

**2016 specification**  
first exams in 2018 (2017 for AS)



# ***Punchdrunk***

A Complete Guide  
for AS and A Level AQA

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# Teacher's Introduction

At the turn of the millennium, Punchdrunk burst onto the theatre scene, and promptly became theatre-going. Punchdrunk is an immersive theatre company, although it prefers to be seen as sympathetic. Its fresh take on space and audience and its innovative blend of performance and design has had a sweeping impact on twenty-first century theatre. Its inclusion in the new A Level Drama specification highlights just how far its influence extends.

This guide has been written primarily to support the 2016 AS and A Level AQA specification, Punchdrunk can be applied to Component 2: Process and Performance. In addition, if the specification, it can be used for Component 2: Creating Original Drama, as well as Component 3: Textual Analysis. The information and activities contained in the resource provide ample support for any of the above areas of the course.

This guide is intended to introduce students to the conventions of Punchdrunk, develop their practice. To support their understanding and practical application of Punchdrunk, the resource is provided with a range of activities, both written and practical. The beauty of working with the Punchdrunk performance style embraces every possible element of performance and design candidates as it is for those following the performance route.

## How to use this resource

Divided into 10 sections, the resource includes the context in which Punchdrunk emerged, their approach, details of their working methods, and more. The final section shows how the resource can be used both for practical examination purposes and written exam responses. Following this are sections containing answers, indicative content to assist with activities, and further helpful resources.

Relevant AOs and exam tips are provided throughout, which will demonstrate to students how to move from the resource to the relevant parts of the course.

 For all links, go to **zzed.uk/8150**

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# Specification Overview

The table below illustrates which components of the course require knowledge and application to be assessed for each component. As you work through the resource, the AO references will contribute to their assessments.

The assessment objectives for both AS and A Level Drama courses are:

## AO1

Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning as part of the theatre-making process, dramatic theory and practice

## AO2

Apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance

## AO3

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre are developed and presented

## AO4

Analyse and evaluate their own work and the work of others

### Weighting of the Assessment Objectives

| AS AQA                               |      |      |      |      |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Component                            | AO1% | AO2% | AO3% | AO4% |
| Component 1: Interpreting Drama      | 0    | 0    | 30   | 10   |
| Component 2: Process and Performance | 20   | 30   | 0    | 10   |
| Total for GCE AS Level               | 20%  | 30%  | 30   | 20   |

| A Level AQA                          |      |      |      |      |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Component                            | AO1% | AO2% | AO3% | AO4% |
| Component 1: Drama and Theatre       | 0    | 0    | 30   | 10   |
| Component 2: Creating Original Drama | 20   | 10   | 0    | 0    |
| Component 3: Making Theatre          | 0    | 20   | 0    | 10   |
| Total for GCE A Level                | 20%  | 30%  | 30%  | 20   |

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# Social Context and Historical Po

## A Brief Introduction to Punchdrunk

- Punchdrunk are known as 'pioneers of immersive theatre', and their beginning millennium, when they staged Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* in 2000.
- Formed by Artistic Director Felix Barrett, who studied Drama at Exeter University.
- Associate Director and choreographer is Maxine Doyle.
- The company gained worldwide recognition when their adaptation of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* was produced in New York.
- Their most recent show, *The Drowned Man: A Hollywood Fable*, was based in a Paddington Station.

*At the beginning of the twenty-first century...*

Theatre-makers were already questioning the role of the audience, using different spaces, or merging dance and performance with art.

We live in an age of individualism. We are used to having our experiences personalised – so why not theatre?

There was an increasing desire, especially in British theatre, to create new and more playful relationships with audiences.

Passive theatre-going, sitting still and silently in a dark space, all facing the same way, watching and listening, was losing its appeal.

Social media – Snapchat, Twitter, the World Wide Web – had exploded and people were getting used to connecting (or disconnecting) in a matter of seconds.

The world was now a digital space where users to be participatory and experiential.

Audiences were getting more demanding and wanted to be transported into environments.

Gaming's adventurous narrative structures were a major influence.

The world was moving fast and the time, so the idea of spending a theatre was.

