

DRAMA *Works*

Artaud Through Practice

NOTES

1. At risk of upsetting probably the largest percentage of drama students - the girls - I have consistently used 'he' and 'him' throughout, taking my precedent from the word 'actor' which is now applied to both genders. Any of the exercises can of course be sex-changed to suit your student requirements!
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INTRODUCTION

Of all the main twentieth century practitioners of the theatre, Artaud seems to frighten many teachers the most. This is because he doesn't set down a system of acting or production that one can follow through and which makes sense in a logical satisfying way, as Stanislavski does. Nor does he have a clear political and social aim which results in a style and manner of production to further that aim, as does Brecht. No, Artaud writes like a poet and visionary, sending off arrows of fire into the night: he fires up the reader as he has fired up many theatre practitioners, such as Grotowski and Brook. He generates excitement in those who seek to follow his ideas, acting as a catalyst, a liberator, and it is that which makes him both frightening and fascinating.

Stanislavski has his system of acting, which has become the backbone of twentieth century theatre craft. Brecht allows theatre to have a social usefulness; he liberates theatre from slavish imitations of life and allows different styles of acting to co-exist: naturalism gives way to clear outlines, comic exaggeration and a collage approach to production, to put over a particular message. What does Artaud offer which is so exciting and which, arguably, is more influential to modern day theatre than either of the former?

Where Stanislavski and Brecht address real life in their different ways, Artaud talks of dreams, archetypes, the inner life of mankind, his hopes, fears and secrets. Encountering practicality, efficiency and an ever-increasing understanding through logical analysis of our day-to-day psychological motivations it is no wonder that theatre turns to such as Artaud for stimulus and liberation. It is the same tendency as lures the practical office-worker into New Age beliefs. We need our dreams; we need our rich and wild emotional life, even if we only get it in our fantasies. And in the realm of the theatre, Artaud offers it to us.

Translating Artaud's ideas into a practical followable form for a teacher and class of students is challenging, not because the work itself is difficult, but because at best any practical work we propose is guesswork. Would Artaud have proposed this way of working? Would he, if given the chance to form a System, have translated his visionary ideas into this exercise or that? We have no way of knowing.

My comfort is, always, that everyone else, including Brook or Grotowski, has been in the same position. In their cases, certain aspects of Artaud intrigued them and out of their exploration of these aspects they formulated their own unique ways of working and moved on. Their interpretation of Artaud became simply a stepping-stone to something else. Perhaps this is best how Artaud should be viewed: as a stepping-stone, a liberator, influencing much of modern theatre either directly or indirectly.

Thus I make no excuses for the fact that many of these exercises are inventions. I have genuinely attempted to understand and translate Artaud's writings into workable and practical exercises that build into a logical and recognisable 'style'. Aspects of this 'style' can be found in Physical Theatre, Visual Theatre and other similar theatre forms in current practice today, but none really embrace the Total Theatre of Artaud's visions. Perhaps because it is impossible, or unworkable or simply would be 'too, too much.' Any interpretation or effort at 'translation' into ordinary workable terms is, of necessity, a reduction and I am very

conscious of that. But, at the end of the day, students must write about him and so his ideas, to be made embraceable, have to be reduced, interpreted, translated, into normal theatre language.

In any case, there is, of course, a consistency of style and approach inherent in Artaud's writings. He is consistently against literary and psychological, slice-of-life theatre. He proposes a theatre that overwhelms the reasoning capacity of the audience, since reasoning prevents them reacting on an emotional and sensory level. And he wants a type of theatre that crosses the barriers of language and the veneers of civilisation to awaken the common primitive roots of shared humanity the world over.

As always, despite the reductions and simplifications that any interpretation must invite - and I was just as aware of this when ordering Stanislavski and Brecht into 'bite-size pieces' - I have sought to deliver Artaud in a form which is not only understandable but also explorable in practical terms. I know that students remember far more what they experience for themselves so have sought to come up with exercises that are feasible and will give room for expansion and discussion.

I always try to put in the introductions to these handbooks some reminders or 'hooks' from which the theories hang, so that you as teachers can state briefly at the start of your course what the practitioner stands for and the recognisable features of his style. All of these features are then explored in greater detail, through practical work, in a logical order for study and with a view to clarifying and demystifying the practitioner's own theories.

1. Artaud's starting point is a pessimistic view of Man and society. In a Europe hurtling towards war and the cruel extremes of Fascism he sees western civilisation as an 'abcess' which needs to be lanced. Citing the excesses in which civilised beings will wallow in times of plague as his proof, he shows that humanity has not changed much since the times of Boccaccio. In fact one of Artaud's main premises is that humanity does not change: whether we are native Australians, tribesmen of the Amazon jungle or 'civilised' Parisians we are the same under the skin. Given a situation in which the normal rules of society are overturned, like a town overrun by plague, or besieged by an enemy, we will do extraordinary things. We will murder, rape and pillage in these situations because law and order is out of the window and, after all, why not? Might we not be dead tomorrow? Artaud shows us how close is the savage under the skin.

2. Much follows on from this premise. If we are all savages under the skin then something must be done to both release this poison and contain it. Brutalising other human beings, releasing our secret desires to 'sin' is unacceptable behaviour but by containing these things in the theatre, living them with and through the actors we may both lance the 'abcess' and translate the energy created through the shared excesses of actor and audience into a higher form.

Note that it is not enough just to lance the abcess; in simple terms that would be to offer an equation: allow the audience to 'participate' in the actor's brutal murder of a rival and their own desire for brutality to another is drained away. That simple solution is only part of the equation. It is also necessary for the audience to find their higher selves, to be in some way transfigured, as the actor is himself, when he builds passion up on stage but does not release it in a real act of, say,

murder. Once again, it is clear that Artaud intends the audience, as far as possible, to experience the same as the actors, actually to be carried along with the emotions the actors generate into that higher state. Thus, Artaud sees theatre, literally, as a regenerative power. And also, though a pessimist about his own society, he does hint at the possibility of a higher state. Man may be redeemable.

3. In consequence of the need to carry an audience along, to make them share the extreme passions of the actors - and extreme they must be, because nothing less will disturb the civilised skin we have grown over our naturally savage selves - an extreme style of acting is needed. This style must be comprehensible to all human beings who, after all as we have seen, are the same the world over. Hence, language is a problem for two main reasons:

- a. it defines a particular people in a particular place and is thus limiting and
- b. it is inadequate to express the extremes of human passion. Better would be sounds - howls, sighs, groans - expressions of emotion wrenched from the innermost core of the human soul.

4. Verbal language is only one area of the actor's expression. To make a universal language, understandable anywhere, the actor must use symbols. Thus we have 'concrete language': a language of visual symbols that are understood on an instinctive level by the audience. So, rather than explaining in words, to give a simple example: "I feel great sympathy for you. I am sorry for you in your pain.", one actor might curl his body in a warm protective shape over the hunched sobbing body of another. The audience understands immediately and without having to use language to explain his understanding; he would understand from wherever in the world he came.

5. It is clear that in consequence of this, theatre that is rooted in words, especially the psychological very wordy theatre of 'slice-of-life' drama is the antithesis of Artaud's style. The plays he likes, Greek tragedies, the macabre works of such as Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore', have this in common: they deal with men and women in extreme states of passion, living on the knife-edges of their existences. They are forced by circumstances to overthrow the rules and conventions of their societies and in so doing, out of their defiance, they become superhuman: heroes or anti-heroes, but in any case more than just ordinary folk.

6. Artaud called his new theatre two names: Theatre of Cruelty and Total Theatre. Both are equally true but 'Theatre of Cruelty' refers to the idea of pushing actors and audiences to extreme states of experience out of which they may transcend themselves. Total Theatre refers to the means by which this heightened state might be achieved. Modern 'civilised' human beings have an innate capacity to reason themselves out of situations, to 'explain away' emotional or spiritual experiences. Aware of this, Artaud wanted to bombard them with so much sensory experience at once that the mind was literally battered into submission. Hence 'Total Theatre', which means combining all the elements of light, sound, colour, costume, music, mask, and acting, which is only one element, into a sensory experience of gigantic proportions which assaults the audience from all sides at once. The brain is thus softened up and the audience's inner selves, their 'doubles', can be freed.

FIRST LESSONS

Artaud is not a practitioner to plunge straight into without any warning. The students will be asked to push themselves to extremes, to expose themselves emotionally in ways they may never have done before. They must know that the group is non-threatening and supportive. There is a large 'embarrassment factor' to overcome when studying any drama, but particularly Artaud. Some groups may not take to him at all. I used to decide which practitioner to study once I had met my new group and tried them with some challenging physical work as well as more Stanislavskian based material. You will quickly know which is right for your group. Having issued that little caveat, I have to say that a very high proportion of students I taught got the most satisfaction and excitement from working with Artaud's concepts. Once they had begun to lose their inhibitions, they found him a challenge and a release.

Though much of the work in the following pages is staggered and builds up from simple approaches to a concept, to quite complex and challenging structures, I always feel it is a good idea to give the students some idea at the beginning of the total 'feel' of the practitioner. They may not reach high standards in this initial session, but it will give them an idea of what they are aiming to achieve and an important flavour of what the practitioner is about.

Practical Work

1. Start by discussing some areas which Artaud uses as his starting point.

a. Is Man a savage under the skin? Consider such material as 'Lord of the Flies.' What might push them into killing someone? How desperate would they have to be? To protect themselves? To protect a loved one? Can they conceive of themselves breaking the rules of society under any particular set of circumstances? It is important that this discussion is taken seriously. Don't accept laddish or show-off answers. Without overtly criticising such an answer, insist by your serious tone that they look further, deeper.

b. What do they think of the idea that you can release the audience's pent-up desires to, for example, rape or kill by allowing them to see the act in such a participatory way - through living the same highly-charged emotions as the actors or through shock tactics - that they will no longer want to do the act themselves. Can you sicken an audience with violence so that they lose the desire to be violent themselves? Some students may subscribe to the view, quite common today, that violence only attracts more violence and that a would-be rapist may in fact be 'turned on' by witnessing such an event and decide to use it as a kind of licence to commit the crime for himself. I am making no judgement on this; I simply think that the students, to start a course on Artaud, need to have aired some of these views; simply to think about the issues involved is enough for a start.

c. If they had to come up with a 'universal language of the theatre', what solutions might they propose? Try out some of these solutions.

2. Now try an approach to a text they all know. Probably they will have all studied 'Romeo and Juliet' or 'Macbeth' for SATS or G.C.S.E. and either of these would be a good basis for the following exercise.

i. divide them into good-size groups. Ask them to tell the story of their chosen text in mime or movement. They will quickly find that they have to reduce the story-line to its bare bones.

ii. Show these to each other and discuss. How universal was the end-result?

iii. The results of the above will be rather bland. Discuss this and how to make an audience sit up and take notice. Can they think of ways of surprising or shocking the audience into experiencing the performance more fully? Hopefully they will suggest such things as sound, light, effects and so on. They are beginning to understand the requirements of Total Theatre. Better groups may even think of more surprising symbolic movement and ways of heightening the emotional content.

iv. Focus on one of these heightened moments, e.g. Juliet's distress at Romeo's exile, or Macbeth's mental tussle between ambition and horror at the thought of murdering Duncan, and see if the group can come up with more extreme physical ways of expressing this. Can the emotions be expressed symbolically? or by using the whole group to translate the emotions? For instance, the Macbeth moment could be shown by members of the group on a see-saw or moving as if on one, offering on one side riches and power and a crown on the other horror and blood and being torn apart by the demons of guilt. This coupled with physical anguish written all over Macbeth's face and body.

Once this work has been completed and shown the group will be well on the way to understanding the way they will have to work and will have some concept of the aims of a course of study on Artaud.

PART ONE: EXPLORING THE THEORIES

CRUEL TO ONESELF

Unless your students are well-versed in physical theatre, it might be best to start with some simple exercises leading up to the sorts of stretches of the imagination and challenges to the body that Artaud meant when he said that first and foremost Theatre of Cruelty meant the actor being cruel to himself. By this he means pushing the physical boundaries to extremes. Grotowski interpreted this to mean that the boundaries are pushed to such an extreme that the body goes beyond exhaustion into a trance-like state, where it no longer feels its exhaustion or its pain and can thus achieve extraordinary things. Artaud himself says, in his first Letter of Cruelty, " ... philosophically speaking, what is cruelty? From a mental viewpoint, cruelty means strictness, diligence, unrelenting decisiveness, irreversible and absolute determination." He doesn't himself talk about the actor in a trance, but he does wish the actor to wake his own double, which is his dream-self, his psyche, and that would have much the same effect. As the audience must have their 'doubles' aroused by experiencing theatre that jolts them into emotional and awed spiritual responses, so the actor must also experience this but with the further addition of control, as implied by the above quotation.

I do not think it appropriate to expect your students to push themselves to such limits, but they can at least talk about it. Perhaps they can all remember a time when they thought they'd reached a physical breaking point, running or swimming perhaps, but then pulled out an extra stop and suddenly felt that extraordinary sense of the body obeying without conscious effort. It is certainly true that we can do things, in extremis, that if we stopped to think about it we would find impossible: the mother who will find enormous strength or speed to save her child in peril, the athlete who, focused on the need to win, will exceed his personal best.

We can't expect these things from our students in a short course of study and the school might have something to say about safety and responsibility! But it is an important theory of Artaud's. Start from discussing their own personal experiences or stories they have heard. Move on to talking about such as Grotowski and his trance-state actors. Mention the concentration of Eastern mystics or martial arts experts. That is the kind of concentration of attention which Artaud means when he talks about the actor being 'cruel to himself.'

The practical work I offer here is a very basic short course, to prepare the students' minds and bodies into broadening their scope both imaginatively and physically. It will lead the students into at least thinking in a more innovative way and hopefully to responding spontaneously and, where appropriate, emotionally. It also features many exercises that will need considerable control to achieve successfully.

Practical Work.

1. All of this work requires fast-moving and energetic warm-ups to begin. This will 'soften' up their bodies and mean that they will need to respond quickly in a physical way, without thinking and planning

too much. They are then more prepared to do more complex body work. Tag games, Red Rover, British Bulldog and such like are good ones, since no one goes out so that all are involved all the time. For this reason, I would stick to tags like Colossus Tag, where if you are touched by the person who is 'it', you stand rooted to the spot till someone releases you by crawling between your legs.

Ball tag, where two 'its' have a large soft ball with which they try to touch others whilst still holding onto the ball, is another good tag. In this one the two 'its' can throw the ball from one to the other. The one who holds the ball immediately stops still and tries to reach and touch someone else without moving their feet or letting go of the ball. Meanwhile, the other 'it' can move anywhere and when in a more suitable position can invite his partner to throw the ball to him. With quick reactions, he may be able to touch someone before they have cottoned on to what is happening and where the ball is now. Each person who is tagged in this way joins the team of catchers, so there are progressively more and more people on the 'it' side. This game can be absolutely exhausting and should be played fast and furiously.

Red Rover, for those who don't know it, involves one person as catcher in the middle of the room and the rest of the group at one end of the room. On a signal everyone must hop from one end of the room to the other where they are safe. The catcher in the middle also hops. Anyone he touches joins him hopping in the centre until all, going back and forth from one end to the other on the teacher's signal, are caught. British Bulldog is exactly the same principle, except the class is running not hopping and the catcher has to lift both feet of his victim off the floor.

Or you could start with a fast aerobic warm-up, perhaps to music. Whatever you choose to do as your initial warm-up. it is important to carry on until they are tired and then to follow up with other exercises before they have had time to catch breath. Counteract grumbles with explanations of 'cruel to oneself.'

2. Keeping the speed up, make things fast and physical. Follow up with knee-fights, which are played in pairs. Here you score points by tapping the inside of your partner's knee, unless he has them covered by his hands. Start them off by facing each other with hands hovering a little away from the knees, ready to attack or defend. Otherwise some players tend to become too defensive in their strategy. Don't allow this to go on for too long - about a minute is enough - and then move them on rapidly to a similar exercise where it is the small of the partner's back that you must touch to gain a point. Here there is no defensive covering of the vulnerable spot. Nothing except ducking and weaving away from one's opponent will do. Consequently this game is far faster than knee-fights and doesn't allow static defensive positions.

3. The fishing line exercise is a good one to move on to. Divide the

class into half and ask them to stand against opposite walls. Call them sides A and B. As start. They cast out their fishing lines to hook in the fish opposite them, the Bs. But you will tell them by which part of the anatomy Bs are to be pulled in. Be really inventive here and work for areas that will maximise their physicality. Suggestions are:

- between the shoulder blades
- back of the left knee
- sole of the right foot
- inner left thigh

Obviously the sides take turns. This exercise is fun and encourages loss of inhibition as you will find. Keep up the sense of excitement, though, by your use of voice, shouting out, 'Fight fish!' to get them to contort their bodies even more.

After this active start, which will have loosened them up and tired them out so that they are less ready to put up mental barriers, move onto exercises that involve more concentration.

4. Ball dexterity work is good here. If you have a suitable wall, issue the group with a tennis ball each. They are to bounce the ball gently against the wall. After each bounce and before they catch the ball they must try to complete a task:

clap once; clap twice; clap hands behind back; spin around; bend and touch the floor.

They could follow this up with partners, doing the same things in turn before the ball is caught.

Even better for concentration, have the class in small circles of four or five with one ball between them. They will have to remain very alert then as no one will know quite to whom the ball is going. In this case it is best if the teacher instructs whether they are clapping once, spinning, or whatever.

5. Divide the class into two teams again. Instruct all of team A to start individual movements of a repetitive kind, e.g one may be jumping up and down, another putting one arm up into the air in a fist salute, and so on. Without any word spoken and with no leader allocated they are instructed to continue until all end up doing the same movement. The other team simply watches. It is a fascinating process to watch. Then team B does the same.

6. Team A to go against one wall, team B against the opposite wall as for fishing line. Give each person a number, 1, 2, or 3. For a large group it is advisable to use more numbers. Don't call out the numbers in order; they will concentrate more if your calling out is unpredictable. Then ask them, by number, to move across the room in different ways, e.g. 'All Number Ones move as if ...'

The list below contains suggestions. You will notice that they start quite naturalistically but move quickly into the realms of fantasy.

battling with a gale-force wind;
fighting through the undergrowth;
crossing a huge thorough-fare with traffic coming from all
directions ;
crawling in the dark through a narrow tunnel;
fighting your way through a crowded pub to reach the bar;
carrying a gas-filled balloon so huge that you are in danger of
leaving the ground;
walking on clouds;
wading through treacle;
crossing a magnetised floor with metal-soled shoes;
crossing the rainbow;
trying to avoid the gaze of a large hungry dinosaur.

7. Now ask them to scatter to spaces in the room. Ask them to respond to the following stimuli as if they were on their own.

caught in a spider's web;
sinking in a bog;
drinking from a fountain of wine;
swimming in a river of chocolate;
shrinking very fast into extinction unless you eat the stuff in your
right hand which will make you grow very fast ... ;
exploring an underwater kingdom;
turning into liquid from the feet up - from the top down.

8. In pairs, taking turns as rescuer and rescued, rescue your partner from:

a burning building;
clinging to the edge of a cliff-face [encourage the use of the floor
as the cliff-face] ;
that same spider's web;
a rickety rope bridge spanning a chasm where he is frozen with
fear;
the lair of a monster.

9. To finish this sequence of ideas, divide the class into small groups and ask them to come up with a fantasy journey using as many levels as possible. Ideas to start them off might be:

a journey as a minute being round a fridge or a laden dinner
table
a journey to escape from underground having fallen through the
earth's crust
a journey on an unexplored planet with much lower or higher
gravity than our own

The above sequence will have loosened them up further and they will begin to see how limitless the possibilities are. Encourage them to challenge their imaginations further and to try to 'be' a variety of

objects, as in the next exercise.

10. The class need to be working alone in their own space in the room. Ask them to be:

- a sausage under the grill - with unpricked skin;
- bacon frying in a pan - flipped over halfway to cook on the other side;
- toast in a toaster;
- a foodmixer;
- a teabag being lowered into a mug of hot water;
- a toothpaste tube being squeezed;
- a revolving door;
- a breathing machine attached to a body on an operating table;
- a pneumatic drill.

Add SOUND to all the above.

11. Now ask them to work in quite large groups on a short sequence which mixes people with objects, all of which, human and objects, are performed by members of the group. For instance, a piece might start with a businessman entering his office through swing-doors, going up in the lift, greeting his secretary who is answering the telephone ... and so on. Swing-doors, lift and telephone are also undertaken by members of the group.

Good starting points are places: the fairground; the hospital; the factory, and so on.

By the end of your general work on physical theatre you will find your group far more receptive to new ideas. They are now ready to move on to Artaud proper. Make sure they are secure with the notion of the actor being cruel to himself before you do. Was there any point where they felt a barrier being challenged and broken down? Did the frenzied activity at the beginning help them to stop putting up mental barriers? Have they discovered anything about themselves during these early stages of the course?

LARGER THAN LIFE

Moving on naturally from a general physical theatre opening, into which has been introduced the concept of 'cruel to oneself' - the actor's limits being pushed and stretched in unexpected ways - will come the idea that everything the actor does on the Artaudian stage must be larger than life. The further we get into the concept, dealt with in more detail later, of Total Theatre, the more the realisation comes that to be in harmony with all else that is happening in the huge space which Artaud ideally wanted as a performance area - with sound, light, costume, mask, giant props, and so on - the actor has to use gestures that are huge and a voice that can carry over everything else. Like the actors of the Classical Greek period, who had to convey their story to audiences of thousands in vast amphitheatres, the Artaudian actor is on the grand scale. To carry this off successfully, the actor must be very controlled with an athletic body and voice.

Artaud himself had nothing to say about actor's training. Everything that can be said about the type of actor and the way he works are deductions from Artaud's essays on a new style of theatre. To perform in this huge space, in, around and above the audience, an actor would need to be fit and physically versatile. This can also be deduced from the level of body expressiveness he demands. His admiration of the Balinese performers would also suggest this. These actors blended dance, ritualised movement, shouts, chants and stylised acting with choreographed moves requiring a high degree of teamwork. It can be deduced that all of this and more would be needed for an Artaudian piece too. In fact, anyone who has attempted this style of acting in a finished product will find that every move needs to be choreographed and the actors need to work together extraordinarily closely to maximise on the end effect.

One of the best ways, I find, to encourage young actors into the larger than life style needed in the frustratingly short time you have to work with them is by using slow motion. Slow motion encourages great body control and also allows the actor to consider every part of his body and what it is doing, pulling each gesture out to its limit.

Practical Work.

1. One way of encouraging slow motion work is by breaking up an action into beats. Start by having the students scattered round the room using their own space. Now ask them to take an everyday action such as filling a glass with water. To a strict count from you of 'One - two - three - etc.' they break up the movements it would ordinarily take into a single move for each beat. So 'one' would be reaching the hand out to touch the tap; 'two' would be the first twist of the tap, 'three' a further twist, 'four' the left hand reaching to touch the glass, 'five' taking hold of the glass, 'six' lifting the glass - and so on. Incidentally, this is an extremely good exercise for any type of training in mime. I find I use it often.

Clue - remind them to keep the ideas small in scope or they'll get themselves in a terrible muddle! Some suggestions are:

putting toothpaste on a toothbrush;
stirring sugar into a cup of coffee;
picking up and opening a book;
opening a purse and paying a cashier.

2. Now try in pairs doing the same thing, once again using an everyday action as the source but working closely together to achieve a synchronised and disciplined result. Some ideas might be:

putting a sheet on a bed;
folding a sheet;
picking up and moving an item of furniture;
passing a pile of books from one to another.

If at any time their slow motion work becomes sloppy, return to these exercises which should remind them:

- a. of the need for discipline and
- b. of the need for harmonised movement.

3. A good discipline is to line the class up at the end of the room five or six at a time. The others watch until it is their turn. Now have them run the last part of an Olympic sprint in slow motion - such slow motion that it is painful. We should see the agony of their stretched faces straining, the full reach of arms and legs, the effort in every muscle. Sometimes, for extra discipline, you could ask them to pause or, pretending they are on video, you could make them 'replay' for a few seconds.

4. In pairs again, the students choreograph a slow motion fight . A close hand fight is best, though an imaginary knife is acceptable. The movement must be very controlled and as slow as possible. I find they always start to speed up during this. The pace should, in fact, remain constant, so if a fall to the ground is involved - one area which is hard to control in slow motion - then they must find ways of controlling the whole descent so that it remains the same speed. It is possible! [especially if you are able to do a Martha Graham type contraction.]

If they are finding it hard to keep the speed down, remind them to use a slow count as in the first exercise or you could help them by bringing a slow, dreamy piece of taped music to play.

5. Build from this exercise into an advance on the same theme, requiring teamwork. This time ask the students to make two lines facing each other. There should be a fair distance between the lines. Now select two people to stand close together in the space between the lines. These two repeat their slow motion fight. This time, though, one line reacts as if they are receiving the blows of one of the opponents and the other reacts as if hit by the other. All reactions are in slow motion and made as extreme as possible. Faces are pulled into grimaces; bodies contort in agony.

A variation of this which works just as well, is for one person to be selected to 'fight' or beat up an imaginary opponent. The rest of the group are scattered around the room. All, in their separate spaces, react as if each blow or tweak or pinch is landing on themselves, once again in extreme slow motion. Add sound to this too; the grunts, cries and so on enhance the final effect.

6. A good way of helping students understand how enormously their body language, facial expression and voice needs to be expanded is through the 'emotion line.' Ask six students to stand in a line at one end of the room facing the rest of the group seated as an audience at the other end. They are given an emotion such as 'panic'. The first in line starts with as slight a response as possible. The next in line watches and builds the response a little way further, then the third builds it a little more, and so on, until total hysteria is reached. Note that they should not aim to reach the most extreme point by the sixth in line - that would be to build it too quickly - but once the sixth person is reached the responses move back down the line again continuing up and down as long as is necessary. Keep pushing them to take it further and further. Even when it seems impossible, push them once more; it is amazing how suddenly some sort of barrier goes down as they reach a kind of desperation and finally lose all inhibition, contorting themselves into all sorts of body postures accompanied by incredible noises. Only when you, as teacher, deem that the emotion can be taken to no further extreme are the six let off the hook and released to sit down with the group again. A further six are chosen and given a fresh emotion with which to work.

Suggested emotional states:

- anger
- flirtatiousness
- love
- suspicion
- sympathy
- hatred

7. An exercise in exaggerated personalities works here. First remind them of the fishing line exercise done in the last section. Here they were asked to be pulled along as if hooked by a part of their anatomy. Bearing this in mind, ask them first of all to move around the room in a group 'discovering' different types of people according to which part of the anatomy they imagine themselves to be led by. Each body part leads to a distinct personality type and, without conscious thought, students will even come up with an appropriate voice for that character as well as the movement.

Try leading with:

- the nose
- the eyes [staring eyes suggests all sorts of strange characters]

the lips [a particularly fun one]
hands
pelvis
stomach
knees
shoulders
top of the head
chest

It helps students to reach extreme types if you ask them to imagine they are being pulled along by that part of the body, rather than following it.

Now try to improvise with these types in a simple situation, such as:

a restaurant
a party
a waiting room
an audition
an interview.

These 'safe' situations allow the students to explore the characters and their voice and movements rather than the situation itself. Encourage them to exaggerate every feature, whilst still remaining controlled.

The last exercise in this section is one of the few that we know Artaud used, when he was working on his production of Shelley's 'The Cenci.' It is now quite famous and widely used as a basis for work in a variety of styles. Artaud asked the actors to think of an animal on which to base their characters. Knowing his opinion of society and the plot of the play which displays human behaviour of the most 'bestial' and depraved kind - rape, incest, murder, revenge - it is clear that Artaud wanted to awaken the animal side of man's nature through this exercise, releasing the beast and, by the kind of rigour he wrote of in his essays, containing it and ultimately seeking to transcend it through purging it from the systems of both actors and audience. It is an exercise that makes a lot of sense, given Artaud's concerns, yet he was unable to make his actors fully understand its purpose.

Clearly it is an exercise that should be used linked to a text, but I give it here in a different form, because it can be adapted to encourage students into acting in a larger than life way.

8. Each student should choose an animal to work on. Ideally, they should go to a zoo or similar and watch closely the way animals move and behave separately and together. If not, use one of the many wildlife programmes available on video. Try out several group exercises in which all are monkeys, apes, flamingos, lions, chickens, antelope. Quite apart from anything else, the value of this is that by

concentrating on reproducing as closely as the human body is capable, the quality and type of movements of these animals, they become absorbed enough to lose their own inhibitions and to stretch and use their own bodies in new ways.

Next ask them to prepare an animal for themselves. They must research it and prepare it in their own time, bringing it to show the class when they are happy with the quality of the movement they are producing. Encourage them to imitate the sounds as well. When all have presented their work, organise the class into smallish groups. Using their chosen animal as inspiration, they must now translate their creature into a human being. It is important that the animal quality of movement is retained in this person, as well as the manner of speaking and behaviour in the company of others. At all times it should be clear that the animal is there, close beneath the skin.

Situations to work on in their groups need to be social ones: a drinks party, a dinner, a picnic, are good, since the way the animal-human tackles food is interesting.

Other situations could be:

- a group waiting for an interview
- people on an outward bound course
- at the bootfair or jumble sale

To encourage 'larger than life' gestures, have the groups present their work in two ways: first at normal speed and secondly showing a section in slow motion. Slow motion always encourages extended movement and will emphasise the vocal tones too, if they use their speech like a running down gramophone.

You may find it better to interrupt the group showing yourself and ask for slow motion to start then and there, releasing them from this after a short time so that they can finish their scene. This will take the control away from them and mean they cannot preplan, ensuring they genuinely concentrate on the movements 'in the moment.'

FROM RHYTHM TO RITUAL

One of the best ways of exploring the intentions of Artaud is through experimenting with rhythm. There is nothing like rhythm, he states, for getting under the skin and causing an emotional response. In 'No More Masterpieces' he says: " Snakes do not react to music because of the mental ideas it produces in them, but because ... their bodies are in contact with the ground along almost their entire length. And the musical vibrations communicated to the ground affect them as a very subtle, very long massage. Well I propose to treat the audience just like those charmed snakes and to bring them back to the subtlest ideas through their anatomies."

There are many clues here. First, that Artaud desires a direct physical appeal that bypasses the brain. Second, that his intention is to affect the audience in a particular way, to 'bring them back to the subtlest ideas.' Elsewhere he makes it clear that bringing them back means putting them in touch with their primitive selves, their unchanged inner selves, and reminding them of the ancient forms of theatre, with its emphasis on religion and ritual.

Practical Work.

1. Introduce the idea of rhythm with a partner concentration game. In pairs, A and B, an individual clapping rhythm is chosen. Then all As sit down in a line facing a wall. Bs stand facing the other way a few paces further up the room. Make sure the Bs are not placed directly behind their own partners. Each B in turn now claps his rhythmic sequence once. If his partner recognises and responds correctly by clapping the same rhythm back, they move together and sit down at the side. They have finished. The line continues until all the pairs are reunited.

Now ask all the pairs to separate and mill around the room. On a signal from you they close their eyes and continue to move [cautiously!]. A further signal and they freeze. Now all at once they start to clap their rhythms and must find their partners through clapping alone. Instruct that those who find their partners must freeze, to allow the remainder to carry on in complete concentration.

2. Stand in a circle. One person starts a rhythm, using hands or feet or both, which everyone copies. Once it is established, another person tries to impose a rhythm over the top of it. The rest copy the new rhythm once they have picked it up until all are doing it. Then another imposes his rhythm, and so on. It might be an idea, rather than leaving it to chance, to have secretly set up those who are going to start a new rhythm, including the order in which they go.

3. Still in a circle, sit on the floor. One person starts a rhythm using floor, hands and knees. Everyone else copies it. By concentrating very hard, try to stop all at the same time.

Vary this by starting the rhythm very quietly and building to a

crescendo, then stopping at the same time.

And, starting very loudly, gradually bring the rhythm down to very soft, then stop all together and hold the silence while hearing the rhythm carrying on in the head two more times. End by shouting 'HA!' all together, which should be possible if everyone has kept the rhythm in their heads.

This exercise done successfully gives a great sense of satisfaction.

4. It is a good idea to have a number of percussion instruments handy if at all possible. If difficult, a variety of instruments can be made by filling tins and boxes of different sizes with a variety of contents: pebbles, sand, wood shavings, lentils, etc. Different textures of sound can thus be created. Hand these out to some of the group and instruct the others to use claps, stamps, thighslaps or breaths. If no instruments are available, the exercise can still be done with just these. Now, standing in a circle, establish a strong and steady beat. Each one in turn round the circle must now add their sound and rhythm to fit in with that central beat. They are not trying to change the rhythm; instead they must match it or add counterpoint to it till by the end of the circle a rich and intricate pattern of sounds is produced.

5. Now create a couple of tribal dances, using the instruments as above and rhythms created by voice and body. Simple movements will need to be added, which express the aim of the dance. For example, a war dance will use strong aggressive movements, stamping, harsh guttural sounds and a blood-stirring rhythm; a rain dance may use pattering light movements, sounds and rhythms. Here are some more suggestions:

- a wedding dance
- a victory celebration
- a ceremony to ward off disaster
- a sundance
- a fertility dance or a celebration of spring
- a dance promoting the hope of a successful hunting trip
- a funeral dance

The group should come up with two contrasting performances. They should use as their starting point a well-established rhythm. Once this is done they should try to allow their bodies a free response to the rhythm first as a way of exploring patterns of movement or particular repeated gestures and steps. If the rhythm is hypnotic or evocative enough, they should not find this too difficult. Rhythm and volume - also important - do more than anything to break down inhibition. Think of how they respond to loud clubbing rhythms on a Friday night!

6. Repeat these performances to a small audience. Get the group to

think of the audience as members of the same tribe. Where would they like them to sit or stand in relation to themselves? Instruct them that they need to infect the audience with the same emotions as the dance is supposed to evoke in the performers; how might that best be done?

The audience factor, by the very nature of Artaud's work, is going to be an important feature of this whole course. Whenever possible the group need to test out their ideas, however short, on an audience. If you have a big group that can be sub-divided you have no problems, but smaller groups may need to build in an occasional lunchtime session with an invited audience.

The above exercises should have achieved three things:

- i. they should realise the power of rhythm to 'infect' an audience.
- ii. Apart from more traditional ways of creating sound, the above work should have stimulated the students into experimenting with ways that they can produce sound with their own bodies and surroundings
- iii. a start has been made on experimenting with different ways of treating the audience. This should quickly become a habit.

Rhythm and Emotion.

Of course, the previous work has evoked an emotional response as does all work using music or rhythm, but now we are looking at expressing different emotions through rhythm and sound. As later we will work with symbols and a language of symbols, here we are working in a similar way towards finding rhythms and sounds that would evoke the same response whatever or wherever the audience.

7. Working in small groups of 3 or 4 and using only the resources of your own lungs and bodies, try to find sounds and rhythms that express the following emotions:

- hate**
- love**
- frustration**
- sympathy**
- sorrow**
- anger**
- joy**
- anxiety**

For instance, 'hate' may come out as a sequence of snorts, grunts, stamps and roars in a jerky, fast rhythm while 'love' could be expressed with tuneful sounds, long slow chords and sighs.

Now, taking three of the above emotions, add appropriate bodyshapes and repeated gestures to these sounds. Keep repeating the sequence of sounds and moves until a 'machine' has been produced, a 'love' machine, an 'anger' machine, and so on.

8. Can more complex ideas be shown in this way? Experiment with dialogues by dividing the class into groups of approximately 6, with each of these groups sub-divided into teams of about 3. Teams to call themselves A or B. A starts by thinking of an emotionally charged concept to express to the other team, such as 'Hands off my girl!' or "This is my land!' or 'Isn't my baby the most beautiful in the world?' They shouldn't think of miming or 'translating' the ideas word by word in a literal way, but of expressing the concept as a whole. e.g. jealousy, mother-love and so on. Bs respond. Will a response work spontaneously or do all such ideas need careful planning, even choreography? If so, something else has been learned about working in this way. Now swap over, so that the B teams initiate.

9. Work towards a more complex planned dialogue between two 'sides' within a group. Use rhythm, sounds and broad strong movements. Don't let the focus be too much on the body movements. Rhythm and sound are the focus of attention here. Try these out on an audience and ask for feedback. What did it make them feel? How did they respond? Did they understand the basic dialogue?

The importance here is that you want the audience to be responding emotionally rather than rationally or literally. This is the difference between Brecht's desire for clarity which leaves no room for doubt as to what the message is and appeals to the *intellect*, and Artaud's desire for a universal language which appeals to the gut and rouses an instinctive *emotional* response.

10. Bring in some different examples of music, preferably without words attached since those would merely distract and lead the listener to a literal response. Mix in classical with modern, very rhythmic with arhythmic or mood pieces. The group should listen in a darkened room with no distractions, perhaps lying on the floor, each one in his own space. Each person should be responding freely to the music; some might suggest a story, others a mood, but all should elicit some definite emotional response. One student I encountered always responded to music through colour, 'That's a very red piece,' for instance. That seems a good response to be making. Obviously talk about their response to each piece before moving on to another.

You will all have your own favourites to use for this exercise, but I use the following: Mussorgski 'Night on a Bare Mountain', parts of Ravel's 'Daphnis and Chloe' or Holst's 'The Planets', Beethoven's 7th Symphony - the joyful middle section of the first Movement or the very rhythmic second movement, parts of Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue', the beginning of the second side of Pink Floyd's 'Atom Heart Mother', [and that dates me but it is still easily available!]

Also useful is film music which is often strongly evocative, though avoid tunes that are so well-known in their film context [such as 'Titanic'] that they will lead their feelings too strongly in a certain direction. Free association is important.

11. Choose one of your pieces of music stimulus that has created a particularly strong response and ask the students to come up with a piece of movement drama based on the music and using the music as background. This shouldn't be pure dance as such but should tell a story or explore a situation. Two responses, for example, I have had in the past is a ritual sacrifice to 'Atom Heart Mother' and a series of images from busy street and café life to 'Rhapsody in Blue.'

The final exercise for this section needs a little explanation to the students first about ritual.

