

# TH249-30 You, the Performer: presence and affect

**22/23**

**Department**

SCAPVC - Theatre and Performance Studies

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 2

**Module leader**

Natalie Diddams

**Credit value**

30

**Module duration**

20 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

n/a.

[Module web page](#)

### Module aims

This module aims to

- Introduce you to ideas about the actor's/performer's presence in performance, and to specific techniques that both depend upon and develop presence.
- Explore key relationships between one performer and another, and performers and their audience, in acts of communication and affective engagement.
- Develop your skills and experience in acting and performance through workshops with several distinct areas of practice (for example, mask, stand-up comedy, improvisation, and audience engagement).
- Facilitate examination of effective acting and performing in exemplary performances on film or video.
- Explore key theories of presence in performance; and examine why and how presence is

seen as fundamental to live performance.

- Explore key theories of affective communication, examining ways in which audiences are facilitated in thinking, feeling and taking perspectives and actions.

This module is intended for those who want to explore live contemporary performance from the inside, examining specific techniques and aspects of performance through embodied practice. The module addresses what it is to be (and prepare to be) a performer in diverse settings. It has two main throughlines: 1) an examination of presence, and the particular work of the performer to inhabit and animate the moment; and 2) an examination of ways in which performers relate to audience members and spectators, not least in an environment where performance events are increasingly diverse and the relationship between performer and spectator is increasingly fluid.

The module is taught mainly through four blocks of workshops, each addressing a particular technique-based approach to performance. The blocks are intended to be different, in order to introduce you to distinct modes and approaches; but are also complementary in enabling you to develop transferable skills (for example in focus, precision and rapport) that apply across all blocks and your work more broadly. In each block, three taught workshops are followed by a fourth class in which you will share pieces – small compositions geared around a particular technique – so that the module has a rhythm of practice-based exploration and presentation. Each class is preceded by a warm-up led by members of the cohort (in accordance with guidance from staff), so that you practise and deepen disciplines of physical preparation. Workshops include contextual study of the approaches in question. A seminar in each term addresses key conceptual issues and theoretical perspectives on presence, affect and the (inter)actions of performance; this discussion may be interwoven with the activities in the workshops. You will also be encouraged to watch performances live and on video that connect with the topics of the module.

## **Outline syllabus**

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

### **TERM 1**

#### **A: Mask and character**

Week 1 Introduction to module

Performing with Mask 1 (Workshop A.1)

Week 2 Performing with Mask 2 (Workshop A.2)

Week 3 Performing with Mask 3 (Workshop A.3)

Week 4 Mask pieces (Assessment 1)

Week 5 SEMINAR: What is presence?

Week 6 READING WEEK

#### **B: Stand-up comedy performance**

Week 7 Performing stand-up comedy 1 (Workshop B.1)

Week 8 Performing stand-up comedy 2 (Workshop B.2)

Week 9 Performing stand-up comedy 3 (Workshop B.3)

Week 10 Stand-up comedy pieces (Assessment 2)

### **TERM 2**

#### **C: Improvising**

Week 1 Improvised performance 1 (Workshop C.1)  
 Week 2 Improvised performance 2 (Workshop C. 2)  
 Week 3 Improvised performance 3 (Workshop C. 3)  
 Week 4 Improvised performance pieces (Assessment 3)  
 Week 5 SEMINAR: Socially engaged art, audiences and affect  
 Week 6 READING WEEK  
 D: Devising as performers  
 Week 7 Devising process 1 (Workshop D.1)  
 Week 8 Devising process 2 (Workshop D.2)  
 Week 9 Devising process 3 (Workshop D.3)  
 Week 10 Devised performance pieces (Assessment 4)

### TERM 3

Week 1 SEMINAR: Critical Review focus groups  
 Week 3 Critical Review submission

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of specific approaches to acting and performing, particularly insofar as they bear upon presence, immediacy, rapport, and communication.
- - Understand ways in which presence in acting and performance has been conceptualised, prepared for and practised.
- - Understand principles of audience engagement and demonstrate knowledge of specific means by which performance interacts with spectators.
- - Conceive and create performance in relation to specific frameworks and points of reference.
- - Communicate with co-performers and spectators in ways appropriate to the idiom.
- - Work collaboratively with colleagues to share and develop knowledge, and create and present new performance.
- - Demonstrate skills in communication and personal interaction.

## Indicative reading list

Binnerts, Paul (2012) *Acting in Real Time* (trans. by the author and Stephen Wang), University of Michigan Press.  
 Brennan, Teresa (2004) *The Transmission of Affect*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.  
 Chaikin, Joseph (1991 [1972]) *The Presence of the Actor*, New York: Theatre Communications Group.  
 Chase, Mike (2017) *Mask: Making, Using and Performing*, Stroud: Hawthorn Press.  
 Chekhov, Michael (2002) *To the Actor on the Technique of Acting*, New York: Routledge.  
 Double, Oliver (2013) *Getting the Joke: the inner workings of stand-up comedy*, London: Bloomsbury.  
 Emigh, John (1996) *Masked Performance: The Play of Self and Other in Ritual and Theatre*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.  
 Frances-White, Deborah and Marsha Shandur (2015) *Off the Mic: the world's best stand-up comedians get serious about comedy*, London and New York: Bloomsbury Methuen.

