Department of Drama & Theatre

Postgraduate Certificate in Physical Theatre for Dancers and Actors

Course Handbook

2011 – 2012

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Content

Programme Aims ................................................................................................................. 1
Programme Outcomes ......................................................................................................... 1
Course Content ..................................................................................................................... 1
Teaching Method .................................................................................................................. 2
Assessments ......................................................................................................................... 2
Formative Assessment: ....................................................................................................... 2
  Saturday 24th March 2012 ............................................................................................. 2
Summative Assessment: ..................................................................................................... 2
  Performance - Friday 22nd June 2012 ......................................................................... 2
  Logbook/Critique - Thursday 5th July 2012 ................................................................. 2
Programme Structure ........................................................................................................ 3
Class Schedule .................................................................................................................... 4
  Weekend 1 – The Process of Creating a Physical Character ............................................ 4
  Weekend 2 – Other Visual and Aural Elements ............................................................... 5
  Weekend 3 – Voice with Demanding Physicality ............................................................. 6
  Weekend 4 – Process of Creating a Physical Character (Part 2) ..................................... 6
  Weekend 5 – Creating a Physical Relationship / Narrative .......................................... 7
  Weekend 6 – Voice with a Demanding Physicality (Part 2) ........................................... 7
  Weekend 7 – Other Visual and Aural Elements (Part 2) ................................................ 8
  Weekend 8 – Creating a Physical Relationship / Narrative (Part 2) ............................... 8
  Full Time Week – Physical-Theatre Performance Making ............................................. 9
  Final Assessment Project ............................................................................................... 9
Reading ............................................................................................................................... 9
Moodle ............................................................................................................................... 10
Bibliography ....................................................................................................................... 10
Programme Aims

The programme aims to study the practice of physical theatre in relation to the techniques utilised by the Jasmin Vardimon Company.

The programme will aim to engage the student with practical methods and skills of creating physical theatre work as a creator, a performer or a creative viewer.

The programme is aimed to support experienced dancers and actors moving into a new area of work, namely dance theatre, by introducing new techniques that combine vocal, kinaesthetic and visual skills and responses.

Programme Outcomes

Insight into the practice of the Jasmin Vardimon Company.

Development of a variety of ways that a performer might use dance and voice skills to form an independent creative response.

Experience of research into new ways of creating physical dance theatre work.

Experience of evaluating and reflecting on dance theatre performance and practice.

Experience of working with video, set or props to understand how visual language can bring another dimension to dance theatre work.

Increased knowledge of artistic and cultural context of Jasmin Vardimon Company’s work.

To understand and explore methods and approaches of creating physical theatre work.

Course Content

Students will experiment with a variety of aspects of the physical theatre work to include movement, dynamic speech, object integration, media usage and sound. The programme will be taught primarily through experiential workshops with students given tasks for improvisation and exploration. The workshop will promote ‘dynamic activity; with time to both experiment practically and to respond with detailed feedback.

The dramaturgy of physical theatre will be built upon throughout the programme so that aspects of developing narrative, working with text and voice, set, props or multi-media will be incorporated.

Towards the end of the training period students will work to create studio-based compositions which reflect the physical and vocal skills that have been developed.
Teaching Method

The programme will be taught at intensive weekend workshops throughout the year, and culminates with a week-long intensive session at the end of the course in June.

The full weekend workshops will be primarily practical but will also include seminar discussions and short presentations given by the tutors or students as appropriate. Viewing of video material, and self-development are encouraged outside class time.

NB We advise students to take body conditioning classes or other forms of exercise to improve their ability and to prevent potential injuries.

Assessments

Formative Assessment:

Saturday 24th March 2012

At a half-way point students will devise a short piece (5 minutes performance and 5 minutes open viva on their process). They will be given written feedback on this piece. As this is formative, the mark given will not count towards the final award.

Summative Assessment:

Performance - Friday 22nd June 2012

Logbook/Critique - Thursday 5th July 2012

Coursework (100%)

Creation of studio-based performance piece in pairs or small groups (c 20 minutes dependent on number of students in the group) 70%

Note: You will have to create your piece with performers from the course.

Artist’s reflective logbook to include critique of performance (3,000 -3,500 words) 30%. The logbook must be submitted to the Drama Departmental Office no later than 4pm on Thursday 5th July 2012.
Programme Structure

**Place:** The programme will be held in the Boilerhouse Theatre, Royal Holloway unless you are otherwise notified.

**Dates:** Weekends in October, November 2011, January, March, April, May, and June 2012. One 5 day week 18th – 22nd June 2012

**Time:** 10:30 – 17.30 (With an hour lunch break.) You are advised to bring drinks and food for lunch or snacks, as there are not many places to eat close by the campus and the campus cafe is not open at weekends.

**NB** - 4 of the days are going to be an hour longer during the final week and you might well need to rehearse outside of the scheduled times.

**Weekend 1 – The Process of Creating a Physical Character**

Tutors: Mafalda Deville / Jasmin Vardimon / Other Company Members

Weekend 1 – 15th/16th October 2011

**Weekend 2 – Other Visual and Aural Elements**

Tutors: Mafalda Deville / Other Company Members

Weekend 2 – 26th/27th November 2011

**Weekend 3 – Voice with demanding physicality**

Tutors: Luke Burrough / Other Company Members

Weekend 3 – 7th/8th January 2012

**Weekend 4 – Process of creating a physical character (part 2)**

Tutors: Mafalda Deville / Other Company Members

Weekend 4 – 10th/11th March 2012

**Weekend 5 – Creating a physical relationship / narrative**

Tutors: Jasmin Vardimon / Mafalda Deville / Other Company Members

Weekend 5 – 24th/25th March 2012

**Weekend 6 – Voice with a Demanding Physicality (Part 2)**

Tutors: Mafalda Deville / Thierry Harcourt / Luke Burrough

Weekend 6 – 14th/15th/ April 2012
Weekend 7 – Other Visual and Aural Elements (Part 2)
Tutors: Mafalda Deville and Guy Bar-Amotz / Other Company Members
Weekend 7 – 12th/13th May 2012

Weekend 8 – Creating a Physical Relationship / Narrative (Part 2)
Tutors: Mafalda Deville / Other Company Members
Weekend 8 – 9th/10th June 2012

Full Time Week – Physical-Theatre Performance Making
Tutors: Luke Burrough/ Mafalda Deville / other company member (Jasmin Vardimon assessment day).
Week – 18th/22nd June 2012

Class Schedule

Weekend 1 – The Process of Creating a Physical Character
Tutors: Mafalda Deville/ Jasmin Vardimon / Other Company Members
Weekend 1 – 15th/16th October 2011

Every session will start with a physical and/or vocal warm up. This will mostly be tutor led, but students may sometimes be required to lead/devise their own.

We will start with a course overview and introduction followed by a practical consideration of the basic principles of JV’s methods for creating physical theatre work. This will include learning sections from the company’s repertoire.

Through exercises and tasks we will focus on various ways of generating choreographic material and their application to the creation of a physical character.

We will work towards developing an understanding of the various ways of communicating a thought, a feeling, an atmosphere, a state of mind, an idea. Each one will be explored with the focus on achieving “Creative Clarity”.

We will work on developing individual body language and explore the importance of the eyes.

We will finish with time for critical reflection, evaluation and discussion.

Please bring to classes a notebook and writing equipment of your choice.

Assignment
Before Weekend 2 watch a DVD of JVC work, to get a better understanding of the course content (Lullaby, PARK, Justitia, Yesterday or 7734).
Outside class time you will have to carry on developing from Weekend 1. A creative task will be set, to be presented at the start of the following session.

Please bring a selection of various props, costume and music to explore in the next session.

Copies of Lullaby, Park, Justitia and Yesterday have been placed in the Founders library for you to view. There are also copies in the department office (Sutherland House) that you can sign out and watch in the department if that is easier for you, but you will only be able to get hold of these in office opening times, so please check by ringing first.

**Weekend 2 – Other Visual and Aural Elements**

Tutors: Mafalda Deville / Other Company Members
Weekend 2 – 26th/27th November 2011

Please bring a selection of various props, costume and music to explore in this session.

A warm up and a short recap from Weekend 2 will be followed by presentation and discussion of last session assignment.

We will explore how various visual elements can be used to create another layer of information.

We will work with props as dance partners and explore how this can provide additional textual/visual information.

We will investigate how to find the qualities each prop has, and how it can be used in the work created.

We will also explore the importance of music and/or sound to a scene and how these elements can be used to create different atmospheres and emotions.

We will finish with time for critical reflection, evaluation and discussion.

Please bring to classes a notebook and writing equipment of your choice.

**Assignment**

Watch a DVD of other artists working in the genre of Dance Theatre / Physical theatre (Robert Lepage / Complicite / Pina Bausch / DV8).

Outside class time you will have to carry on developing from Weekend 2. A creative task will be set; to be presented at the start of the following session.
Weekend 3 – Voice with Demanding Physicality

Tutors: Luke Burrough / Other Company Members
Weekend 3 – 7th/8th January 2012

A warm up and a short recap from Weekend 2 will be followed by presentation and discussion of last session assignment. Building on the elements explored in the previous sessions, Weekend 3 will focus on the relationship between the body and the voice through theatrical and choreographic exercises and tasks.

We will explore the use and awareness of text and vocals and how we might use them to create another layer of information. We will explore and discuss the various relationships between text and movement, acting and moving and how they might co-exist in an organic bond.

We will finish with time for critical reflection, evaluation and discussion.

Please bring to classes a notebook and writing equipment of your choice.

Assignment

You will be required to begin working towards your March assessment and to come with ideas to develop in the following session.

Weekend 4 – Process of Creating a Physical Character (Part 2)

Tutors: Mafalda Deville / Other Company Members
Weekend 4 – 10th/11th March 2012

The session will start with a physical and/or vocal warm up.

We will explore the concept of the “Physical Dictionary” in order to investigate how various ways of physical communication can allow for a variety of interpretations.

Investigate methods to encourage versatility in a performer, working on state of mind, intention and physical personality.

Work on methods to creatively, logically and organically combine the various elements as explored over weekends 1-3 in order to create a well-developed physical character.

Explore how various other elements can be combined to move from creating a character to a well-developed performance.

This session will include self-directed rehearsal and you will each have individual tutorials regarding your assessment and progress so far.
Please bring to classes a notebook and writing equipment of your choice.

Assignment

Come prepared to perform your interim assessment solo next weekend.

Weekend 5 – Creating a Physical Relationship / Narrative

Tutors: Jasmin Vardimon / Mafalda Deville / Other Company Member
Weekend 5 – 24th/25th March 2012

The Formative Assessment will take place on Saturday 24th March 2012 and details and times are to be confirmed. Libby Worth will come in to see these and will be the second marker. You will receive written feedback for this assessment.

A physical/vocal warm up will precede the assessment.
This session will include exercises of contact improvisation and partner work so please wear appropriate clothing.

We will explore different tasks in order to facilitate the development of physical characters into physical relationships and their subsequent development to scenes or narratives in a physical-visual way.

We will finish with time for critical reflection, evaluation and discussion.

Please bring to classes a notebook and writing equipment of your choice.
Assignment

A research-based assignment will be set in preparation for the next week’s session. There will be no presentation.

Weekend 6 – Voice with a Demanding Physicality (Part 2)

Tutors: Mafalda Deville / Thierry Harcourt / Other company member
Weekend 6 – 14th/15th April 2012

Please bring and learn a short text to explore in this session.

The session will start with a physical and/or vocal warm up.

We will explore ways of incorporating voice into work with a demanding physicality and look at the management of breath. We will explore it while working with a script.

Working with dramaturgy (from a dramaturgical perspective), we will explore the vocal and textual layer of information and how it can enrich the physical / visual element rather than repeating it.
We will finish with time for critical reflection, evaluation and discussion.

Please bring to classes a notebook and writing equipment of your choice.