Ritual is one of those words that has been reduced from its original meaning. Nowadays, any repeated action or series of actions done on a regular basis, such as always doing your morning routine in a certain order, has come to be called a ritual. But the real meaning of ritual has to have the addition of religious worship or awe. Rituals were repeated actions done in honour of a god, for placatory or celebratory reasons. A wedding is a ritual as is any church service, with its repeated words, songs and actions. Some of the tribal dances that the students came up with in exercise 5 could be worked up into a ritual. Many of the suggestions in that exercise had the idea of a celebration or appeasement and if they were done in honour of a god or gods in the same way every time then they would be rituals.

Artaud wanted to remind the audience of their roots, to 'bring them back' to earlier forms of drama, which were founded in religion or used to please gods. The features of these early dramas, such as those performed in honour of the god Dionysus, were: repeated actions, music, words or chants that praised the god or told of his exploits or lifestory, and masks - certain actors acted out the exploits or the story of the god by donning a mask and becoming the god. The mystery attached to the mask was that the actor believed that he was in some way cancelling himself out by effacing himself and that the god would actually enter into him through the medium of the mask. He became the god and was thus not really answerable for his actions as he was literally possessed. In a kind of trance-like state he performed instinctively, filled by the god. Such actor-priests or mediums of godhead were treated with awe by the audience who often participated in parts of the familiar ritual.

Here we see many of the features common to Artaudian production and can understand why the Balinese Theatre rang so many bells for him as a form of primitive religious drama with many of the above features, that has remained unchanged for countless numbers of years. Western theatre, he felt, has moved too far away from these Dionysian roots, and is the loser for it. All the features listed above feature in Artaudian drama, including the idea of the possessed actor - taken further by Grotowski - and the audience as participator as well as witness - experimented with by many modern practitioners, but particularly by Grotowski and by Brook.

12. As a final exercise for this section, ask the students to come up with a piece of ritual drama for an audience. They could use one of the ideas in Exercise 5 as a starting point. The piece must include as many features of Ritual Drama as possible: repeated actions, rhythm or music, chant and mask to represent the god, if time to make one. There must be a reason for the piece, e.g. a request for rain after prolonged drought, strength to conquer the enemy, or similar: that is there has to be a reason for the god to be contacted - life has become too difficult for humans to cope with on their own; divine intercession is necessary. For the god to want to bother to help insignificant humanity, he must be flattered or honoured in some way, it may be by sacrifice, or by prayers in his honour, or by a recounting and enactment of a glorious exploit such as a miraculous birth or the outwitting of an enemy.

Obviously this will be quite an extended piece of work taking two or three sessions perhaps. The finished piece should be done with an audience who need to be involved in some way. Make sure the students discuss ways this can be done. It could be by leading them from place to place in procession with the actors, encouraging the imitation of repeated chants and movements with them, or simply by enacting the 'god-story' around them. Whatever they decide, part of the aim should be to instil a sense of wonder or awe in the audience. They should be involved, carried along emotionally.

Make sure the results of this are discussed. Did the audience remain cynical or detached? What else could have been done to quench this Western cynicism and to involve them further?

BREATHING

Work on breathing follows naturally on from rhythm and in many ways parallels it. Artaud talked about the infectious qualities of breathing and wanted an audience " ... to identify with the show breath by breath and beat by beat." [In 'An Affective Athleticism' and 'Seraphim's Theatre'] For him, breathing was the most powerful way to convey emotional states and he tried to devise the beginnings of a system for actors to use.

He divided types of breathing into masculine, feminine and neuter and believed that different combinations of these three basic styles of breathing could invoke emotions both in the actor and the audience. Basically, masculine breaths are outward, large and positive or active, feminine breaths softer, more yielding, pulling inward and neuter breaths are a balance between outer and inner, without one or the other taking prominence.

Not only was the type of breathing used of importance, but also the part of the body from which the actor breathes. Following the example of Chinese medicine which identifies the pressure points over the whole body and links them with certain vital organs and which also links emotional states with physical ones, he cites, rather vaguely, that it should be possible to find out how to reach the seat of any emotion providing you can identify which part of the body, which pressure point, rules that emotion. The actor needs to identify these central points which can be reached, he asserted, through identifying the right combinations of breathing for each pressure point, thus releasing the emotion that is situated there. Breathing, he further asserts is infectious and therefore it is possible to affect the audience too with these breaths, thus releasing the identical emotion in themselves. So, literally, the audience would be carried along with the show 'breath by breath', identifying with each emotion of the actor on stage at exactly the same time.

Lovely if it worked! How useful it would be to an actor to have a code of breaths, sighs and screams - Artaud tells us that where breathing fails to 'irritate' the pressure point into releasing its emotion, screams might work - which will instantly release any emotion he has to feel on the stage in its most pure and extreme form. Not that Artaud thinks this will be easy; the actor is "a heart athlete", that is his job is to run the range of human emotional life and share that range powerfully with an audience. To do that he must put his body under extreme pressure, focusing on the pressure point he is trying to invoke, causing the emotion to release itself with cries, groans and shrieks and putting the muscles around those pressure points under enormous strain.

Sadly, Artaud admits, we have forgotten how to use our throats and bodies in this way. The whole skill will have to be rediscovered and relearned and, to my knowledge, no one has achieved this yet, though Peter Brook has used sounds in some of his work and, with Ted Hughes, invented a primitive language. This, however, is not quite what Artaud was getting at. He felt that this language of breaths, cries, sounds of all kind, is the real primitive communal language of

humanity. Most of his theories are geared to this end: finding a common language of the human heart. The way to achieve this he felt to the end was by a kind of torturing of the human organic body, "to irritate those pressure points as if the muscles were flayed"['An Affective Athleticism'], so that the true forgotten human language, buried deep in all of our psyches, would reveal itself: not a language of minutiae and day-to-day trivia, but a language of all human spiritual and emotional experience.

This theory, fascinating as it is - and there is something about Artaud which resonates very deeply in my own subconscious even while logic struggles - is only explorable in miniature by a group of students. But I think enough is provable, or at least exciting, for them to see what Artaud wanted to attempt.

Practical Work.

1. Start by exploring the different areas from which they can centre their breathing. At first, it may simply be enough to have them exploring their own breathing patterns. Becoming aware of their own bodies is the first step. Do they breathe shallowly or deeply, rhythmically or arrhythmically? Is their breathing centred in their chest, diaphragm or stomach?

Once this is established try, by concentrating on the part of the body concerned, to change breathing patterns. What happens when the breath is centred deep down near the pelvic area of the stomach? Up high in the chest, drawing back so that the breathing is coming from the back part of the chest? Did they feel any different with prolonged efforts in any region?

I think it is true to say that breathing up high and at the back of the chest makes one feel timid and nervous, deep into the diaphragm inspires confidence, and so on. A certain amount is demonstrable.

2. Now try formulating masculine, feminine and neuter breaths.

The words Artaud uses when describing masculine breathing are, at various times: tense, outward, positive, convex.

Of feminine breaths he says: inward, "everything which is surrender, anguish, a plea, an invocation..."['An Affective Athleticism'], relaxed, empty, concave.

And of neuter he simply says balanced, requiring will-power - lying in wait - , resting, space.

This sounds as though one can have a tense neuter state and a relaxed one - one in which the mind is focusing on the next bout of tension in whichever area of the body and one which is genuinely a 'floating' between breaths of a more definite nature.

3. Next try one of the experiments Artaud himself tried and documented in 'Seraphim's Theatre.'

The first half of this essay is a detailed retelling of his attempt to find the breathing pattern to release the emotional and primeval outcry that would come from all of oppressed womankind.

The process seems to be as follows:

1. He conjures up the image of his own body in his mind's eye.
2. He has decided on a pattern where feminine breaths are squeezed between oppressive masculine breaths and taut neuter breaths.
3. He centres on the stomach, again visualising it with his mind's eye in order to focus his will on it. He finds the 'right' part of the stomach, deep in the groin.
4. Focusing on this point he visualises scenes of oppression, overlaying this with short measured neuter breaths which batten down on the horror of the scenes, allowing the feeling to build up.
5. The breaths become longer, pulling right down to the bottom of the stomach and heaving back up again to the top of the chest. By doing this, he is pushing down the active masculine force, whose seat is at the base of the stomach. By repressing it, denying it, he allows the feminine force to emerge.
6. Now he visualises the part of the body which is the seat of feminine distress, around the kidney area in the small of the back and with short inward breaths releases a hollow 'bellowing', like someone trapped underground struggling for freedom.

That should create some interesting results! Notice, though, that if you follow this carefully and wholeheartedly, the muscles are 'flayed;' it takes an enormous amount of constricting and expanding of those muscles around the part of the body concentrated on.

4. Try finding the breathing patterns for :

anger
fear
suspicion
joy.

I tried these myself and patterns were quite easy to come by for these emotions in particular. Anger seemed easy to manage with deep outward breaths from the stomach, a sprinkling of fast neuter breaths from the chest then back to the deep rushes from the stomach again.

See what sounds start to emerge once these breathing patterns are in place.

The results are extraordinary and in a quite frightening way, truly primeval. Also interesting is how totally absorbing the process is. It acts like a kind of meditation, an intense focus of concentration which, if followed through, may well lift the actor to a trance-like state. At least, if your students try this for themselves, and I think it is important that they do, they will be able to see more of the 'science' of acting, the kind of precision that Artaud sought and ardently believed was possible.

5. In pairs, A and B, lie in a space on the floor, side by side. A starts imposing a strong regular rhythm of breathing. How long does it take before B catches the rhythm and they are breathing in union? Now swap over.

Vary this by A focusing on a particular emotion, finding the breathing pattern for it, still lying close to his partner. Can B start to feel the same emotion? Again swap over.

6. The group sits in a circle, preferably in a blacked-out room, but in any case with eyes closed, holding hands. One person, selected by the teacher, begins, focusing on a particular emotion and the breathing pattern for it. How quickly does the rest of the group feel what he is feeling?

Note that for all breathing exercises, once the emotion is in place, sounds will start to emerge. That is to be expected, and what Artaud meant when he talked about a language of screams, grunts, guttural sounds, sighs and breaths.

THE PROBLEM WITH LANGUAGE AND WESTERN THEATRE

Just as Artaud sought for a common language of sounds, he also wanted a physical common language. The ordinary language of theatre was altogether too stifling and confining for his tastes. Words were limiting as were the subject matters chosen by contemporary dramatists. Fly-on-the-wall slices of life were the order of the day and to him they were anathema. Theatre, he urged, " must make a break with topicality.In Western theatre, words are solely used to express psychological conflicts peculiar to man and his position in everyday existence ..." whereas it should ... "... express secret truths." ['Oriental and Western Theatre'] In 'No More Masterpieces', he states, echoing one of Brecht's sentiments, "We must finally do away with the idea of masterpieces reserved for a so-called élite but incomprehensible to the masses.Past masterpieces are fit for the past, they are no good to us. We have the right to say what has been said and even what has not been said in a way that belongs to us, responding in a direct and straightforward manner to present-day feelings everybody can understand." Despite this sentiment, as we shall see in a later section, certain plays from the past caught his fancy because of their passion and the extreme nature of the rebellions within their central characters, that lifts them to a superhuman plane.

What are the 'secret truths' he mentions? Simply all the subjects not so far considered fit areas for Western theatre, such things as our dreams and fantasies, our secret passions, our nightmares. A whole realm of life is left unexplored by traditional theatre and why? - because, Artaud avers, we are afraid of Danger. Theatre managers play safe and seek to entertain or amuse an élite cultured audience and playwrights give them what they want for this task. Yes, says Artaud, there are risks involved in the kind of theatre he proposes, but those risks are worth taking. Theatre must be reanimated and taken back to the condition it was in originally, a vehicle for the divine and the supernatural. As such it explored far more the real concerns of humanity: large concepts of Good and Evil and of Man seeking to understand the workings of his own soul.

Seen in this light, his statement about finding a theatre that responds 'in a direct and straight-forward manner to present-day feelings' takes on a different meaning to that intended when Brecht wrote much the same sentiments. Artaud means people's inner feelings, the kind of things they experience when, alone at night, they confront and wrestle with their own natures. And 'everybody' will understand because that area of life is common to all the world over. Thus Artaud is mooting a subject matter which links all mankind. It is obviously important, then, that theatre should find a way of expressing this subject matter so that all can understand it.

The reason he spends so long describing and praising the Balinese Theatre is because it is a contemporary form of theatre which has not lost touch with its spiritual roots. It is as alive and comprehensible today as it was hundreds of years ago, and unchanged because in those areas of Life with a capital L, the subject matter does not lose relevance.

The Balinese Theatre excites him into an analysis of what it has that Western Theatre lacks. Finally, it is the platform for the formation of a new theory of theatre, his own Theatre of Cruelty and Total Theatre.

In summary, these are the elements of the Balinese Theatre which he praises:

1. It uses a rich symbolic language composed of images, gestures, sounds and movement.
2. All elements of the piece are of equal importance: music, costume, props and so on have their place and contribute to the beauty and meaning of the final production.
3. The subject-matter is universal, with enough realism in it - he cites the Balinese actor whose fear of the supernatural world he finds himself in is entirely comprehensible even to the most entrenched Western mind - to strike resonances in anyone.
4. All the movements, music, dance, mime are choreographed and deliberate yet give the impression of spontaneity because they lead an audience, through the calculated use of theatrical effect, rhythm and so on, to a spontaneous reaction.
5. It has managed to achieve a way of reaching an audience directly, without the stumbling block of rational thought and without offering useless images of mundane life. It seems "like an exorcism to make our devils FLOW." ['On the Balinese Theatre'.] Thus it has the effect, similar to the Plague analogy, of 'lancing the boils' of society.
6. No playwright is necessary, instead the weight of the production is in the hands of the director, who becomes "a kind of organiser of magic." [ibid.]
7. Without actually being religious theatre - the pieces Artaud saw were secular folkpieces - they were richly imbued with spiritual meaning and used the concept of 'the Double', that is, an actor playing a human being might be put next to another performer who represented his own spiritual counterpart.

Here we see the seeds of everything that becomes familiar as Artaudian Theatre. Yet it is merely an inspiration. Artaud, when he actually talks about the shows he would like to put on, comes up with something very different, as we shall see when we come to grips with the concept of Total Theatre.

Out of the appreciation of the Balinese Theatre comes considerable thought on the nature of language as we use it currently and the problems inherent with that. The spoken word has come to be the single most important means of communication and yet it embraces only a very small part of our experience. The words 'I am cold' hardly begin to touch the concept of 'coldness', which is really a number of very physical sensations. This small example is the pattern for any concept at all that is expressed through the medium of words. Words ignore the physical sensations that make up all feeling and response. How can a verbal description of a view, for instance, encompass the colour and variety seen with the eyes, the sounds of birdsong or wind in trees heard with the ears, the feel of the air

against the skin, the scents brought on the air? All of this is habitually ignored, or at most suggested, because of the inadequacy of verbal language.

In all areas of life this is true. How many times have we all floundered to express thoughts about spiritual truths, emotions, feelings? We experience frustration at our inabilities. The fact is, words reduce thought, experience, life. Why is it then, argues Artaud, that all the potential that theatre has to produce *sensation* through visual, aural and many other means is forgotten in the Western Theatre's love affair with language? What wasted opportunities!

He does not propose, however, a theatre without the spoken word, but wants rather to take the emphasis away from that area and reduce its importance. Language is inadequate to express anything on its own, therefore it must be linked with other means of expression, physical and sensory. Moreover, the more difficult and metaphysical the concept to be communicated the more inadequate spoken language becomes: instead these areas ought to be communicated through suggestion. Why? Because if whatever happens on stage elicits a response in the audience that is couched in verbal form, albeit in the head, then the fact that the audience is rationalising his response in linear verbal ways means he is also in the process of reducing feeling and ideas. To prevent this the audience must respond in visual images and sensory impressions; he will understand on a deep, gut level and ought to avoid trying to rationalise that understanding. Oblique images, symbols, archetypes, work in this suggestive way.

The example Artaud talks about of the picture of 'Lot and his Daughters' by Lucas van Leyden [see following page] is a demonstration of this. In the foreground of the picture are the figures of Lot and his two daughters. Their whole manner suggests sexuality and abandon, yet they are the people without sin who God was saving from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the background the two cities burn and the whole landscape lies under a pall of smoke like divine retribution. Artaud's fascination with this picture is because, while it purports to be a simple depiction of a well-known Bible story, it works on our subconscious by its suggestiveness, its brooding quality, the corruption hinted at in its central characters and, by inference, with the whole of humanity. It chimes in with Artaud's own feelings about the corruption of society and the way visual images can work on us subliminally.

Of course, by attempting to describe it and its affect at all, I am falling into the trap of reducing by verbal description! This is inevitable of course, and should not discourage the students from putting into words what they have to in order to write examination answers.

LOT AND HIS DAUGHTERS
by
LUCAS VAN LEYDEN



Practical Work.

1. Sit in a circle. Members of the group volunteer to describe an event or a moment that is of great significance for them for some reason; it may simply be how a favourite place makes them feel; or their first visit to a dentist; or the loss of a loved pet. It really doesn't matter what they tell, providing it elicits some emotional response in them.

After each telling, ask the rest of the group to relate what means of communicating response the narrators used, other than their choice of words. Could they tell what the narrators feel through eyes, gesture, facial expression, body language, intonation, breathing? Consider the whole range of physical expression apart from spoken language.

2. Now ask each person in the group to relate their incident or moment once more, but this time they cannot use words. The whole range of body and vocal expression through sound and intonation is still open to them, however, and hopefully by now they are beginning to see the potential there.

3. Though I have used gibberish exercises in the study of Stanislavski, they are just as appropriate here. For those who have not done such work before, it is better if students use a whole range of sounds, so that the speech sounds genuinely like an actual 'language'. It is, though, quite daunting to do at first so that it may be necessary to allow shyer members of the group to use a makeup word like 'Bidiga' to work with.

First, try some explorations of intonation alone using the following as starting points:

complain to a garage mechanic about shoddy workmanship on a car

complain to a circle of accusers against the injustice of your prison sentence

accuse a friend of betraying a secret

accuse the gods of letting you down - your whole life is in ruins

explain the mechanics of some kitchen gadget to prospective buyers

explain how you are dying of love for someone

try to get yourself out of an awkward situation - caught shoplifting perhaps

tell a lie to convince someone you are trustworthy

order food in a restaurant

order a group of servants to do your bidding

Don't move on to the next exercise without a full discussion of the results of these. After all, what we are testing out in all these exercises is how far it is possible to communicate with anyone anywhere and if so, on what level? What subject areas work and which are unsuitable? So which ones of the above worked best? Why? They should come to the conclusions that the ones that needed to deliver very specific information were the hardest, because of course the minutiae of life cannot be translated adequately into gibberish. The broader the idea and larger the scope the more successful. It is easier to indicate to an audience that you are talking to 'gods' or the whole audience as accusers than it is to show that another person is something as specific as a 'garage mechanic.' This tells us a lot about working in an Artaudian way:

- a. he is not interested in the day-to-day concerns of everyday life
- b. his type of theatre is on an altogether larger scale. Emotions are large, requiring a style of acting that is also large, whether you are talking about gestures or voice.
- c. because we do not share the same social and cultural backgrounds the world over, it would be hard to find day-to-day subjects that would work but some things we do have in common.

