The art form

Handout DN2

Theatre is an art form that usually presents people involved in some sort of action in some sort of space, whether it’s a theatre, a classroom or a street.

In a play text, the action is communicated through words in the form of episodes/scenes/moments of action. Some words are spoken but some may be instructions from the playwright to the artists working on the play.

The structure of these episodes/scenes/moments of action gives a focus and communicates a meaning, idea, story or experience to an audience. This is communicated through the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Body</td>
<td>a. Interpreting the play text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Face</td>
<td>b. Transforming the text and its ideas into action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Gesture</td>
<td>c. Communicating meaning, ideas and/or story through action</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Movement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Voice</td>
<td>a. Set and costume</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Lights and sound</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c. Props</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Plays are written in many different styles and often experiment with form. Play texts may also differ depending on cultural traditions regarding playwriting and the recording of intended action. The “art form checklist” may not, therefore, be applicable to every play.
## The art form checklist

The following checklist may be helpful when working with a play text but can also be helpful for the creation of new work.

### Action
What happens in the play?
- Story and plot (when appropriate)
- Structure
- Dramatic tension
- Pace
- Mood

### Meaning
What is the play about?
- Themes
- Ideas
- Messages
- Symbols and symbolic actions
- Text and subtext

### Context/setting
Where does the action of the play take place?
- Location
- Culture
- Period
- Social conditions
- Atmosphere

### Performer
Who are the characters in the play?
- Physiology
- Background
- Psychology
- Emotion
- Attitude towards other characters
- Status
- Objective