**Weekend 7 – Other Visual and Aural Elements (Part 2)**

Tutors: Guy Bar-Amotz and Mafalda Deville
Weekend 7 – 12th/13th/ May 2012

The session will start with a physical and/or vocal warm up.

This session we will focus on gaining practical experience and knowledge of working with video and multi-media equipment. We will explore the various possibilities of usage to communicate ideas and thoughts.

We will finish with time for critical reflection, evaluation and discussion.

Please bring to classes a notebook and writing equipment of your choice.

**Assignment**

Please bring and learn a short text to explore in the next session.

You will also be required to start considering ideas for the final assessment.

More information on this will be given nearer the time.

**Assignment**

You will be required to have begun working towards your final assessment and to come with ideas to show in the following session.

Prior to weekend 8 you will be required to submit an outline of your final assessment work.

More information on this will be given nearer the time.

**Weekend 8 – Creating a Physical Relationship / Narrative (Part 2)**

Tutors: Mafalda Deville / Other Company Member
Weekend 8 – 9th/10th June 2012

The session will start with a physical and/or vocal warm up.

This session aims to practically consolidate all aspects that you have learned throughout the course by facilitating the creation of your individual performance pieces.
This session will include self-directed rehearsal and you will each have tutorials to discuss your individual ideas for the final performance assessment.

Please bring to classes a notebook and writing equipment of your choice.

**Full Time Week – Physical-Theatre Performance Making**

Tutors: Luke Burrough / Mafalda Deville / other company member / Jasmin Vardimon (assessment)
Week – 18th/22nd June 2012

During this week you will use the time to develop your own ideas into a physical theatre performance. You will have an intense week to work on your piece with your chosen performers from the course, culminating in the final assessment. Nearer to the time you will be given a detailed assessment guide including assessment criteria, technical support, rehearsal arrangements etc.

You will be encouraged to create pieces that show your own choreographic identity and that reflect the understanding and implementation of all aspects that you have learned throughout the course.

**Final Assessment Project**

THE PERFORMANCE: Your devised performance should reflect aspects of the content of the course and could include voice / text and other visual elements as well as movement work. Though you will be staging a small-scale production, it is important to remember that the focus of the programme has been on the performer’s ability to combine the theatrical and physical skills while developing his/her own creative voice, as a prime means of communication and your addressing this issue will be the main focus of the assessment.

THE LOG BOOK: You will receive detailed suggestions for the making of this early on in the programme. It is important that you include at least 1,000 words critique of your final assessed performance. This should be written in continuous prose and conform to an academic style with sound use of referencing where necessary. Guidance will be given on this nearer the time. Images, drawings, diagrams and photos may be included in addition to text, but the overall word guide for the log book of 3,000-3,500 words should be kept in mind.

**Reading**

Although this is a primarily practical programme, you can support your understanding and development of the work you are encountering through enriching it in a number of ways outside of the class times. The following reading list is offered as a starting point for you to browse and does not constitute a required reading list. You are also encouraged to go to see live performance and exhibitions in London and specific suggestions for these will be brought to your attention during the programme.
Your student card entitles you to use the library at Royal Holloway and you may also use the University of London library at Senate House, in central London if that is more suitable. Please organise this with a member of the library staff from Royal Holloway prior to going. http://www.rhul.ac.uk/information-services/library/

**Moodle**

Prior to your first weekend we will be setting up a Royal Holloway shared internet learning environment especially for this programme. It will enable you to contact each other, pick up messages from you course tutors and share ideas and information about the course and external events that might be interesting to attend. You will be able to add links to other internet resources. Details will be emailed to you before your first weekend.

**Bibliography**


Sontag, S. Illness as Metaphor and AIDS as its Metaphor (Picador 2001)


Film:

Trier, Lars von dir. *The Idiots*

Corine, Harmony *Gummo*

Turner, M. ‘Hospital Lullaby’ *Animated Magazine*, (Summer 2005)

http://www.communitydance.org.uk/metadot/index.pl?id=22493&isa=DBRow&op=show&dbview_id=17860

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