See if the students can come up with a few ideas of those things, even if it just that underneath the surface bravado of modern man we are all afraid of the dark. That might be a good starting point for their discussion. In any case, it is our emotions, our spiritual fears and aspirations that to some extent we share, plus the cruelty of the world which can throw things at us for which we are not prepared. As Artaud says in 'No More Masterpieces', : "We are not free and the sky can still fall on our heads."

When not relying totally on words to convey meaning, body language and intonation become far more important. The following group of exercises are designed to show this.

4. The class find their own spaces in the room. The teacher instructs them to be preparing a meal as if they were on a programme like 'Celebrity Cook.' After a time, the group are instructed to freeze and one person is selected to carry on, describing what he is doing in gibberish. The group are told that the demonstrator is from a foreign country but that one person there understands his language and will translate. A translator is then selected from the rest of the group who, by observing what is being done and listening to the intonation, will relate what is happening in English for the remainder of the class.

Try variations of this with:

- a homedecorating or makeover programme
- a fashion or hair designer
- a famous modern artist
- someone with an extraordinary hobby
- the inventor of a new form of transport

5. A variation of this is in pairs. A couple of volunteers decide where and who they are and what they are doing. They begin a scene using only gibberish. At a signal, the sound is 'turned down' as if they were a foreign film or programme and the couple carry on without any sound at all. Meanwhile two others have been selected to 'dub' sound in English onto the action. Each person is the 'voice' of one of those on the stage. The scene proceeds with the voices dubbed over the action from the original pair.

Warning! Students are apt to take over as dubbers and lead the scenes into areas never intended by the originators! Though this is good for a laugh, it is against the spirit of the exercise which should be a genuine attempt to read the body language and facial expression of the two actors.

Keep moving rapidly on with this exercise. As soon as the first pair flag, ask the two dubbers to become the next actors with a new scene they decide on between them and choose two new dubbers, one to interpret the body language of each actor. Later these dubbers become the next actors, and so on.

6. In small groups, ask the students to improvise a scene in a naturalistic style. Best might be a family scene, such as daughter arriving home late after a party, worried parents, and so on. Anything of that sort of ilk.

When it comes to showing their scenes to the rest of the group, they perform as if they are on television and the sound has been turned down. How much of the scene comes over to the rest of the group?

Now try improvising other scenes in different styles such as narrative style or melodrama. Which style comes over best in 'silent' form?

7. A more genuine test of how little most actors pay attention to other means than words to communicate is by watching a part of a video, such as an episode of a 'soap', with the sound turned down. How much of the episode could be understood?

LANGUAGE - THE LESSONS OF SURREALISM

Artaud never forbade the use of words, but he thought they should be used in a different way: for their sound quality more than for their sense.

Two distinct ways of using language emerge from this:

1. Using words against their meaning as was often done by the Surrealists
2. Using words exaggerated and supercharged with emotional subtext to enhance their meaning.

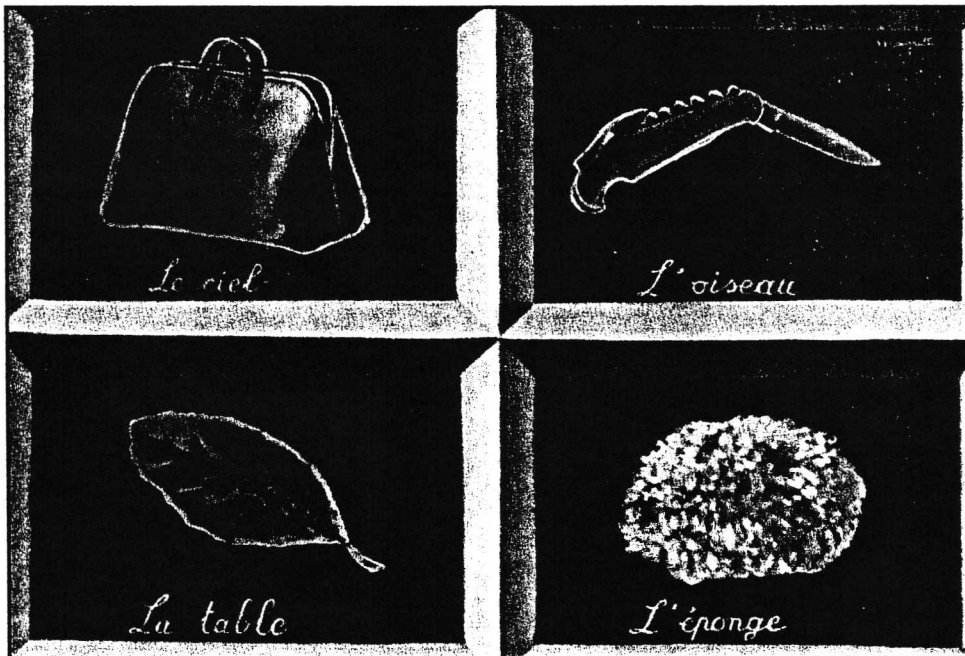
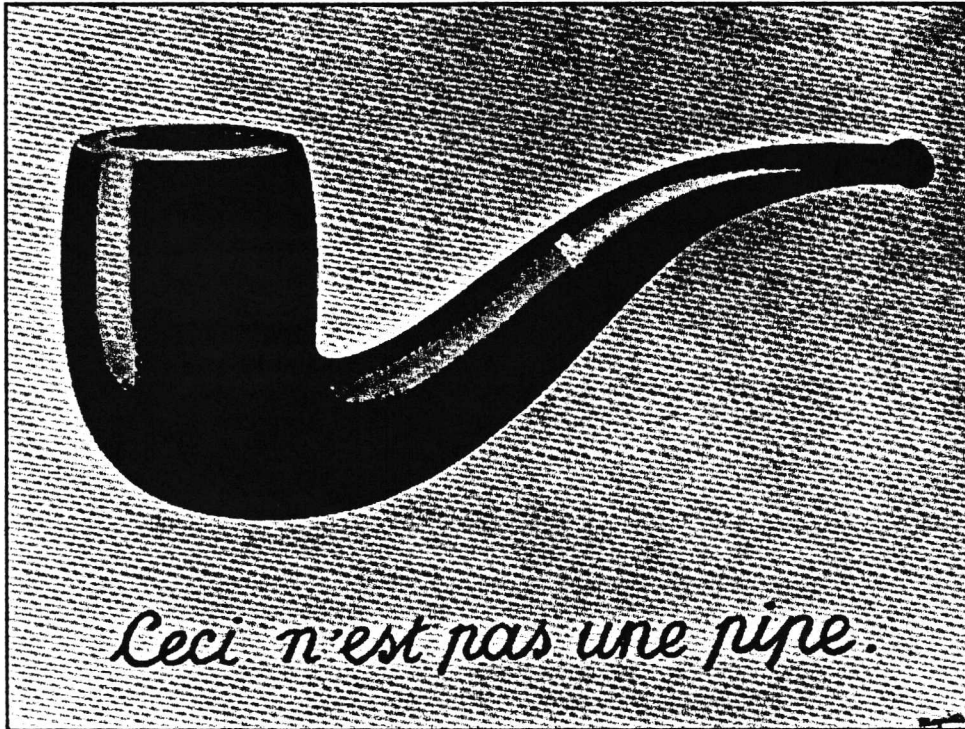
I will deal with the first idea first.

A brief explanation of certain pertinent aspects of Surrealism is needed here. Surrealism means 'above' or 'on top of' reality. Its realm is the exploration of dreams, fantasies and the mysteries of the human mind. Especially how people see the world, their perceptions which change so much from individual to individual, the extraordinary connections that can be made [and often are in dreams] between objects. Surrealist paintings seek to suggest the enormous richness of the mind and imagination, so often kept battered down by convention. So in a Surrealist painting one might see objects in strange relation to each other - later, when we look at some of the ideas Artaud had for staging we will see the Surrealist influence at work - or something looked at from a strange angle or distortion. This sparks off connections in the viewer's mind, not of the 'oh-I-see' kind, because the Surrealists, like Artaud, did not want those who saw their paintings to understand them in a logical way, to put them into tight little boxes of interpretation; instead they wanted people to be shocked or surprised into unleashing different understandings and perceptions about the world. By setting off a different chain of connections in the mind, a whole new set of images is hinted at; we are set free from the humdrum world of normality.

Already you will see how much the Surrealist movement influenced Artaud's ideas. For a short time, until he quarrelled with them, he was an active member of the movement, but the influence remains. It is a good idea to send your students off on a quest into surrealism; they will certainly benefit by it and it will deepen their understanding of Artaud's methods. Perhaps send them to the library in pairs to research a particular painter, or to read and report back on the Surrealist manifestos written by André Breton. One or two of the exercises below are surrealist in origin and should start off some active discussion.

So far as language is concerned, Magritte did a series of paintings which illustrate one of the theories of Artaud. [see next page]. 'The Use of Words 1' begins the idea that objects exist apart from their labels. The word 'pipe' conjures up an instant image in our heads by association. But what if it were called something else? 'Cloud' perhaps, or 'tree'? Would that change its essential being, its 'pipeness'? Not at all! So we are led into realising the uselessness of language as a means of describing something - a subject, as we have seen, close to Artaud's heart. Further, by saying 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe' - 'This is not a pipe' - we are instantly surprised into a reaction. What is it then? We look at the object anew, noticing and appreciating things about it that we might otherwise have taken for granted.

THE USE OF WORDS 1
By
MAGRITTE



THE KEY OF DREAMS
by
MAGRITTE

The second picture, 'The Key of Dreams' works in a similar way, but this time Magritte has labelled three of the objects with different words. The bag is labelled 'le ciel' - 'the sky' - the leaf is called a table, the penknife a bird but the sponge is a sponge. I find my mind spiralling off when I see this painting. It works in the same way as the picture I described above. But by mis-labelling the objects we are taken on a further journey than being told the pipe is not a pipe. On the reality level, things are unchanged from their essential being by whatever name we happen to call them in whatever language. But here also another dimension has been added. By suggesting a bag could be the sky we both see the inadequacy of words and at the same time are plunged into a world of mystery and suggestion where perhaps things could be other than what they seem. That is why the painting is called 'The Key of Dreams'. The penknife shape is disturbingly like a bird and thus adds a suggestion of cruelty plus the idea of the merging of shape and texture to suggest other things. Finally, calling the sponge by its real name jolts us back again into actually seeing the object as much stranger than we would otherwise see it because we have learned not to take things for granted, not to be taken in by surface appearances, by what seems to be real. The sponge takes on a threatening looming quality as we perceive the mystery of 'sponge', which might contain numerous other realities concealed within it.

This aside into Magritte seems to me to contain a lot of information about the way Artaud works with language. Apart from the inadequacy of language, which seeks to label and reduce things, thus detracting from their essential mystery, words can also work as a means of suggestion, by triggering off a series of associated ideas. This kind of suggestiveness is typical of surrealism; it is the way dreams work and, if we let our minds roam free, without the trammels of logic and rational thought, it is the way we can liberate our own selves too into the realm of dreams and into the shared world of mystery and allusion common to all humanity.

Practical Work.

1. Sit the whole group in a circle. Their instructions are to blank their minds as far as possible and to respond instantly only to the word they hear coming to them from their immediate neighbour. It is very important that they do not try to be 'clever' about this or to plan a response in advance. When they hear the word that the person before them says, and only then, they should say the first word that comes into their head.

I have played this a number of ways and I find it works best if each one allows the word they hear to settle in the mind for a few seconds before responding. This is so as to, as it were, dwell on the word and allow it to fill the mind so that the word they come out with is a genuine association sparked off by that word. If the response is too quick there is a danger that they are not responding to the word they have just heard but to whatever was going on in their minds just before that.

Keep the starter word as broad as possible. Colours are good and emotions. Here are some suggestions:

black	woman	notice	pity
life	death	red	green

2. Hand out a blank sheet of paper to each member of the group and a pencil. Now have them sitting in their own space in the room with as few distractions as possible. It helps if the room is darkened and as silent as possible. First start them off in a relaxation exercise. Ask them to lie on the ground and imagine rolls of black velvet unfurling before their eyes. The whole view is filled with deep black velvet ceaselessly unrolling. When they are relaxed and floating in their minds ask them to hold the pencil end to the paper and see what happens. They are not to force anything into their heads. The mind must be in a kind of 'free-fall'. If possible allow words to flow out without conscious thought. Or it may be that a picture emerges.

Stress it is important that they stop writing or drawing the moment they become conscious of what they are doing, because in the latter case the mind will manipulate the movements of the pencil into some recognisable shape or pattern. At the end of the exercise, or the end of their concentration span, bring the lights up and compare notes. What are the findings? Did anyone experience any genuine 'automatic' writing or drawing? The Surrealists used to meet together and experiment in this way often, believing that the mind floating in this way disclosed connections and perceptions only held in the subconscious and only normally revealed in dreams.

3. A simple game introduces the idea of words being used to describe other than what they are. In this game the word used is 'coffee-pot.' The word 'coffee-pot' is used instead of a verb chosen by one group, while others must ask questions and finally guess what verb was originally in the group's mind.

First divide the class into small groups. Each group thinks of a verb. Group A starts while others ask questions. Perhaps the verb group A has thought of is 'eat.' A conversation might ensue like this then:

Q: Can you all coffee-pot?

A: Yes, not only can we coffee-pot but we also enjoy it.

The questions continue until the word concealed by 'coffee-pot' is revealed.

4. For the next exercise, the students need to be in pairs. Standing a little apart from each other, they may now abuse each other verbally, but they are not allowed to use a single derogatory word, certainly no swear word, but not even a word like 'silly'. Using any other words at all, they use the voice tones of invective, of ridicule. So a slanging match might go like this:

A: You doorstep you! You plank of wood!

B: Oh, a plank of wood am I? Well, you're not even that, you're a splinter!

A: Lightbulb!

B: Cushion!

and so on

Hear some of these, they can be very amusing. It is also strangely liberating being allowed to shout and hurl insults without actually upsetting anyone with emotively charged swear-words!

5. Still in pairs, use sounds only and build up an argument from the first signs of disagreement, through a full-blown row to apologising and making up. Use as full a range of sounds as possible, for instance derision can come through in tongue clicks, rolled 'rrrrrr's, whistling breaths, snorts and a number of other ways. All this will be accompanied by intensified body language and gestures that are clear and sharp. Once they have done this, ask them to choose a word between them, any word, to use as part of this 'symphony' of sounds. Now repeat the exercise with the word being used as well.

The word will have the effect either of simply being another sound, one amongst many, showing the reduced status of verbal language in this style of theatre, or it will trigger off a string of associations, if the word is well-chosen.

6. Still in pairs use a single word, accompanied by sounds and body language, to express:

comfort
greed
hope
forgiveness

Try the above two ways:

- i. with both partners working together to express the same idea
- ii. with one partner working against the other, but using the same word.

For instance, taking 'hope' as an example, Partner A may be excited and optimistic in tone while Partner B puts him down and deflates him at every turn. By both using the same word, the logical meaning of the word is further reduced and the word becomes simply a combination of sounds. If the actual stimulus word is used, e.g. 'hope', then even more resonances are added to the final exercise.

Further work based on the suggestiveness of ideas through allusion and resonance is taken in the next section on finding a concrete language of symbols. It is in this field that Artaud's early years with the Surrealists bore most fruit.

First, to explore another way Artaud used language. Here, words are laden with emotional subtext and enhanced thereby. Once again, the meaning of the word would be clear to anyone all over the world, not because the word itself means something to anyone in any culture, but because, charged with intonation and accompanied by expressive gesture it would be hard to miss its meaning.

Words are interpreted and physicalised.

7. The group should stand in a circle. In turn, each should take a word of their choice expressing the sense of that word both physically and through vocal inflexion. For example, the word 'heavy' could be expressed by lowering the body to the floor showing strain in every muscle, whilst at the same time saying the word in a deep ponderous way. Or 'cold' could be expressed by hugging the body and shivering all over, whilst stammering the 'c-c-c-c-co-o-ld' as if shivering.

Whatever language you spoke, or your audience spoke, these words would communicate their sense in this way.

8. Have the group milling around the room in a random fashion. As they come across others they should greet them, not with actual words, but with polite sounds of pleasure. Instruct the group that they like everyone in the room. Very much. In fact, gradually, the liking starts to turn more intense until it reaches love and finally adoration. All the while it is sound that accompanies their actions and expresses the increasing intensity of their feelings. At the peak of 'adoration', their feelings change to hatred and end with keeping as far away as possible from everyone else in the group.

Repeat the exercise using the word 'Hello' along with the sounds.

8. Now with the group working in pairs, take the following words and express them physically and by using the sound of the word to enhance the meaning:

**message
insanity
order
formality
captivity
meticulous
blossoming
distance
partnership**

Some of these words, of course, have more than one meaning. Hopefully, the brighter ones will see that and bring the added richness of layers of meaning into their interpretations.

Already it should be seen that words used in this way are less confined and work as much by suggestion as they do by too precise - and therefore limiting - an interpretation.

9. Using words that are the names of weapons or that are to do with fighting, create a fight sequence in pairs or small groups in which

words, sounds and movements work together to form an impression of violence and brutality.

10. Follow this by a final exercise in larger groups in which places are suggested by using words, sounds and action which will build up a physical impression of that place as well as an emotional reaction to it.

For instance, you could decide to set a scene in a hospital operating theatre, showing how cold and impersonal such a place might be. The vehicle by which the audience will monitor what is happening emotionally could be a 'breathing machine' which registers the distress of the patient and, through the infectiousness of the rhythms it builds up, will lead the audience response. The words in the scene are not used in their normal conversational way but may be used as ways of identifying the location, e.g. using the word 'cut' to focus on the surgeon's actions. Or they could be used as part of the emotional content of the scene, along with sounds, for example, using the word 'distress' in rhythm with the ragged breathing of the 'machine', as we follow the patient's reaction to what is happening to him.

Good starting points are:

- the political hustings
- candidates waiting for an interview or audition
- the schoolroom
- evacuees on the train platform
- a prison
- trapped in a room whose ceiling and walls are slowly closing in

Like an earlier exercise, in 'From Rhythm to Ritual', when the students had to create a machine out of an emotion, for this to work as a final piece for this section, suitable for showing to the rest of the group or for feedback from an audience, the work will need organising, even choreographing, to gain effect. Find ways of using members of the group sometimes as a chorus, to set a scene or to enhance an emotion, sometimes focusing on the plight or the feelings of an individual.

By the end of this section, the students are well on the way to discovering the meaning of 'concrete language' for themselves. In fact, 'concrete language' merely means language made physical. But the kind of physicalising we have been exploring in this section is only part of the way there.

So far, what we have explored is how to make words physical by accompanying them with body language or gesture, which, along with sound, interpret the real meaning of the word. Artaud's 'concrete language' really means language turned into visual symbol, and it is this that we will explore in the next section.

FINDING A CONCRETE LANGUAGE OF SYMBOLS

Images or symbols have the power to evoke an emotional response which is often not logical. The intellect tends not to rationalise 'I am feeling this and this because of the powerful suggestiveness of the image I have read or seen'; it just feels. As in the word association game played in the last section, imagery sets up a chain reaction of emotional responses in each of us that is both individual and universal. That is why it is so potent in poetry. For example, the word 'night' sets up a chain reaction of responses which are shared in most areas of the world: darkness, death, fear, destruction, evil, etc.