Frost, Antony, and Ralph Yarrow (2016) *Improvisation in Drama, Theatre and Performance: History, Practice, Theory*, London and New York: Palgrave.

Giannachi, Gabriella, Nick Kaye and Michael Shanks (eds) (2012), *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being*, London and New York: Routledge.

Greer, Stephen (2019) *Queer Exceptions: Solo Performance in Neoliberal Times*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Heddon, Deirdre, and Jane Milling (2016) *Devising Performance: a critical history*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hess, Elizabeth (2016) *Acting and Being: explorations in embodied performance*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hurley, Erin (2010) *theatre & feeling*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Krasner, David (2000) *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory, Practice, Future*, New York: St Martin's Press.

Loui, Annie (2009) *The Physical Actor: exercises for action and awareness*, London and New York: Routledge.

Loui, Annie (2018) *The Physical Actor: contact improvisation from studio to stage*, London and New York: Routledge.

Luckett, Sharrell D., with Tia M. Shaffer (2017) *Black Acting Methods: Critical Approaches*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Merlin, Bella (2007) *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit*, London: Nick Hern Books.

Oida, Yoshi and Lorna Marshall (1997) *The Invisible Actor*, London: Nick Hern Books (30-86).

Petit, Lenard (2009) *The Michael Chekhov Handbook: For the Actor*, London: Routledge.

Quirk, Sophie (2018) *The Politics of British Stand-Up Comedy: the new alternative*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Spolin, Viola (1999 [1963]) *Improvisation for the Theater*, Northwestern University Press.

Welton, Martin (2012) *Feeling Theatre*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wilsher, Toby (2007) *The Mask Handbook: A Practical Guide*, London and New York: Routledge.

Wright, John (2006) *Why Is That So Funny? A Practical Exploration of Physical Comedy*, London: Nick Hern Books.

Zarilli, Phillip B. (1995) *Acting (re)considered: theories and practices*, London and New York: Routledge.

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

## **Research element**

Research into modes of performance, the work of actors/performers, and a selected issue in performer presence and communication with audiences.

## **International**

Considers international instances and performance practices across different regions and traditions.

## **Subject specific skills**

- Knowledge of specific approaches to acting and performing, particularly insofar as they bear

upon presence, immediacy, rapport, and communication.

- Understanding of ways in which presence in acting and performance has been conceptualised, prepared for and practised.
- Understanding of principles of audience engagement and demonstrate knowledge of specific means by which performance interacts with spectators.
- Ability to conceive and create performance in relation to specific frameworks and points of reference.
- Ability to communicate with co-performers and spectators in ways appropriate to the idiom.

## **Transferable skills**

- Ability to work collaboratively with colleagues to share and develop knowledge, and create and present new performance.
  - Skills in communication and personal interaction.
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## **Study**

### **Study time**

| <b>Type</b>       | <b>Required</b>              |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Seminars          | 4 sessions of 2 hours (3%)   |
| Tutorials         | 1 session of 1 hour (0%)     |
| Practical classes | 12 sessions of 3 hours (14%) |
| Other activity    | 45 hours (18%)               |
| Private study     | 160 hours (64%)              |
| Total             | 250 hours                    |

### **Private study description**

Independent research and study: 92 hrs

Individual journal: 32 hrs

Individual preparation and rehearsal: 36 hrs

### **Other activity description**

Group warm-ups: 18 x 30 mins = 9 hrs

Group preparation and rehearsal: 36 hrs

## **Costs**

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A3

|   | Weighting | Study time |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Critical Review   | 40%       | 20 hours   |
| Critical Review (4,000 words):  |           |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Journey through module, with reflection upon personal learning and development (750 words);</li><li>• Critical reflection upon personal work in pieces (750 words);</li><li>• Case study of a selected performer (500 words);</li><li>• Analysis of a selected issue in performer presence and communication with audiences (1,500 words)</li><li>• Excerpts from journal showing development of personal thinking and practice over time (500 words or equivalent)</li></ul> |           |            |
| Performance Pieces  | 60%       | 30 hours   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mask piece (3-4 mins)</li><li>• Stand-up comedy piece (4-5 mins)</li><li>• Improvised performance (3-4 mins)</li><li>• Devised performance (4-5 mins)</li></ul> <p>[Individual components may be adjusted in light of student feedback, review and module development]</p>  |           |            |

### Feedback on assessment

Verbal in class (formative)

Verbal in tutorial (1 each term)

Verbal and written (pieces)

Written (individual) and verbal (group) (Critical Reflection)

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 2 of UTHA-W422 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies
- UTHA-W421 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies
  - Year 2 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
  - Year 2 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies