the work of drama and theatre theorist, Hans-Theis Lehmann, namely through his 1999 publication, 'Postdramatic Theatre'.

They research the work of companies in Australia and internationally that engage with the style and form of postdramatic theatre, using Pony Cam as a starting point. Other suggestions include but are not limited to Melbourne based company The Rabble, German and UK company Gob Squad and internationally renowned artist Pina Bausch.

Students use the findings of their research to inform their own theatre making, performance evaluation and presentations.



Critical and Creative Thinking

Target: SACE Stage 2 / IB Theatre



About the Company

Collaborators – Pony Cam

Pony Cam are an award winning experimental collective of five theatre makers from around Australia.

Their work is driven by a desire to bring people together to create experiences that could not otherwise be had. By subverting well-known forms, activating unexpected spaces, and inviting audiences into their work in unexpected ways, they create moments where audiences are challenged to question their assumptions, laugh at themselves, and reject habitual recourse.

As an ensemble they have trained together for over five years, and their practice is instinctive, physical, and highly playful. No two of their works are formally the same, but each is driven by a desire to reimagine our impact in the world, find joy in community, remain utterly silly and laugh in the face of tragedy.

The current line up for Pony Cam is Claire Bird, Ava Campbell, William Strom, Dominic Weintraub and Hugo Williams.

David Williams – Creator / Performer

David Williams holds a PhD from UNSW, was the founder of the performance group version 1.0 (1998-2012) and is currently the director of Alternative Facts. Over the past 27 years he has crafted evocative performances from found materials such as interviews,

archives, and transcripts of public inquiries. His recent works include Quiet Faith, built from conversations with Australian Christians about religion and public life, Grace Under Pressure (co-written with Paul Dwyer), based on interviews with doctors and nurses about hospital workplace cultures, and Smurf In Wonderland, an autobiographical work about football fandom and geographic belonging.

Ava Campbell – Creator / Performer

Ava Campbell is a Naarm based musician, film and theatre maker originally from northern Tasmania. As a young performer, she was awarded the Rural Belle Shakespeare Scholarship and went on to train at RADA in London, and later in Athens with French performance company Sine Qua Non ART. Over subsequent years she has worked with internationally acclaimed theatre makers and choreographers including Susie Dee, Stephanie Lake and Antony Hamilton. As well as being a trained jazz singer and violinist (Hobart Conservatorium of Music), Ava is also one half of a film making partnership with her sister. In 2019 they released their first feature film entitled 'The Deep State.'

Claire Bird – Creator / Performer

Claire Bird is a Naarm based multidisciplinary artist, maker and performer with dual education at the VCA (theatre) and UNSW (theatre and performance studies; dance). Their work is based in

contemporary performance, dance and collaborative practice and swims inside a Frankenstein of queer, clown, provocative deconstruction of form and the downright silly.

Claire is the co-founder of award-winning experimental theatre collective Pony Cam and works highly physically and playfully to create bold new experiences for audiences and community alike. Pony Cam's practice challenges traditional models of hierarchical performance making, instead seeking to engage in the mess of half-baked ideas, finding harmony in head-butting and bodily modes of making. They seek a provocative edge through humour, theatrical thievery and the breaking down of form.

Dominic Weintraub – Creator / Performer / Associate Producer

Dominic Weintraub is a theatre maker, creative producer, and arts facilitator based in Narm/Melbourne. In all facets of his work, Dominic tries to cultivate the meaningful exchange of ideas between artists and non-artists. Creating spaces where diverse communities can come together to build collective identities, challenge themselves, and imagine possible futures.

Alongside his work as co-founder & producer for Pony Cam, Dominic is the General Manager of the Centre of Jewish Artists, and a freelance artist working with companies including Back to Back, Punctum Inc, and Playable

Streets. Dominic is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts (Bachelor of Fine Arts) and the University of Melbourne (Bachelor of Arts).

Hugo Williams – Creator / Performer / Associate Producer

Hugo Williams (he/they) works across contemporary performance and socially-engaged art as a performance artist, creative producer and facilitator. With background in history, sociology and languages from UOM, Hugo borrows from ancient texts, historiographies, social theories, poets, senior citizens and young people to create subversive, informal and physically provocative performances.

Graduating from the VCA as the recipient of the Orloff Family and Richard Pratt scholarship, Hugo is a co-founder and creative producer of Pony Cam. Professionally they have created new-work for curated, found and public spaces working with organizations such as

Punctum Inc, Testing Grounds and artists Roslyn Oades and Nathan McGlynn.

William Strom – Creator / Performer

William Strom is a theatre maker. His practice is deeply physical, highly improvisational, and usually playful, with at least a passing interest in music. His investigations are often directed towards the intersection of his own practice and the practices of others - whether they be artists or non-artists - and these collaborations are a constant source of interest and inspiration.

Through this work, William aims to forefront and connect with community. He has extensive training in both circus and dance, and a degree in Theatre, all of which he uses with great abandon.