Test out the connotations for your students with the following series of words.

horizon
tree
water
sap
sea
flower
cloud

Each of these, if they are prodded a little, should evoke responses which are not literal. For instance, I would expect 'horizon' to stimulate ideas of goals, aims, adventure, etc. 'Tree' might provoke Christian responses as well as ideas of strength.

How much more powerful does this all become when it is visual, not tied just to a word or words in a particular context. The poet works often by appealing to the visual inner eye of the listener or reader but Artaud proposes bringing that rich world of allusion to the visual art form of the theatre. And this proposal is enormous in its repercussions; the effect on the audience of visual imagery is extraordinary, providing it is accompanied by all the other areas of Total Theatre: light, sound, colour, etc, to help block out the impulse to question. Visuals work intensely on the brain and are far more memorable than anything heard. Test this out by asking, after the class have seen any show, what they remember about the show. It will nearly always be something visual; very rarely a memorable line or speech. Couple, then, the power of visuals with the ability the brain has to spiral off into its own series of allusions, sparked off by a particular image, and you have an extraordinary ability to influence and affect the audience, as it were subliminally - that is, bypassing the intellect which would seek to explain and thus reduce the effect of what it has seen.

I remember the billowing black cloth that engulfed the stage and swallowed the actors, as an image of the Holocaust, in Théâtre de Complicité's 'The Street of Crocodiles'; I will never forget it. Nor shall I ever forget Peter Schumann's huge sorrowing female puppet figure as the symbol of Vietnam, when I caught his 'Bread and Puppet Theatre' at the end of the 1960s. Images stick.

Practical Work

1. After an initial discussion about symbols and their connotations, as suggested above, divide the students into smallish groups, 4 or 5, and ask them to come up with visual symbols for the following stimuli. From the beginning encourage the use of sound where appropriate.

anger; sympathy; frustration; despair; boredom;
deceit; defensiveness; rejection; loneliness

It might be a good idea to brainstorm a few first. Encourage the use of the word 'like' Boredom is 'like' a clock ticking very slowly a droning fly underlined by the droning voice of a teacher leaves drooping in heat etc.

2. Now take this a little further. A symbol for non-conformity might be a group of people marching, or doing a strict routine of movements in a robotic repetitive manner, with one person beginning to dance slowly and dreamily.

Adding sounds to this, extend the idea. What happens next? How do the conformers react to the non-conformist?

Using wherever possible the whole of their small group, find more extended symbols to show:

- the sudden flaring up of a street-fight
- a group of friends trying to calm the anger of one of their number
- idealised romantic love punctured by reality
- captivity followed by liberation
- the protectiveness of mother love
- courtship of an innocent by a practised seducer
- someone suspecting their friends of treachery

Symbols can be mixed. For instance, an argument could involve the slinky moves and hisses of big cats at one time, the snarling and howling of a dog-fight at another, the fizzing and explosiveness of a match igniting at another. The idea is to hit the audience hard and fast with a whirligig of impressions, not all of which will resonate for every person but enough will.

Discuss what other additions might have helped too - sounds, lights, visual images back-projected on the cyclorama, props, costumes, colour washes, or anything else. It is time to start feeding them towards the idea of Total Theatre.

3. Try now expressing a whole simple story-line in a symbolic way. The idea used in the First Lessons section could be re-explored. It might be useful to compare the results of the work then with the present, now that so much more has been learned. Or, one of the following ideas might work:

Boy meets girl. They fall in love. Angry parents try to keep the two apart. The two find a way of escaping and run off together.

A young girl is seduced by an older man who then deserts her, leaving her pregnant. Her brothers vow revenge. They track down the man and murder him. Meanwhile the girl has her baby. The brothers want to take the baby from her but she fiercely protects it.

Bored by the humdrumness of his life, a young man rebels, overthrowing all the chains of work, family and society.

Before beginning, the students need to talk through how to prepare a storyline in an Artaudian way. The story cannot be approached in a logical, naturalistic manner, with single characters allocated to individual members of the group. Certainly two people have to be, for instance, the young lovers but the rest of the group will be taking an active part throughout, expressing symbolically the emotional states of mind of one or other of the lovers, as well as taking on parts of the storyline as other characters where necessary, even becoming physical things such as doors slamming, bubbles bursting.

Remind them too of the arsenal of other tools they have already learned about for making a physical piece effective: breathing, rhythm, sound, repetition, chanting, music, ritual, masks, words used as sounds, concrete language.

- a] Break down the story into small sections.
- b] Brainstorm each section looking for startling and individual ways of expressing something symbolically. Make each symbol as complete as possible, i.e. if the use of a large black cloth would enhance a particular image, then try as far as possible to provide that. It is important that the students feel free to use the whole range of potential theatrical effectiveness and if it cannot be done in your particular space, then they should at least be aware of what they want and how it could be achieved in more ideal circumstances.
- c] Choreograph each section to maximise the use of the whole group as they move from image to image, from impression to impression. Check that physical expression is large enough.
- d] Add whatever can be added in your particular circumstances

- to enhance the action and the moods: amplified sound, light or whatever, bearing in mind that the group themselves can probably do a lot of at least the sound live.
- e] Aim for a finished piece of around ten minutes. Make it as powerful as possible and finish by trying it out on an audience, in a lunchtime perhaps.

The insistence throughout this study programme on performance and trying ideas out on an audience is for a number of reasons. Firstly, Artaud himself is concerned with trying to affect an audience in a very profound way. He tenders many experimental ideas as to how this effect can best be achieved, some of which we have explored already but many are to come in the next few sections. Mainly, though, some of his ideas are so extraordinary that it takes a particular type of courage to carry them through. This attitude of daring, of risk-taking, must be built in to the students from as early as possible. It is inherent, I believe, anyway, in any form of theatre - actors put themselves on the line by the very nature of live theatre, which can fail for any number of reasons and is for ever changing, subtly, from performance to performance [something which frustrated practitioners like Craig intensely - he wanted to pin theatre down to exactitude and consistency, refusing to accept the volatile changeability of actors and of audiences]. On top of the natural fluctuation of atmosphere between actor and audience, Artaud imposes another risk: the risk of the extraordinary and the extreme. So as not to cripple your students with fear, they must become used to performing throughout the course, even if it is just little snippets to other groups of their peers. They must understand that sometimes things will not work, but instead of feeling foolish, they should use the whole experience as an ideal opportunity for discovering why things work or do not, and for pushing themselves into braver and braver experiments.

HUMOUR

Danger and risk-taking in theatre does not just cover the area of serious subjects but also the realms of humour. We have forgotten how to laugh, says Artaud and the anarchical power of laughter to heal and cleanse us. It is sometimes forgotten in studies of Artaud that extreme forms of comedy - the Marx Brothers, Charlie Chaplin and their ilk, caught his admiration. The ridiculous has the power to move people out of themselves as strongly as the mystical. What Western Theatre offers us instead, he felt, is watered-down laughter just as it offers a watered-down version of the serious aspects of life. We rarely experience the rich, belly-shaking joy through laughter that the ancients encouraged in their comic festivals, held in honour of the more basic aspects of Dionysus, God of fertility, whose symbol is the grape. The downside of glorification of the grape is drunkenness and the lower form of the celebration of the renewal and continuance of life is crude sexuality. Artaud was as keen to bring us back to these primitive roots, in their way just as powerful as the mystical grandeur of the tragedies.

Bearing in mind all that has been studied so far, about symbolic concrete language, about the use of language for its sound value, about extreme physicalisation, explore the following situations for their comic value.

It is beneficial to start with the realm of silent comedy, since Artaud himself enjoyed the ridiculous humour of silent comics.

Practical Work.

1. Divide the class into pairs. Explore, without words, the comic potential of one or two of the following ideas:

A is in a bad mood. B tries to cheer A up by all sorts of ridiculous faces and postures. Nothing works. Perplexed, B is about to give up when something happens - he trips, he is knocked flying by something hurtling from the wings, etc. A rolls around laughing. B is left. He is in a bad mood.

A is sitting in a restaurant. He is a posh person, eating in a very exaggeratedly polite fashion. B comes in and 'asks' if A minds him sharing his table. B then proceeds to eat A's food, bit by bit, complementing A all the time, in mime, on the quality of the food.

A is walking his dog. The dog uses B's garden to 'do his business.' B comes out to complain. A remains friendly and reasonable, whatever B says, but does not clear up his dog's mess. B gets more and more apoplectic.

A and B have bumped into each other in their cars. Each thinks it is the other's fault. With completely dead-pan faces, each in turn does something to insult the other, e.g. flicking his tie, stamping on his foot, tripping him up. The 'insults' must escalate. The faces remain dead-pan throughout.

A and B are both waiting outside the cinema for the same young lady. They don't yet know that. Both have gifts for her. She has not arrived. They compare gifts. It becomes obvious they are waiting for the same person. Each tries to show the other that he is the better

person by putting the other one down. Eventually it becomes obvious that she has stood them both up.

If possible, show them a silent movie, Buster Keaton or Charlie Chaplin, before doing any of this work. It will give them many ideas.

It is not surprising that this kind of humour appealed to Artaud. It is all of a piece with his other beliefs. Like the Balinese Theatre, it too crosses boundaries. One does not need to share the same language to understand these situations and their facial expressions and body language have to be large and clear to communicate. Even the absurdity of many of the actions and the way situations escalate from the normal into the surreal is consistent with Artaud's concerns.

2. Try to explore broader ideas now for their comic potential, using larger group movement.

Using exaggerated facial expressions and closely choreographed repeated movements explore the comic movement and sound potential of:

a crowd of people in a panic [as a flock of chickens harried by a fox?]

a group of young men eyeing up the passing 'talent'

neighbours passing on a juicy piece of gossip

a group of courtiers flattering a ruler to his face and working for his downfall behind his back

a group of students pretending to listen to a profoundly boring lecturer

Don't forget that at all times this kind of comedy works best through escalation, that is, start simple and obvious, even realistic, and move into exaggeration and beyond, into the ridiculous or the surreal.

3. As a final foray into the realms of humour, try one of the following as a more extended group piece for performance, at least to the rest of the group:

Either take a typical comic strip idea - a love story or a tale of heroism - and expose its clichéd ideas through humour, using both group and pair movements as explored above.

Or add in humorous moments to one of your earlier pieces, e.g. the meeting of the lovers could have a background of sighing, fluttering 'chorus' members and an exaggeratedly beating heart rhythm.

Naturally, there is far more that could be done, as in every section, but this should be enough to show the students that an Artaudian piece does not have to be all grandeur and passion; humour often works as an effective counterpoint, exposing the darker moments by contrast.

THE AUDIENCE 1] : THEATRE AS LIFE

When Artaud talked about abandoning the old masterpieces of literature as irrelevant to our time, he proposed a theatre based on mythology, because the ancient myths, so similar all over the world, are part of the collective unconscious that binds all humanity together. He did not, however, propose that we should resurrect the old myths, because they too are part of the past ; instead he felt that new myths should emerge from the collective unconscious of modern man, myths that would make sense to the restless inner spirit of early twentieth century humanity.

In the Second Manifesto of The Theatre of Cruelty he writes: "The Theatre of Cruelty will choose themes and subjects corresponding to the agitation and unrest of our times," and goes on to talk about "contemporary myths" built out of "major considerations and fundamental emotions" which "will appeal to the whole man, not social man submissive to the law, warped by religions and precepts." These myths will use the inner life of man, his hopes, dreams, nightmares, all his secret inner life and unite these with the daily life of the outer man to make him whole. The act of being made whole will be a purging and a healing. Theatre, Artaud truly believed, had the power to unite these elements, to stir the subconscious and awake it, uniting it with the conscious. In an earlier publication of 'The Theatre and its Double' than the one currently on sale, he writes in a Letter to a Friend: "The theatre must make itself the equal of lifethe true purpose of the theatre is to create Myths, to express life in its immense, universal aspect, and from that life to extract images in which we find pleasure in discovering ourselves." Thus we get the idea that theatre as he sees it is a participatory event. Even when merely observing, the audience must be involved in some way.

From this idea come two main strands explored by the followers of Artaud. From one strand comes the idea of the Happening or Event in which the audience definitely takes part in the action. This action will often be something that is normally 'taboo', such as the smashing up of pianos, one of the Happenings of the Sixties, where passers-by joined in this activity, at first tentatively and then more enthusiastically. I gather it was for some, once the guilt had been broken through, a very liberating experience. Just the fact of being 'allowed' to do something one could not normally do breaks inner boundaries and liberates part of the unconscious self. Ultimately, this kind of liberating activity, challenging social taboos, leads logically on to psycho-therapy, where the therapist 'allows' the subject to explore a taboo he has imposed on himself, such as not expressing the anger he feels for his father. By role-playing this anger and letting it out at a representative of his father, he purges himself of this inner repression and is made whole.

Happenings became very popular in the Fifties and Sixties and ranged from simple releasing actions like the one I have described above to quite complex scenarios with the audience as journeyers on a kind of magical mystery tour, participating in a variety of ways on route. An example of the latter kind is one of many designed by the French artist Jean-Jacques Lebel. This one was called 'Funeral Ceremony of the Anti-Process'. In this, Lebel invited 150 people to a Venetian palace for a cocktail party. They were told to wear formal clothes and to bring white flowers. On arrival they were shown into a hall where a man 'killed' a

body that already lay in a coffin. A choir sang in Latin throughout. Then, accompanied by terrible screams and howls, Lebel read from the writings of the Marquis de Sade. A man masturbated behind a curtain and a poem of praise to the 'dead man' was recited. Finally the body was carried into the street, put onto a gondola and ended by being thrown into the water to the singing of hymns. The spectators followed the whole thing in other boats laid on for the purpose. In fact, the body was a sculpture designed by another artist, but that is not the point. The point is that the spectators believed it was real; they were disorientated and shocked. Lebel's expressed intention in all his work, many of which involved sexual acts and nudity, was to shock the bourgeoisie out of their politically and socially repressed lives into what he called the "Collective Dream", where myth and hallucination rubbed shoulders with reality, releasing inhibitions and repressions.

Whatever one feels about these things, it is clear that Artaud and Surrealism is very much the source of such activity and who is to say that participating in unsettling events where one is never quite sure what is going to happen next does not release the unconscious, the 'dreamer within' and create a kind of purging effect?

Clearly, you cannot in an educational context allow your students to go too far with this, but it would be useful to them to try out some simple Happening style activities, monitoring closely the audience reaction. All in the spirit of research, of course!

Practical Work.

1. Start by planning some simple type of Happening that can occur, without threat to anyone, in a public place. Here are some suggestions. Make sure that the public affected have everything explained to them at the end.

Devise a simple little scenario such as having a boy student harassing a girl student somewhere public like on the tube or in the street. Nothing too dreadful, perhaps just being too persistent, asking her again and again to go out with him. She refuses and starts to become annoyed when he will not take 'no' for an answer. Finally she appeals to someone nearby. Observe people's reactions.

Another effective one is to ask for directions to somewhere quite difficult, eyes going glazed, or acting dumb, so that the poor 'victim' has to keep repeating his instructions.

Another is to have some students make a 'citizen's' arrest of one of their number, appealing to members of the public for co-operation or saying, 'You must have seen something..' etc.

In these, the public are unconscious audience. They believe they are participating in a real event. Nonetheless, they are drawn in. It is important to observe and comment on their reactions when they think it is real and compare that to their reactions after it is explained that it was all an act.

2. Now try something where the audience have made a conscious decision to overthrow some taboo and participate. Once again, keep

these ideas simple and non-threatening but at the same time liberating in some way. Some suggestions are:

Take a huge container of jelly to a park and dabble around in it squidging it between the toes etc. Encourage others to join in.

Take a number of helium balloons, some gift tags and pens to a crowded pedestrian precinct or square. Recite, in a choric way, a piece of moving verse, or read out a newspaper report of something that has happened recently or sing a stirring protest song or a hymn. When a number of people have stopped and are watching, tell them they can take a tag and write their own message on it, of hope perhaps, or protest, attaching it to a balloon of their choice. Then when all have done this, devise a simple ceremony, at the end of which all those who are now participating release their balloons.

Take a number of 'instruments' with which to make noise to a public place such as a park or precinct and, having cleared it with the authorities first, encourage people to make as much racket as they like for a brief period. When they are happily participating, blow a whistle loudly and have some figure acting as authority tick the participants off but then suddenly give in and say, "Oh, all right, then, just one more time...." This one might be best done in the school itself, perhaps, in a lunch or breaktime - still with permission, of course.

The above are still in the form of 'real life' participation, but the participation is now conscious and should involve some release - of strictness, of convention, or simply of what is 'normal' behaviour.

3. Finish these experiments with a longer closely planned Happening involving a mix of involuntary participation and 'taking the plunge.' If ideas are slow in coming - though I would hope that the students would come up with something themselves - here are a couple of suggestions that work:

a) Prepare a treasure hunt, using written clues, perhaps set in riddles, that send participants from one area of a room or building to another. Invite a small number of people to participate in this event. They should not be close friends of the students; it is better if they are a different year. It is necessary that the students remain firm and strict at all times. Blindfold your participants to start with and keep them apart from each other and in silence. Allow one at a time to go into the treasure hunt area and remove his blindfold. Talking only in whispers to him, tell him he has only five minutes to solve all the clues and find the treasure. If he fails allow this to hang threateningly in the air. Those who fail [and they all do] are herded into a small darkened room and left there with strict instructions that they should not talk. They will. Turn bright lights on them all at once. And instruct them to clap. Anyone stopping clapping will be punished Then the students should turn their backs on the participants. The clapping will continue for a little but first one, then more, will stop and

when nothing is said or done all will stop. Students leave a silence before turning round with a huge smile, moving from participant to participant to congratulate them.

Afterwards make sure the students ask the guinea-pigs what they felt about the whole experience.

b] Make a large model or effigy of a human being. Invite a number of participants who must not know what to expect. Start the ball rolling by students treating the effigy as if it were a real person. One may accuse the figure of letting him down over something; another may hurl abuse at it; another fall down in front of it, crying. Then encourage the audience to talk to the effigy. Say invitingly: here is your chance to let off steam. Got an unfair mark for your test? Didn't get picked for the team? Wasn't allowed to go out this weekend? Allow each member of the audience to have a go; some will join in but others won't. Don't push it; it's a free choice. End with a chant from the cast around the effigy. During the chant, gradually separate until each actor has a member of the audience in tow, then reform into a large circle including all participants too. One of the actors ends by leading a chant line by line [i.e. he sings a line and everyone echoes him] or by clapping rhythms, once again leader followed by everyone else. Add sounds up to a climax. Then take it gradually down to quietness and a long drawn-out expelled breath.

Once again, make sure to ask the audience what they felt about the experience.

Though Happenings are not specifically mentioned by Artaud, they do address many of his ideas and so I include them here as a legitimate way of exploring some of his theories. In this work, the audience are active participants in one way or other, often not realising that what they are observing and reacting with is 'an act,' not real. Though we are confined by the age of the students we are working with and by the status of ourselves as teachers, in a small way we have challenged the normal boundaries, surprised the audience into reactions that may be unexpected even to themselves. This kind of jolt may for a while have awakened their 'doubles', that is their inner selves and they may feel excited, cleansed, different at least, if not 'whole.'

What about the idea of finding 'contemporary Myths?' What figures and archetypes would make sense collectively for modern man? Some things do not change. War, man's violence towards man, oppression of various kinds, these things still exist. So, as Peter Schumann came up with the giant suffering figure of Vietnam herself, perhaps a similar figure of suffering Africa ravaged by the Aids virus, or Thailand offering itself up to sexual exploitation by the West, would be appropriate. Maybe there should be images that show our increasing reliance on technology, that expose our loss of self in a terrifyingly fast-paced world. Finish the work on this section by some discussion of potential modern myths and how to make them recognisable and universal without the need for explanatory language.

THE AUDIENCE 2]: TOWARDS TOTAL THEATRE

The audience cannot always be active participants as with the ideas in the last section. But Artaud is adamant that the theatre process happening on stage should equally be stirring the audience. Whatever happens, the theatre event must carry the audience with it even if they remain physically sitting in their seats. Artaud proposes a number of ways of tackling this problem.

The first is to change the conventional idea of theatrical space. He proposed a large hangar-like space in which, with the audience in the middle, actors and effects could bombard the audience from above and from all sides. Actors would move along catwalks over the heads of the audience and the whole space would be part of the theatrical event. This idea goes a long way towards involving an audience; it grabs their attention and keeps them startled.

In fact, disorienting an audience seems crucial to the success of awakening the double. His preconceptions have to be unsettled and overthrown. Not knowing where sound or action is going to occur next unsettles him further. Battered on all sides by sound, light, colour, violent action there is no chance for the reasoning brain to kick in. Stunned, the audience reacts emotionally. Stirred by a welter of images which prod his unconscious into action, his double - psyche, sub-conscious, dream-self, or whatever else you want to call it - awakes and unites with his conscious self in a healing union. That, at least, is the theory.

Hence the need for Total Theatre, which is the use of all design, sound and acting elements together to create this stunning effect. Hence, too, the constant reference to the final show as a magical event, with the director as conjuror or shaman. In primitive tribes the shaman will weave a spell through rhythm, ritual movement and incantation to convince his audience of the reality of the illusions he offers. And because he has appealed directly to their inner selves, their 'doubles', his healing or solution to a problem will often work. They are convinced right down to their core that they will, for instance, kill their enemy, marry the one they desire, banish the bad spirits from their home. The only doubt is whether the civilised, cynical Western mind is as reachable as this. Artaud believed so.

Once again, when talking about Total Theatre, Artaud avers that the barrier between the theatrical event and life must be broken down. In the Second Manifesto of The Theatre of Cruelty he states: "...just as there are to be no empty spatial areas, there must be no let up, no vacuum in the audience's mind or sensitivity. That is to say there will be no distinct divisions, no gap between life and theatre." This is clearly a different idea than the participations put forward in the last section. He seems to be saying that once the audience has been battered into bewildered submission, so that their doubles are woken, the audience become spiritually a part of the atmosphere, the total theatrical event. They are living the event, identifying with the show "breath by breath and beat by beat." And they can do this without becoming actors themselves, just by staying in their, albeit unconventionally placed, seats.

There are few ways of exploring Total Theatre without putting on a final show, which if you have time would of course be ideal, but there are a few elements of the whole that can be explored in a practical way and certainly experiments with handling audiences can be achieved.

Practical Work:

1. For the first exercise the teacher will need to make available a variety of things with which to make sounds, as well as technical equipment such as at least a tape recorder and a microphone, e.g. a variety of musical instruments, bits of piping to blow into or clang, items of different materials - metal, wood, cloth, china.

The group are to explore the different qualities of sound that can be made with the materials they are given. Encourage their invention. For instance, wonderful sounds can be made with pieces of hose and other hollow items in a bucket of water. The rustling of different textures of cloth into a microphone is another example. Finish with each person in turn presenting their favourite sound and stating for what they would use it ., e.g. the bubbling of pipes in water might be used for a witch's cauldron.

2. Experiment with sound. Try mixing loud amplified sounds coming from different areas of the room and live sound to create the following atmospheres:

fear

hatred

tension - waiting for something ominous to appear

soldiers coming to arrest someone

a haunted house

a battle

the entrance of a god or a hero

Remember, the sound must come from all sides and it must be overwhelming.

3. Experiment with light. It may not be possible for you to allow a group to 'play' with a lighting board, but at least it would be helpful to have enough strong coloured gels pre-set in for them to discuss the atmospheric changes made by the different colours in as much intensity as can be managed. Borrowing a strobe from the physics department might be helpful too.

What might being bathed in red or blue or green light make an audience feel? How does it feel to have sudden bright spotlights thrown on straight into the face? What does it do to one to be plunged into sudden darkness and left there? How does it feel to be the focus of strobe lighting? [Make sure you explain the dangers of the latter and don't leave it on for more than a few seconds.]

4. Divide the class up into largeish groups. If you have only a small number in your class, they will clearly have to do this work by using perhaps your Year 12 group as guinea -pigs. Each group is to come up with first a general subject-matter or theme, like rape, the Holocaust, war, and so on. Then they must find a way of bringing an

audience into the space and seating them so as to disorient them or involve them from the start. Finally they present the first two minutes of a show on that theme.

For instance, taking the theme of rape, the audience could be brought into a dark theatre and sat with chairs well apart in a circle. It is pitch black. This is already disorientating. In the silence, the audience start to hear the quick fearful breathing of a girl. Then the sounds of a chase and scuffling, the ripping of cloth, the harsh guttural breathing of the males and the cries of the girl. The sounds end in just the lonely sobbing of the victim, who drags herself round from chair to chair, clutching the legs and laps of the audience members as if pulling herself along in her distress. The audience are guaranteed to feel uncomfortable and their emotions will already be heightened, intellects on hold.

Challenge the group to come up with novel ways of using the space they have and different ways of breaking the boundaries between actors and audience.

Obviously, from the time point of view, it is impossible to come up with a finished piece of Total Theatre using giant masks, actors built up to inhuman height, surreal props and effects, but they should be cottoning onto the general idea by now!

They should also be beginning to realise what an extraordinary job the director must have to put together such a show. No wonder Artaud called him a conjuror; he must also be a choreographer. Every move and feature of the show would have to be worked out and finely tuned for effect. "The show will be coded from start to finish like a language," [Theatre and Cruelty] by a "kind of single Creator using and handling this language, responsible both for the play and the action." [The Theatre of Cruelty, First Manifesto.]

The next section, which contains some explorations of texts, will give more of an idea of what it means to perform in and direct a show of this kind. Though it will deal with the actors mainly, it must never be forgotten that the actors are only one of the many features of Total Theatre.

PART TWO.

APPROACHES TO TEXT.

Helpfully, Artaud gave us a list of texts that he would consider ideal for his purposes and style. He begins the list with the promise, "Disregarding the text ...". The list includes Shakespeare and other dramatists of that period. Already, elsewhere, Artaud has shown his admiration for Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore' and here he mentions 'Arden of Faversham'. What appeals to him about these plays is that they mirror "our present, confused state of mind." They also have a universality of theme if not of treatment, in the case of Shakespeare particularly, which would be appealing to Artaud. The tragedies especially present huge characters in extremis on a canvas that covers a wide range of extreme human emotion. Still, Artaud says he would ignore the words of the originals and adapt them in his own way. The only clue as to how he would adapt them comes later in the list where he says "Elizabethan theatre works stripped of the lines, retaining only their period machinery, situations, character and plot."

Only one text is proposed by him unchanged and that is Georg Büchner's 'Woyzeck' which he would put on "as an example of what can be drawn from an exact text in terms of the stage." We will look at a couple of scenes from 'Woyzeck' later, which in any case is so underwritten linguistically, so full of suggestive blankness to be filled visually, that its appeal to Artaud, given too its theme and violent storyline, is immediately obvious.

We have already done some exploration of the first approach to a text that Artaud suggests, that of stripping a play down to situation, character and plot. Reduced to the bare bones, the story line must be explored for its mythic appeal. For instance, using the example of 'Romeo and Juliet', the tale of two 'star-crossed' lovers has already become archetypal, as real today as it ever was; witness, for example, 'West Side Story.' The play can be transposed to any modern context where two opposing factions war against one another: Catholic and Protestant, black and white, Jew and Palestinian. Plot and situation easily take on mythic proportions. And by physically building up the height of the actors, by slowing down and extending their movements, by creating typical and moving symbolic poses, shapes, gestures, facial expressions, by emphasising moments of action with ritualistic sounds, repetitive patterns of music, by adding the textures of all the Total Theatre paraphernalia that we have been exploring, such a play can easily be transposed into something else, monumental and larger than life. For it has to become larger than life to attain the mythical quality it needs, even though that quality is also resonant of life itself, through shared recognition of emotional truths.

Practical Work.

1. Remind the students of the earlier work they did on a Shakespeare text in the first lessons. Then remind them of the more recent discussion about searching for modern symbols, creating modern mythical figures.

Can they suggest:

a] the look of at least one of the characters in their chosen play. Costume? Colour? Height? Mask? If masked what would be the fixed expression on his face? What would be the general character or style of his movement? Slow and languid? Fast and frenetic? Are there any identifying features that ought to be emphasised in some way? [such as Macbeth's ambition, perhaps.]

b] Taking one representative scene, how would the group present the emotional state of their chosen character, bearing in mind all the decisions they have already made about his physical appearance and movement?

This is a theoretical exercise, [though of course they can demonstrate such as the style of movement in a practical way,] so they ought to consider all the armament of Total Theatre to help them expose the emotional force of their scene. They ought to consider, too, as always when dealing with Artaud, the impact on the audience and how to maximise on that. Where should the audience be in relation to the actors?

Before looking at Artaud's one choice of a text to be used inclusive of language, 'Woyzeck', let us look at a couple of examples of plays that were not around in Artaud's time but which are specifically geared to Artaudian concepts of theatre. The best of these are some of Steven Berkoff's work, especially his early writing.

Berkoff himself does not try to hide his debt to Artaud. He refers to him by name in such introductions as for 'The Fall of the House of Usher' and other introductions are full of Artaudian phraseology and allusions.

With reference to his adaptations from Franz Kafka, Berkoff has found in these the perfect modern myths sought by Artaud. In each of these plays from Kafka's stories the imagery is startling and reaches the stature of mythology; with such as the dung beetle in 'Metamorphosis', the maze of doors of 'The Trial' and the huge harrow machine of 'In the Penal Colony,' there is in each piece an example of a symbol that dominates and disturbs the imagination of the audience by its sheer physicalisation on stage.

The following is an extract from towards the end of 'Metamorphosis.'

EXTRACT FROM 'METAMORPHOSIS' by STEVEN BERKOFF

Gregor, a hard-working young man, has slaved every day to keep his father, mother and sister in relative comfort. One day he wakes up having turned into a dung beetle, that hard-working member of the insect world that scuttles around accumulating dung in an ever-increasing ball. At first, the family believe he will recover, but gradually they start to forget, ignore or be embarrassed by his presence in their house, in varying degrees. At this point, just before the end [where we witness the death of Gregor and the liberation of the family from the oppression caused by his brooding presence in their lives] Gregor's father, Mr Samsa, has gone out to work leaving Gregor's mother and sister alone in the house with their metamorphosed brother.

[Image - the listless automatic waving as Father leaves and a strong light revealing the swaying huge body of the Gregor beetle - the anticipation of horror.]

[By this time Gregor has climbed onto the ceiling of his cage and just hangs there. Mother and Greta are waving goodbye to Father. Gregor speaks, rocking in time to the waves. (This speech is a grim foreshadowing of events and the separation of animal from human. The acceptance of his state which now almost gives him pleasure. Hang your legs over the cross bar and cup your toes into the side bars to give your body a braced, arched look.)]

GREGOR

I liked hanging from the ceiling. It was better than the floor - one breathed more freely - and I can swing and rock backwards and forwards - I feel so light, and I can see the hospital across the street - all I can see from the floor is a drab, grey sky - I so much want to see my mother - it's so long since I've seen her - perhaps I'm too hideous ever to see her again.

MRS SAMSA

You think he's well, you say?

GRETA

He seems to be. I don't hear him moan like he did.

MRS SAMSA

But you said he didn't have enough room.

GRETA

No, I don't think he does. I want to shift some furniture so that he can move around more easily.

MRS SAMSA

It's so heavy you'll never manage it alone.

GRETA

Father'll help me.

MRS SAMSA

Your father'll never go in there.

GRETA

Then I'll shift it myself.

MRS SAMSA

Listen, Greta - I'll help you. Please understand how necessary it is for a mother to see her son - no matter what, and perhaps how necessary it is for him to see her - so we'll just shift some of the furniture that hinders him before Father comes back.

GRETA

Are you sure?

MRS SAMSA

Yes, yes - let us go in and be quite matter-of-fact about it.

[Hearing this Gregor drops down.] [Image - the terror and fear as they move like the base of a triangle shortening to its point.]

GRETA

Wait what do you think we should take first?

MRS SAMSA

Oh yes, we must decide now - we mustn't upset him - let's take the chest.

GRETA

That's heavy.

MRS SAMSA

All right, his writing desk.

GREGOR

Leave it!

MRS SAMSA

Oh, Greta - that desk was his ever since primary school - he used to build models on it, and all those hours of homework he's toiled on that desk.

GRETA

When he's better we'll put it back.

MRS SAMSA

What about his bed - he doesn't really need that now.

GREGOR

Yes, I need that to hide under - Leave it!

GRETA

All right, let's go in.

MRS SAMSA

[whispers] Doesn't it look by taking all his furniture that we're giving up all hope of his recovery?

GRETA

No, of course not - he'll think we're trying to help.

MRS SAMSA

Oh, I don't know - wouldn't it be better to leave the room alone - then when he recovers, he'll find it exactly as it was, and he'll forget more easily what happened in between.

GRETA

I don't agree with you, Mother - I always hear him bumping into things ... all right now, let's begin.

[Image - in slow motion as he speaks they are emptying his room in unison while Gregor's fear increases.]

GREGOR

You're turning my room into a naked den for some wild beast to roam in - leave it. If you empty my room I'll forget who I am, I'll lose all recollection of my humanity - *I'll become what I am* - no, no, it mustn't happen ... they'll take my picture frame with the lady in the fur muff - *they mustn't take that!*

[Gregor lets himself come into full view and attacks them, spitting with rage.]

MRS SAMSA

Oh God ... no!

GRETA

Mother ... Mother! *[Holds her up.]* Gregor! *[Shakes fist at him.]*

MR SAMSA

[rushing in.] What's happening?

GRETA

Gregor's broken loose.

MR SAMSA

I expected this to happen.

GRETA

He just rushed at us.

[Image - Gregor escapes - the world caves in - the women are moving as if in a ship hurled by a storm - Mr Samsa comes in - Gregor hides under the table - we know he's under a table but the family can't see him - they peek under the tablecloth. They lift an imaginary table - he hides again, under a stool. The furniture the family shift illustrates Gregor's size. The Family spin around as he appears as if dazzled by his ugliness - eventually the Father mimes an apple from a bowl.]

GRETA

I think he's under the sofa. Don't hurt him.

MR SAMSA

Apple for you, Gregor.

[He hurls it - Gregor frantically claws the floor, not knowing whether to go back or to go forward.]

GRETA

Escape, Gregor - escape!

MR SAMSA

Scaring people to death!

GRETA

Do go forward, Gregor - he'll hit you!

MR SAMSA

[throwing] And another!

MRS SAMSA

Climb, Gregor - climb the walls - you can climb!

MR SAMSA

I'll hit him! It's sunk in! *[Gregor screams, falls on his back, legs waving in the air, unable to find his balance.]* Back! Back! Back! Back! *[Mr Samsa throws a missile with each scream of 'back' - Gregor heaves himself back into his cage.]*

[Mother and Daughter now seize hold of Father - a terrible light illuminates the scene as if the family are lit by strokes of lightning - huge beetle shadows of the group downstage - slide and shudder over the cyclorama. Their faces are torn open in silent screams. A strange music reflects the torment, twisting and jangling.]

MRS SAMSA

[recovered now but horrified she throws herself round Mr Samsa's neck.] No, Father. No! No! No! Stop it for God's sake, you're killing my son.

[Greta and Mrs Samsa prevent him from beating Gregor any more. Mr Samsa takes women and starts spinning them like tops.]

MR SAMSA

It's all right. *[Gregor slowly crawls back to his room, slow fade as we hear him whimpering.]* He's gone back.

GREGOR'S DREAM the family are asleep on their stools, Gregor upstage in his room.

[A strange light filters gradually on to the stage - hardening and elongating features - Gregor's heart is heard beating, the lights adjust to the heartbeats - the movement of the family seems caught in the motion of the beat - the bodies occasionally pulled by its sound - they appear as if under water.]

GREGOR

[screams, drained of any energy.] The apple's still inside me - I can't move any more - I can't climb - it takes me ages to crawl under the bed.

MRS SAMSA

His room's filthy, Greta - he's lying there in heaps of filth and dust.

GRETA

I'm tired - I'm tired of working - trudging out my life in a shop all day.

MRS SAMSA

We mustn't leave him - he'll think we don't care any more.

GREGOR

Take it out of me - I can feel it beginning to rot - it's becoming inflamed - covered with dust.

MRS SAMSA

Oh, Greta, do something.

GRETA

I can't, Mother, I can't do that.

MRS SAMSA

Father, do something.

[Image - Father laughs - the pulse of the heart and light snatches the reason from his voice - the words break. End. Shudder - again automation from Gregor.]

MR SAMSA

He's a dung beetle - he's just a dung beetle.

[Cry is heard- they twist around in their sleep.]

MRS SAMSA

We mustn't hurt him any more - he's still our son.

MR SAMSA

No, not that thing in there, our son's left us.

GREGOR

I'm hungry - oh, I'm so hungry.

MRS SAMSA

Feed him, Greta - you're not feeding him any more.

GRETA

I do feed him - I've always fed him.

[Image - a giant beetle composed of the Family, the arms moving in stiff staccato rhythm, and bodies twist and join together in agonised conflict.]

GREGOR

Yes - any old scraps of food without considering what I like - just throw something in - slam the door and leave me in the darkness again.

GRETA

He would probably have perished without me.

MRS SAMSA

I wish we could move to a smaller house - we could save so much money.

MR SAMSA

How could we move that creature in there without anybody noticing - no, there's nothing we can do. But work - we must work.

[They all continue with the same word, fading out on it.]

GREGOR

[As he speaks, the Family hold their positions like a fresco.] Of course you could move me. You could shift me in a box with air holes - no - you're blaming me for your own helplessness.

Phase Three

MR SAMSA

Work, Gregor. Time to get up.

[Image - the beetle dissolves, the limbs disconnect. Dreamlike, Gregor walks to work, Mr Samsa hangs upside down in the cage, the pace increases, maddens.]

GRETA

Time, Gregor - four a.m. - you must catch the five a.m. train.

MR SAMSA

[Pulls Gregor out of cage.] Pack your samples - come on, Gregor, don't be lazy.

[Gregor now starts walking on the spot.]

MRS SAMSA

He works so hard - he's good to us.

GRETA

You must hurry, Gregor, hurry - I need violin lessons.

MRS SAMSA

Only five years to go, Gregor.