Suzie Franke – Producer / Lighting Designer

Suzie Franke is a seasoned professional with an extensive range of expertise in theatre production. With experience spanning over twenty years, she has excelled as a Producer, Production Manager, Lighting Designer, Event Manager, and Company Stage Manager. Her dedication and skill have allowed her to successfully produce, manage, and deliver national tours, making her a highly sought-after industry professional.

Currently, Suzie is a Producer for CDP Theatre Producers, an awardwinning theatre production house specialising in producing and touring theatre of the highest quality. Additionally, she holds the position of Director and Executive Producer for Alternative Facts Pty Ltd, where she drives the company’s mission of presenting works of social relevance, aesthetic rigour and emotional impact

Reviews

The Age

theage.com.au/culture/theatre/it-s-the-last-week-of-fringe-but-for-some-showsthe-party-s-just-getting-started-20221016-p5bq3r.html#:~:text=by%20Vyshnavee%20Wijekumar%2C%20THEATRE,-Grand%20Theft%20Theatre

What Did She Think

whatdidshethink.com/2023/06/grand-theft-theatre-theatre-review.html

Theatre Travels

theatret Travels.org/post/review-grand-theft-theatre-at-st-ambrose-hall-melb-fringe

Theatre First

keithgow.com/2023/06/review-grand-theft-theatre-by-pony-cam.html

Kaleidoscope Arts Journal

kscopearts.com/read/grand-theft-theatre-or-a-reflection-on-reflections

Postdramatic Theatre

‘Postdramatic Theatre’ by Hans – Theis Lehmann.

monoskop.org/images/2/2d/Lehmann_Hans-Thies_Postdramatic_Theatre.pdf

‘Postdramatic Theatre is no longer a closed book’ by Andrew Haydon for The Guardian.

theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2008/nov/11/postdramatic-theatre-lehmann

Grand Theft Theatre Referenced Material

**some of the shows included in this list may be changed or replaced for AF24. Additionally, for AF24 a variety of shows from the festival will be added to Grand Theft Theatre. These will be added the week of the festival and therefore it is difficult to record at time of asking.*

Show Referenced	Artist(s) Referenced	How does it get referenced?
Betty Grumble Showing	Betty Grumble	Song and Sign
Palermo Palermo	Pina Bausch	Choreography and Sign
Piece for person and Ghetto Blaster	Nicola Gunn	Choreography and Sign
The Hooper	The Fondue Set	Choreography and Sign
Split	Lucy Guerin	Choreography and Sign
Feet of Flames	Michael Flatley	Choreography and Sign
Beautiful One Day	ILBIJERRI	Choreography and Sign
	Meredith Monk	Choreography and Sign
Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men	DV8	Choreography and Sign and Recreation
Grand Finale	Hofesh Shechter	Choreography and Sign
First Night	Forced Entertainment	Choreography and Sign
Shirtology	Jerome Bell	Choreography and Props
I love you goodbye (Brexit Edition)	Gob Squad	Monologue
Bloody Mess	Forced Entertainment	Monologue
BRIEFS	BRIEFS	Monologue
Thyestes	The Hayloft Project	Recreation and Text
Grand Theft Orchestra	Amanda Palmer	Song
Chicago the Musical the Movie	//	Monologue and Recreation
Love and Anger	Betty Grumble	Monologue and Recreation

Soft	Back to Back	Monologue
Love me Tender	Elvis Presley	Song
Charles Horse lays an Egg	Cam Venn	Monologue
Mega Israel	Hofesh Shechter	Monologue
Bunny	ROARAWAR FEARTATA	Monologue
DIE! DIE! DIE! OLD PEOPLE DIE	Ridiculusmus	Recreation and Monologue
NT's Frankenstein	Benedict Cumberpatch	Recreation and Monologue
Oedipus Schmoedipus	POST	Recreation and Monologue
Piece for Person and Ghetto Blaster & Working with Children	Nicola Gunn	Recreation and Text and Monologue
Unconditional Positive Regard	Version 1.0	Recreation and Monologue
Les Miserables	//	Recreation and Song
OH DEER!	APHIDS	Recreation and Monologue
Rite of Spring	Pina Bausch	Recreation and Text and Prop
Hamlet	Thomas Ostermier	Recreation and Props
The Power of the Holy Spirit	Harriet Gillies	Recreation and Monologue and Props
21 Pornographies	Mette Ingvarsen	Recreation and Monologue and Props
Bloody Mess	Forced Entertainment	Recreation and Text
The Crucible	Arthur Miller	Recreation and Text
Idol	Sidetrack Performance Group	Recreation and Text
Frontier Stories	Sidetrack Performance Group	Recreation and Choreography and Monologue
Cold Blood	Kiss and Cry Collective	Monologue
Saigon	Caroline Guiela Nguyen	Monologue
Wit	Jane Montgomery Griffiths	Monologue