GREGOR

Yes!

MR SAMSA

What will the Chief Clerk say if you're late?

GREGOR

Yes!

MRS SAMSA

Oh, Gregor, hurry! Hurry! Hurry!

[They repeat their phrases faster and faster. Father is in the cage now - whipping him on - Mother and Greta have stood on their stools as if on a grandstand. Gregor moves faster - the heartbeat accelerates - suddenly Gregor's movements become jerky, mechanical. He breaks into a run - but a strange hideous run like a beetle scurrying along with a ball of dung - he now moves as a sprinter, so

fast it seems his heart will burst. He stops, exhausted. Father draws his arm back to the whine of the women and throws his apple. Gregor screams, transfixed - a single spot emphasises his agony - slowly his body transforms itself, trembling jerkily into Samsa/Insect - his arms crossed - fingers bent like hooks - he collapses over a stool - he now appears less human than insect - the Family come downstage and look at him as if witnessing a street accident - they whisper in uninvolved concern. Greta and Father walk to their sleeping positions. Mother above, takes him slowly back to his cage.]

MRS SAMSA

Don't worry Gregor - you're not being forgotten by your old mother - she'll look after you if nobody else does - have it all clean for you to roam around in - don't worry, we won't have a charlady in here - nobody'll have to see you. You'll soon be well, I can feel it - as soon as the weather starts to break and the cold winds go - we'll have a bit of spring in the air and one morning you will wake up and see that it's been a nasty dream.

[Image - Mrs Samsa takes him back to his room - gently reassuring this is Gregor - tired, old.]

[End of Dream Sequence.]

Practical Work

1. Start by physicalising some of the individual movement of the characters. Obviously, without the set, which spans the whole back of the stage with scaffolding suggestive of a cage as well as the giant legs of an insect, the hanging from the bars cannot be achieved. But the contrasts between human and insect can be. The role of Gregor requires really being "cruel to oneself." First of all, establish the stance of the insect. Get down on your knees and rest on your elbows with forearms raised and hands free. Hands can become like feelers then and are crucial to the insect 'feel' of the end result. Try to keep the back as straight as possible and the whole body as compact and square-looking as you can, that is without legs trailing too far behind the outline. Try moving forwards and backwards. Can you make it a scuttle? Now imagine doing a whole performance like this! The actor playing Gregor needs to be very fit with an agile versatile body.

For the demands of the part, just in this section alone, the actor will need padding in the knees and elbows, for protection.

Try, now, the escape from the bedroom where Gregor scuttles and hides under a table, a stool, a sofa. Try flattening down a little, withdrawing the legs into, not away from, the body, hands protectively over the head, fingers waving, forearms framing the face which looks out, frantic eyes swivelling.

In this extract we see the apple hitting Gregor's back twice. The first time is as an insect and concentrates on frantic movements, panic, so is taken at speed. Try flipping over on your back, waving legs in the air. Now try the contrasting moment when, to emphasise the horror, we see the moment again in the dream sequence. This time, Gregor starts as a man, at the front of the stage, walking on the spot. The walk speeds up and becomes more robot-like, jerky, then it becomes a run and he starts to turn into the insect, but without dropping to the ground. Body must hunch over, arms, elbows bent, draw tight in front of the chest, feet move as fast as possible on the spot with tiny steps. Then the apple hits the centre of his back. This needs to be done in extreme slow motion for maximum emphasis.

His body arches outwards and upwards, arms still bent at the elbow, fingers clawing the air and he collapses onto his knees in a semi-upright position over a stool. If you achieve all that successfully, well done!

2. Next turn to the other characters. Each of these needs to be made extreme too. Start by thinking of their main characteristics and it is these features that need exaggerating, as far as you can take them. Thus, Mr Samsa is aggressive, Mrs Samsa sentimental about her son, Greta practical and down-to earth, but disgruntled. Go back to an earlier exercise, near the beginning, and think of either an animal or a physical feature [nose, chin, chest etc.] as a starting point for the character. For instance, you may see Mr Samsa as a lion or a gorilla. A lion would give that slow, menacing shake of the head, a gorilla that aggressive jutting forehead. Or, starting with a part of the body to lead from, the chin or chest might be starting points for aggressive behaviour. Experiment with each character until you are happy with the style of movement and then extend the movements till they are as extreme as you can make them. Try them out on sections of the script

3. Appropriate voices are often suggested by the type of movements you come up with. For instance, Mrs Samsa and her sentimentality should have swaying movements, head often on one side, eyebrows raised, hands clasped in emotional fervour in front of the body and her voice will swoop and sway as well in cooing, sickly-sweet tones.

Find a key-line from the extract on which to start your vocal experiments. Once again, exaggerate the voice tones and come up with an over-emphasised style of speech suitable to the over-emphasised movement.

What should Gregor's voice be like? There needs to be clear differentiation between Gregor's thoughts when he is just speaking to himself and his attempts to communicate with his family, which they don't understand. You may want to use a trick, such as amplifying his 'insect' voice, overlaying the words 'leave it!' and so on with echoes, to show how they are received by his mother and sister.

What ever you do with the voice, remember the lessons of Artaud and concentrate less on the surface meaning than the emotion that lies behind the meaning. If you have studied Stanislavski, what you are really doing is exploring the subtext of a line and then amplifying that to its furthest point. For instance, with Mrs Samsa's line 'We mustn't hurt him any more - he's still our son,' the empty cloyingness of the line should super-emphasise 'still' and 'son', saturated with sentiment. The line, as all lines treated in this way have a tendency to do, will become slower than normal speech.

4. Berkoff uses the word 'Image' at key moments of the text. These are

held moments, frozen moments in time, not necessarily completely static - the first image of the extract contains the slow-motion waving of Mrs Samsa and Greta - but at least extremely slow motion, with all the details of movement and facial expression drawn out for extra focus. Sometimes the image contains a symbolic picture to act as a metaphor for the situation, as worked on in an earlier section. Berkoff, however, does the work for you and gives you the image he wants to create.

Try first of all one of the slow motion images: *'In slow motion as he [Gregor] speaks they are emptying his room in unison while Gregor's fear increases.'*

Now try to translate into 'concrete' [actual] symbolic form this image: *'The world caves in - the women are moving as if in a ship hurled by a storm.'*

And this: *'a giant beetle composed of the family, the arms moving in stiff staccato rhythm, and bodies twist and join together in agonised conflict.'*

5. Notice how sound made by the actors themselves can emphasise points of the action. Try this: *'Father draws his arm back to the whine of the women and throws his apple. Gregor screams transfixed...'* The movement needs to be in the slowest of slow motions and the whine could perhaps start as the tense high-pitched sound such as a mosquito might make and gradually rise in pitch to increase the tension.

6. The extract is full of variations of speed. This should be played with and the right speed for each short section should be found. We have mentioned slow motion a lot, and the 'normal' speed of the scene tends to be a little slower than naturalism would demand, because of the over-emphasis of movement and voice. There are times, though, when the pace needs to increase in frenzy. An obvious moment is the section near the end of the extract beginning: MRS SAMSA: *'He works so hard - he's good to us.'* and ending with the throwing of the apple. The speed of the first part further emphasises the horrific slowness of the ensuing violence. Try this section out.

7. Rhythm, too, features strongly in the extract. Try the opening part, timing Gregor's lines to the 'listless waving' of the family - they should fit exactly. The waves establish a gentle rocking rhythm that Gregor's dreamy voice and swaying movement emulates.

Now try the beginning of the dream section which establishes Gregor's heartbeats, brings in the light to pulse at the same time as the beats and has the restless movements of the family sleeping upright on their stools also timed to coincide with each beat. You will find the beat needs to be slow, to establish not realism but the rhythm of a dream. Try to time the speeches too with this beat.

If you have time, put on a short performance of this extract but in any case, use it as a model to check against less helpful scripts to be done in an Artaudian style. This is very important.

The checklist:

- a Establish the dominant mood or feature of each character. Using a way in, like the animal exercise, seek to emphasise this mood or feature to its fullest extent, first in movement and then in voice tones.
- b. Break up the text into short sections. Investigate each section for pace, climax points that might need emphasis and imagery potential. Remember you want to appeal to more than an audience familiar with your own language. Never mind that it is written in English, if you are using language in your piece then the tone of voice which exaggerates the emotional subtext conveys an enormous amount. This exaggeration is therefore very important.
- c. Extract as much imagery as you can out of the text itself and find physical shapes or symbols to convey it.
- d. Choreograph each section. Everyone should know exactly what they are doing and where they are going. There are no woolly, naturalistic moves in physical theatre productions. Each move is deliberate and the placing of characters in relation to each other, for its symbolic meaning, must be explored at all times.
- e. Check whether any of your images would benefit from further emphasis through sound, rhythms, costumes, colour, props, masks or makeup and/ or light. Once again, remember the largeness of everything and make sure that all additions are in keeping with the stature of your piece. Sound may need a lot of amplification. Both light and sound need to be as choreographed as the action.
- f. And - really, this should come first since all else hangs on it - think of your space. Where will this piece be performed? Where will the audience be in relation to the action? Make sure there is the fullest potential for audience 'involvement' - in the sense of being surrounded and overwhelmed by the impact you are creating.

THE OPENING SPEECH FROM 'AGAMEMNON' by STEVEN BERKOFF

The play is a loose adaptation of the ancient Greek tragedy 'Agamemnon' written by Aeschylus. Agamemnon was the Greek general who pursued Helen and her abductor Paris to Troy and laid siege to that city for ten years, in revenge. The city finally fell through the trick of the Trojan horse, but on coming back in triumph to his home town, Agamemnon is insincerely welcomed by his wife, Clytemnestra, who has taken a lover in his long absence, and murdered by her in his bath.

In this opening speech the reason for the curse on Agamemnon and his family is given. The feast that Atreus, Agamemnon's father, gave to his brother Thyestes is described. Atreus, because Thyestes has slept with his wife, has killed Thyestes' sons and served them up to him in a stew ...

Something begins to smell in this vile house/ is it the stew/ vomit-heaved that lies drying on the cracked streets/ or in the dark cellar forgotten and growing mushrooms from the slime/ under the lid/ life stirs from the dead/ pot of stew crammed with bits of human flesh/ a finger or two slipped in by the neglectful cook who was so careful to disguise the hell kitchen of skinned and sliced torso with thick sauce/ sipping gently at first like licking vomit/ strange already/ rot skunk stink/ like garlic stuffed/ camouflage with bitter herbs the smell of pain/ who would know/ what laughs and female giggles hide behind the dead teeth watching/ waiting to belch out and spit words with a Ha! Ha! You old rotting beast it's on your own flesh that you feast/ still/ quiet/ the faces watching your face/ squaring its hole/ and down the gut it rolls/ tendon calf lips even you, have kissed when little/ the shoulder that you squeezed with comforting grip/ the tongue that whistled/ bite/ gulp/ slither down/ that's gone for ever. The mouth opens again. That dark chamber of horrors/ blind 'O' open and close/ open and close stuffing down its own juices/ strange tasting difficult to go down/ does gristle stick in throat/ some wine/ the gravy's very thick/ with blood/ your own/ all move in slow motion/ the eyes stare/ fixed/ time stopped/ plates full not eating only you [around the table] only you. It's very warm. The hand moving its heavy beat/ from plate to faces/ as faces caught/ teeth clenched jaws/ staring/ frozen fresco Why?/ It's hot/ the garlic's strong/ loosen my clothes/ the smell/ why that smell/ why still/ chews on/ on scrawny bone splintered hard/ explore the mouth/ retrieve that bone belonging to no animal I know/ the faces now slope in/ incline those dark holes in their heads to feast on you/ I know it now/ now it I know/ I am the feast they feast on/ my eternal horror/ I know where are my little ones/ inside/ they're sliding down my guts/ along the lengthy graves of my intestines/ I know it now/ the thing retrieved from out my nauseous mouth is topped with its little nail/ the moon just rising. The heads of those that sloped/ hang/ taking no breath waiting for ... the earth appeared to stop ... still ... everything hung at the end of that horror on my fork.

The last piece was full of helpful explanations from Berkoff, written into the text. This is the opposite extreme. Usually it is spoken by one character, who thus dramatises the Legend of the Curse on the house of Atreus, as a result of which the tragic fall of Agamemnon occurs. The actual speech is twice as long as the section quoted here, but I feel this is enough with which to try some vocal and physical experiments.

The difference, of course, between Artaud and Berkoff is the wordiness of many of Berkoff's works. How does one make physical this speech? And how can one use the words in such a way that the main meaning would be clear even to a non-English speaker? Of course, Berkoff doesn't share all of Artaud's concerns but he is still a useful exponent of much of Artaud's theory.

Practical Work

Though written for one speaker originally, try this as an exercise for a chorus. You will find it works very well. To start with it needs dividing up. One voice alone, however talented and versatile, will not hold the audience interest as much as a number of voices, giving extra colour and texture to the piece. I am going to divide up the first few lines to give an idea of what I mean, with suggestions of how vocally to 'play' with the sound of the words. What I am seeking to emphasise is the horror and the disgusting enjoyment of the courtiers of Atreus who are all in the know, while poor Thyestes, the taster, knows nothing, though he is aware something is up.

Divide the group up into chorus a, chorus b, a chorus leader and Thyestes.

All the cast make a pile in the middle of the room, representing the cauldron. Thyestes stands behind the pile. The pile bubbles and heaves. This is emphasised by disgusting bubbling noises amplified, which fade out at times during the speech, but which bubble up again in each pause. Though I don't state it all the time, the pile should never be still, always stirring and moving slightly, like the heaving surface of a boiling thick stew.

THYESTES	
Something begins to smell in this vile house.	quiet, flat voice
CHORUS A	
Is it the stew	horrible enjoyment, slow
ALL GIRLS	
vomit-heaved	exaggeratedly bring the voice up to a peak and down, to accompany huge heave of bodies up and down
CHORUS A	
that lies drying on the cracked streets	slow, staccato cracked / streets
CHORUS B	
or in the dark cellar	darker, lower, slow
LEADER	
forgotten	whisper, slow
CHORUS B	
and growing mushrooms from the slime?	ominous - emphasise sss
PAUSE. BUBBLES.	
ALL GIRLS	
Under the lid	soft, 'I have a secret' tone
ALL BOYS	
life stirs from the dead	soft, suppressed excitement
CHORUS B	
pot of stew crammed with bits of human flesh	horrible enjoyment
LEADER	
a finger or two	light, separating each syllable - two hands wriggle up from the pile of

ALL GIRLS

slipped in by the neglectful cook

LEADER

who was so careful to disguise the hell kitchen of skinned and sliced torso with thick sauce. PAUSE

Sipping gently at first

THYESTES

like licking vomit

LEADER

strange already

ALL

Rot skunk stink

CHORUS A

like garlic stuffed

CHORUS B

camouflage with bitter herbs the smell of

ALL

pain

bodies, slowly uncurling

light, jokey, almost laughter

still light, elongate and give breadth on 'thick', separate this word

tiptoe tongue, delicately separating each syllable

mimes tasting, grimace, tiptoe tongue, separate syllables, voice up and down on 'vomit'

knowing satisfaction, sibilant 's'

violent, very loud, spat out - ugh!

less loud, still horror, Thyestes, horror step backward

rising hysteria, note of increasing horror, build to ...

shriek, long drawn out vowel. The pile contorts and scatters into frozen shapes reflecting pain, making sure that Thyestes is unmasked by anyone. They freeze and on a beat, shift just their head to look at Thyestes.

Having tried this out for size, see if you can carry on in similar vein. The chorus reflect the images of what is happening in a physical way from now on. They become the watchers at the feast and at times the feast itself. See if you can build the horrific images, add sound and rhythm where helpful. Work out where it is best to have Thyestes speaking the lines - you'll find that more and more of them as you go further into the speech should probably be his, but try also to keep the colour and texture of the words which a division amongst voices help to achieve.

You may find it helpful to divide into smaller groups, each group taking a section of a few lines to work on. It takes a long time to do this properly and, if nothing else, will make you realise for yourself how disciplined and lengthy a process such preparation of a play in this style ought to be.

EXCERPTS FROM 'THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER' by STEVEN BERKOFF

I know of no other work that fits Artaud so well as this one. Berkoff's own introduction is full of his own indebtedness to Artaud and it is clearly an attempt to put the theories into practice. I have taken out one or two scenes for working on, but the whole thing would be great to do. It lends itself to a lush extravaganza of visual and aural effect .

Briefly, the story is Edgar Allen Poe's dark tale of a brother and sister, Roderick and Madeline Usher, trapped in a decaying ancestral home by their own inherited diseases which will not allow them to venture out. It explores the unnatural love between the pair and Roderick's final attempt at release from her power when she falls into a cataleptic fit. He locks her into her coffin and takes her down to the vaults where he will not hear her screams when she wakes from her fit. The long slow wait for her death drives him mad and he dies insane and terrified of her ghostly revenge. At his death, the decaying house itself crumbles into the lake that lies next to it.

The symbol of the house, which stands for the diseased family itself, is powerful and Berkoff weaves other very potent visual images into the fabric of his play. One that is particularly appealing is where Roderick takes his sister between his knees and plays her as a cello, using her arm as a bow. Berkoff comments that this playing of each other is a symbol of how they use each other throughout. But it also combines connotations of sexuality and unnatural closeness within its image. Like all good symbols it resonates with more than its obvious meaning.

In this first extract we see the arrival of Roderick's Friend, Edgar, to stay with them. The actor's move between being the house and the characters.

USHER

He has arrived. You see, Madeline, I said he would come.

MADELINE

But his face, Roderick, looks a little troubled.

USHER

We'll soon remedy that.

FRIEND

I approach a Gothic archway. A servant takes my horse without a word.

[During this Madeline and Usher become a Gothic archway and then lower their arms to become a heavy door through which the friend enters the house. Voices create the sound of ancient door seldom opened.]

Scene 10.

FRIEND

Which way?

USHER and MADELINE

Step by step we will conduct you.

[Usher and Madeline become house. Friend wanders through them.]

FRIEND

MADELINE and USHER

[sung or whispered]

Conducted in silence

Through dark and intricate

Passages. Everything I encounter

In this house

Insufferable

Melancholy

Half-pleasurable

Heightens vague sentiments of
 Foreboding
 The carvings of the ceilings
 Sombre tapestries of the walls
 Ebony blackness of the floor
 Phantasmagorical armorial trophies
 Which rattle as I stride
 Into a room large
 With windows long narrow and pointed
 Inaccessible feeble gleams of light
 Make their way through the trellised panes.
 The eye struggles in vain,
 Dark draperies hang on the walls.
 I breathe an atmosphere of sorrow.
 An air of deep irredeemable gloom.
 Which way? [door]
 Which way? [steps]
 Which way? [door]

Poetic
 Landscape
 Depression
 Soul
 Afterdream
 Opium
 Iciness
 Sinking
 Sickness
 Torture

Scene 11

[As the Friend is led through the last door Beethoven's Fifth Symphony begins. The Friend and Madeline are sculpted into seated positions on non-existent chairs. They begin talking and gesticulating without sound. Usher seats himself and signals to stop the music.]

Scene 12

USHER

The family is exceedingly ancient. *
 Noted time out of mind for its
 Peculiar sensibility of temperament. *
 Producing through the ages many great works of art. *
 Including a passionate devotion
 To the intricacies of musical science. *
 And yet never putting forth any enduring branch. *
 The entire family lies in the direct
 Line of descent. *
 Refining its artistic power until
 They fester like that water
 Which will soon seep under the door.

[At each of these places Madeline and Friend make a cypher image of the phrase which has been said.]*

Practical Work

1. In his own commentary, Berkoff tells us that the cypher images must "somehow encapsulate the essence" of each line in picture form. Find a suitable still picture for each of the asterisks in the above scene.

2. To accompany Scene 10, Berkoff's commentary states: "The Friend as narrator chillingly describes the interior of the house while Madeline and Usher create it and are 'it.' Madeline always moves loosely and lightly - a split being, between house and 'her' - the actress like the actors should mime well and suggest advanced decay,

neurosis and catalepsy ... a high degree of dance skill ... is essential - Usher becomes the doors, vibrates like the house, becomes corridors, stairs ..." In threes, try to build up the idea of a house full of rooms, stairs, corridors, doors. One person moves through the other two who create the house, accompanying their actions with sounds.

3. For Scene 11, Berkoff suggests that the music used is the third movement of Beethoven's Fifth, not the more famous first. Usher should mould the other character into shapes, "the clichéd attitudes of posed painting", which should suggest his manipulation of events.

This idea is a fun one to play with. Allow each shape to move from a freeze into a moment's mimed, silent 'polite' conversation, full of attitudes and gestures, finishing with the seating of Usher himself and a last moment's stillness.

4. Finally, try what you can do with this whole extract, working in groups of three, before moving on to the next.

This is good practice in using concrete language, by the script's constant demands that ideas should be crystallised into visual images.

Scene 16

USHER

You see here the result of a family evil,
brought about through much inbreeding.
I despair to find a remedy for it.
My senses are so acute the most insipid food
alone is endurable to me.
My troubled flesh can bear garments only of the
lightest softest texture. The odour of flowers
oppresses me and my eyes, my eyes are tortured by
even a faint light.
Only the delicate tremulous notes of stringed
instruments are acceptable to my ears.

I shall perish,
I must perish
Thus, thus and not otherwise
Shall I be lost.
In this unnerved
In this pitiable condition
I feel that the moment will
Sooner or later arrive when
I must abandon life and reason together
In some struggle with the grim phantasm,
FEAR

FRIEND

You must leave this house.

USHER

How can I? These walls are my skin. This room is my heart. Besides, I have a sister.

Scene 17

[Light change. Usher steps aside leaving Madeline in a frozen position.]

USHER

My last and only relative. A tenderly beloved sister.
The horror of her illness far outweighs mine.
She approaches the end of her days.
Her passing will leave me so hopeless
and frail.

The last of the ancient race of the Ushers.

FRIEND

But what is her illness?

USHER

A gradual wasting away of the person.
Frequent though transient affections of a partially cataleptical nature.
She has borne it all refusing to take to her bed.
We do not talk openly.

[During this time Madeline is going through spasmodic fits and tremblings. Whenever Usher or the Friend come near her they begin to tremble as well.]

FRIEND

Openly?

USHER

Face to face

Lips moving, sounds issuing forth.
She succumbs to the power of the destroyer.
Take your last look.

You'll see her no more.

[Usher calms her by wrapping her in a white translucent cloth. When she is cocooned she begins to dance with the Friend.]

Scene 18

MADELINE

Do you regard me with dread?

USHER

With astonishment.

This extract is more challenging and introduces other Artaudian ideas for practice.

Berkoff's notes on Scene 16 suggest that Usher should speak 'slowly and deliberately, reaching into his guts for sounds that onomatopoeically serve as a meaning - stretching the words almost into visceral images.' **Go back to the exercise in the section on Language - the lessons of Surrealism, where you did a word circle, exploring words for their sound quality as well as their meaning, accompanied by physicalisation. For instance, the word 'cold' was said as if with juddering teeth as well as trembling all over and hugging oneself. This is the way this speech should be explored. Pick out key words in each line to use in this way.**

Madeline is supposed to be acting in sympathy with Usher throughout 'suggesting identification with his thoughts by her hands and arms that lift and fall about Usher.' They need to act and react together as if 'telepathically', in total harmony and sympathy.

For scene 17, Madeline is supposed to be caught, transfixed in a shaft of red light in which she shakes in the throes of one of her fits. Every time another person strays near her or into the beam of light, they too are caught. The lights should flicker in rhythm with her shudders. Finally she is wrapped around in white cloth that calms her but also suggests a death shroud. Berkoff suggests that the cloth is previously hung as part of the fabric of the house itself, thus suggesting further that house and brother/ sister are linked and crumbling together.

I have ended this extract with Usher's words "With astonishment", which Berkoff says should be sung 'to suggest the enormity of his passion by the crude symbol of the anguished vocal power of his voice.'

Try singing this word in a variety of ways to find the most effective.

Scene 24

[Usher attempts to say her name. Finally he cries out.]

USHER

Madeline *[Sung]*

My sister is no more.

I shall preserve her corpse for two weeks

Before interment

The unusual nature of her malady makes me fearful

To hurry her to the family burial grounds far away from me.

We must wind our way through the dark entrails

Of the House, a rank place, stinking bowels of

The House where the bodies rest against the

Earth. Will you help me, please, will you,

Please, help please.

Scene 25

Section A

FRIEND

Fear, by anticipating terrible events, has a way of bringing about those very events.

[Usher and Friend mime climbing down into the vaults. Sounds of dripping water and creaks and groans.]

Section B

USHER and FRIEND

Vaults

Long unopened

Oppressive

Smell

Damp

Lightless

Remote

Stinking

USHER

Once a dungeon

FRIEND

Now

USHER

A place where the bodies of the family rest against the earth.

What you hear are the waters of the tarn seeking to reclaim their former territories.

[When they have reached the vaults they metaphorically take the figure of Madeline and place her in the coffin. She is standing, her arms crossed, eyes closed, at the back of the stage.]

USHER

Screw down the lid

[Sound of lid closing. They begin to climb.]

Scene 26

USHER

We deposit our mournful burden
Within the region of horror,
A faint flush, the mockery of
A smile upon her face
The maladies of catalepsy
So terrible in death, and yet
So beautiful.

Scene 27

[Madeline has slipped behind a gauze curtain. Lights up on her waking in coffin. She mimes pounding and scratching at coffin lid, struggling to escape. Blackout.]

Scene 28.

[Usher moving about the stage with great lassitude.]

FRIEND

Several days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend. His ordinary manner had vanished, his ordinary occupations are neglected or forgotten ... He roams from chamber to chamber with hurried, unequal and objectless step. The palor of his countenance has assumed, if possible, a more ghastly hue, and the luminousness of his eyes has utterly gone out. The occasional huskiness of his tone is heard no more, and a tremulous quaver, as if of extreme terror characterises his utterance. There are times when I think his unceasingly agitated mind is labouring with some oppressive secret, to divulge which he struggles for the necessary courage.

USHER

She is gone.

Finished, frozen. Dead! Why therefore can I not forget? I move through these ancient rooms, searching for fragments of her broken spirit that I might take them in a mental trap and carry them down to where her body lies. Still body. Still born. Here but not here.

But he is always here, listening.

[Usher begins pacing. Friend looks up as if he is listening to Usher pace in room above him.]

FRIEND

What is your secret Usher?

USHER

I have none to tell. I roam

FRIEND

From chamber to chamber with unequal objectless step.

USHER

The mockery of a smile upon her lips. So horrible in death and yet so beautiful.

Scene 29

[Usher stops pacing. He listens. Listens. Listens. Screams.]

Light up on Madeline in coffin. Tape of pounding with nine screams. She struggles to escape.]

Scene 30

[STORM. Usher is thrown about the stage. Occasional light up on Madeline. Storm fades. Light up on Friend hiding behind sheet.]

Ideally, you should try to stage this yourselves, applying all that you have learned to date. If you cannot employ light and sound effects, at least try to make as much sound as possible live, using instruments, sheets of metal and so on.

Here, however are some notes to help you, in order from Scene 24.

Scene 24. The sung 'Madeline' should be 'First an outward cry sung which develops into a scream of anguish into a high falsetto. At the end his voice returns to deep resonance as if restored by a purge. As if the voice had returned from a voyage into hell.'

Edgar, the Friend, and Usher should be standing on either side of the stage in two separate pools of light. This is to show that they are in fact in different areas of the house altogether.

Scene 25 should have plenty of atmospheric light and sound additions to set the scene of a 'real' place - dripping water, echoing booms, creaking doors etc. Greenish dim light. The mime should be very clear and accurate.

Madeline is stationed at the back of the stage. Berkoff suggests she should be standing in a square of light to suggest a coffin. The men mime closing a lid on it and the light reduces and fades.

Scene 27 Madeline is now standing behind a dark gauze curtain. The lights come up and reveal her there in a square of light. The sounds of her panic, scratching of nails etc. should be amplified. The mime must be very accurate and firm, suggesting the solidity of her confines.

Scene 28. Usher needs to be excessive in his grief after the listlessness of the first part of the scene, where his whole body expresses fear mixed with despair.

Once again in two separate pools of light, Edgar the Friend listens and looks upwards at the ceiling to suggest that Usher is pacing above him. When Usher listens, he should bend to the floor as if listening to something way below in the vaults of the house.

The rest - have fun! The storm should show the house in agony as well as the characters; that is why Usher is thrown about the stage. Madeline remains in coffin position behind the gauze. Berkoff says it should be like the storm in 'King Lear', i.e. not a 'natural' storm, but as much a storm of the mind as of the elements.

EXTRACTS FOR 'WOYZECK' by GEORG BÜCHNER

Why was Artaud fascinated, as indeed were most theatre practitioners of the first half of the Twentieth Century in this text? Probably because it was revolutionary for its time, obeying no form and structure as laid down by those who wrote 'the Masterpieces.' It centres on an act of violence, too, a forbidden act, and on madness, both of which attract Artaud, and it presents these acts stripped of wordy psychology or explanations of any kind. So sparse is the script, indeed, that the imagination is left to fill out the details. This is where the appeal would lie, I feel, and it is on this factor that I base the practical work afterwards.

There are so many versions of 'Woyzeck' because of the unusualness of its style. It is written in a number of very short scenes which build up like a collage, adding detail to the central story of the increasingly unhinged Woyzeck and his murder, out of jealousy, of his mistress Marie. Various editors have given different arrangements of the scenes but, since the original was lost for many years, it is impossible to know quite in what order Büchner intended it. In the version I have, published by Nich Hern Books, the scenes are arranged as chronologically as possible. The scene numbers I use are from that version.

1.

[Open fields, the town in the distance. Woyzeck and Andres splitting wood. Andres whistles.]

WOYZECK

Yes, Andres, the place is cursed. See that patch of light over there where the mushrooms are growing? That's where the head rolls in the evenings. Someone picked it up once, he thought it was a hedgehog. Three days and three nights and then he was in his coffin. *[Quietly]* It was the freemasons, I'm sure of it, freemasons. Sssh!

ANDRES

Two hares sitting there

Eating the grass

Until it was bare -

WOYZECK

Ssh! Do you hear, Andres, do you hear? Something's moving

ANDRES

Eating up the tiny shoots

Eating the grass

Down to the roots -

WOYZECK

Something's behind me, beneath me. *[He stamps on the ground]* Hollow, d'you hear? Completely hollow under there. Freemasons.

ANDRES

I'm scared.

WOYZECK

Strange how quiet it is. You want to hold your breath. Andres?

ANDRES

What?

WOYZECK

Say something. *[He stares ahead.]* Andres, it's so bright! The town is glowing. There's fire travelling across the sky, and down here the din of trumpets. How it draws you on. Quick, don't look behind you. *[He drags him into the bushes.]*

ANDRES

[after a pause] Woyzeck, do you still hear it?

WOYZECK

Silent, completely silent. As if the world was dead.

ANDRES

What was that? The drum's going. We'd better go.

13.

[In a field]

WOYZECK

On and on, on and on - squeal and squeak go the fiddles and the pipes. On and on, on and on. Stop the music! Who's talking down there? *[He puts his ear to the ground.]* Eh? What do you say? Louder, louder! Stab? Stab the she wolf dead. Stab, stab the she wolf dead. Shall I? Must I? Do I hear it up there too? Is the wind saying it? I can hear it on and on, on and on. Stab her dead, dead!

22.

[In a wood by a pond.]

MARIE

That's the town over there. It's so gloomy.

WOYZECK

Stop here. Come and sit down.

MARIE

I have to go.

WOYZECK

You've no need to run your feet off.

MARIE

You're so strange.

WOYZECK

Do you know how long it's been, Marie?

MARIE

Two years come Whitsun.

WOYZECK

Do you know how long it's going to be as well?

MARIE

I have to go and make supper.

WOYZECK

Are you cold, Marie? And yet you're so warm. What hot lips you've got, hot. Hot whore's breath. And yet I'd give the kingdom of Heaven to kiss them again ... Are you cold? When you're cold you won't feel cold anymore. The morning dew won't make you feel cold.

MARIE

What are you saying?

WOYZECK

Nothing.

MARIE

The moon's rising. So red.

WOYZECK

Like blood on iron.

MARIE

What are you going to do? You're so pale, Franz. *[He raises his knife.]* Franz! Stop! For the love of God help! Help!

[Woyzeck stabs wildly]

WOYZECK

Take that, and that. You can't die? There! There! She's still twitching, not yet, not yet. Once more. *[He stabs one last time.]* Are you dead? Dead! Dead! *[He lets the knife fall and runs away.]*

23.

[The inn.]

WOYZECK

Dance, everyone, on and on. Sweet and stink. He'll take you all in the end anyway.

[sings] Tell me why, my dear daughter,
And what have you done?
Gone off with a soldier
And polished his gun -

I'm hot, Käthe. I'm hot. Hot! Hot! [He takes off his jacket.] The Devil takes the one and lets the other go. You're warm too, Käthe. Why's that? But you'll be cold one day, even you. Be nice now, Käthe. Couldn't you sing?

KÄTHE

In Schwaben I am not at home
And I don't wear long dresses,
For finery and pointed shoes
A servant girl should never choose -
WOYZECK

No, no shoes. You can go to Hell barefoot.

KÄTHE

Ah, no, my friend, that was ill said.
Keep your money and keep your bed -
WOYZECK

Really, I don't want to get covered in blood.

KÄTHE

What's that on your hand?

WOYZECK

Me? Me?

KÄTHE

Red! Blood!

[People gather round them.]

WOYZECK

Blood? Blood?

DRINKER

Urgh! Blood!

WOYZECK

I think I cut myself on my hand.

DRINKER

But how did you get it onto your elbow?

WOYZECK

I wiped it off.

DRINKER

What? You wiped your right hand on your right elbow? That's clever.

IDIOT

And the giant said, 'Fe Fi Fo Fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman ...'

WOYZECK

What the Hell do you want? What's it got to do with you? Out of my way! Or I'll ... You think I've killed someone. Am I a murderer, eh? What are you staring at? Stare at yourselves. Out of the way! [He rushes out.]

24.

[By the pond]

WOYZECK *alone*

The knife, where's the knife? I put it down somewhere. It will betray me. Closer and closer. What kind of a place is this? What's that? Something moved. Quiet. Somewhere just here. Marie. Ha. Marie. Still, completely still. Why are you so pale, Marie? Why have you got a red ribbon around your neck? Who have you earned that from with your sins? You were black with sin, black. Was it me made you so pale? What's your hair so wild for? Haven't you got it in plaits today? ... The knife, the knife. Have I got it? Here! [He runs to the water.] There! Away with it! [He throws the knife into the pond.] It will sink like a stone in that dark water... No, it's too near the beach where they swim. [He wades out into the water and throws the knife further out.] There! But in the summer when they dive after mussels?

Ach! It will rust anyway, who'd recognise it? If only I'd destroyed it. Am I still bloody? I must wash. There's one stain. And there's another. *[He wades further out.]*

The difficulty with this from an Artaudian point of view is the language, which is naturalistic. Of course, it is impossible to know what Artaud might have done with it all; what he says, though, is that he would put it on "in a spirit of reaction against our principles," so clearly he does not intend to pare it down to the bare storyline and ignore the words. He goes on to say that he would use it "as an example of what can be drawn from an exact text in terms of the stage." It is the words 'drawn from' that is the inspiration here.

The words are so sparse that they suggest many things. Start your work on the text first by picking out any images built into the language itself, e.g. the moon being likened to blood on iron. With each one discuss how the image might be used to enhance the scene in some way, through light, colour, sound or action.

Take the first scene as an exercise on its own. How could you suggest Woyzeck's state of mind through sound, light and other effects? Where should these start? Could the beginning have a background sound like a high-pitched whine, picking up to hollow echoing going on and on as he stamps his foot, and so on.

What does he see? Could his hallucinations be shown in some way? How?

Now try to enhance the other scenes in the same way.

Don't be intimidated by the words. Are there moments when you could play with the words to enhance the horror of the action, or Woyzeck's state of mind? For instance, Scene 22 needs a way of building up the tension to the murder. How can you work on Woyzeck's words to show the 'strangeness' Marie refers to? Perhaps some of the ends of words could be picked up and echoed by a background chorus, acting like a Greek chorus. Using this idea further, perhaps Marie's trapped state could be worked out in physical form by the use of a chorus.

Taking lessons from Berkoff's use of Madeline in her coffin, can you enhance the horror of the last scene when Woyzeck blunders into the dead body of Marie, by not having her lying on the ground and instead have her placed upright somewhere? How can you make her body look horrific?

What do you want to suggest at the end? Buchner leaves it open, but the suggestion is definitely that Woyzeck blunders further and further into the water, ending up by drowning himself. Could you link that in some way to the dead body of Marie? Come up with a stunning final image that will sear into an audience's mind.

Make sure that you don't just talk about all these theoretically, but try as much as you can practically too.

CONCLUSION

Despite having so little chance for practising his own theories, Artaud has formulated, just as much as Stanislavsky or Brecht, a body of theory which amounts to a definite and readily identifiable style. The idea of Total Theatre, combining all elements of theatre into a stunning end result which bombards audiences into a cathartic reaction is clear. Few people, however, propound it.

On the whole, Artaud's greatest influence has been to spark off in one practitioner or another a chord which has sent them off onto their own path of discovery: Brook, Grotowski [though he denies the influence], Berkoff and others. Even today, he seems the most modern of the three 'great' practitioners and I often find people surprised to discover when he was working. Much of Brecht's work is actually more 'modern', in that he was still working after Artaud's death.

Yet Artaud is very much a product of his times, especially of Surrealism and of the restless spirit of the between wars generations. Just as Brecht's embracing of Communism was the only logical answer in his mind to the evils of fascism, the purging of the sick spirit of man and the liberation of his double, which is his buried true self, is an understandable reaction to the horrors France underwent in the First World War and the excesses of the unstable society that followed it.

Artaud's wild sweeps of imagination all contain enough energetic truth to fire up not only individual theatre practitioners but also psycho-therapists. He is most revolutionary as a liberator. His ideas free us from the bounds of convention and style and give us permission to experiment, discover and rediscover. Inspired by him, theatre challenges its boundaries and also discovers new areas to explore while actors test the limits of body and voice and are the richer for it.