### DISCUSS

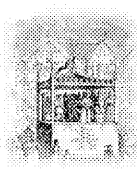
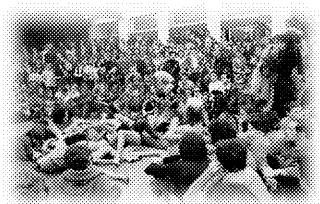
Based on the information above, can you think of ways in which theatre can be adapted so as to better fit in with our modern world?

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## A (Very) Rough Timeline of Immersive Theatre

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Middle Ages              | <p><b>Promenade Theatre</b> has its roots in the Medieval Mystery plays, where groups of tradesmen performed stories from the bible to illiterate townsfolk. Each trade performed on a pageant wagon and the audience moved around the space, following the story as it happened.</p>  | <p>Shakespeare's audience was more vocal than they are today, laughing at the fools and listening to soliloquys which were performed to the audience.</p>                                                                                              |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> century | <p><b>Restoration Theatre</b> was a noisy place to be. The first women on stage often doubled as the local prostitutes, so the double entendres in the script would often be pointedly directed at members of the audience!</p>                                                                                                                                         | <p>'It's behind you!' Perhaps the most famous line from Commedia dell'arte, which was a precursor to British theatre forms.</p>                                                                                                                        |
| 1930s/40s                | <p><b>Antonin Artaud</b> was a theatre practitioner who wrote about immersive theatre. He wanted to assault his audiences, not have them sitting safely in a darkened auditorium</p>                                                                                                                                                                                    |  <p><b>Bertolt Brecht</b> was a German playwright and poet, known for his work on the border between theatre and politics, with his epic plays.</p>                   |
| 1950s/60s                | <p><b>Boal's Forum Theatre</b> invited the audience to stop the action of a performance and suggest alternative endings, or even step into the role of one of the characters themselves. His Theatre of the Oppressed aimed to create a dialogue between audience and <i>spect-actor</i>.</p>                                                                           | <p><b>Happenings</b> were a form of performance art that encouraged the audience to participate in the action.</p>                                                                                                                                     |
| 1960s                    | <p>Inspired by Artaud, <b>The American Living Theatre</b> is an experimental theatre company which formed in 1947. In the '60s their work became more participatory – and even involved nudity!</p>                                                                                  | <p>Polish director <b>Jerzy Grotowski</b> explored the relationship between the actor and the audience, ignoring traditional theatrical conventions. He often placed the audience in the middle of the stage, and actors were placed at the edges.</p> |
| 1970s                    | <p><b>Pina Bausch's Tanztheatre</b> was (and still is) a unique fusion of dance, sound, dialogue, singing and astonishing sets.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p><b>Site-specific or environmental theatre</b> is a form of performance in non-traditional spaces, where the environment is suited to the performance and is often more interactive.</p>                                                             |
| 1990s                    | <p>Genres merged as <b>Experimental Companies</b> fused dance, text, physical theatre and digital technology. Academics were making connections between the interactive nature of video games and performance.</p>                                                                                                                                                      | <p>We come to the present day, where immersive theatre is becoming increasingly popular.</p>                                                                                                                                                           |

So, the history of audience participation shows that the conventional auditorium is a relatively recent invention.

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## Research task 1

Research further into the historical background of Immersive Theatre. For example:

- 1 Find out more about one of the practitioners mentioned – Artaud, Boal or Punchdrunk – and how they view the performer/audience relationship?
- 2 Research a contemporary theatre company that is committed to site-specific performance. What do audiences say about the experience?
- 3 Explore audience participation in Shakespearean Theatre, Restoration Theatre or Victorian Theatre. Were/are audiences encouraged to get involved?

You can turn this research into a poster, mind-map or presentation (filmed or written).



### Assessment Top Tip

*A Level AQA: Component 3*

In Component 3: Making Theatre you will be assessed on ‘practical interpretation of three extracts’. In doing so, AQA asks that you show ‘evidence of methodology of one influential theatre practitioner’, and ‘evidence of work and methodology of the practitioner in the performance’.

Researching performer/audience relationships in the context of influential practitioners will support your understanding of Punchdrunk’s methodology. This will enable you to effectively integrate them within your own work. This is particularly important if you are going to be assessed as a performer, as your understanding of the configuration of the performer/audience relationship is key.

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# The Work of Punchdrunk

## Experiencing a Punchdrunk Show

It's almost impossible to describe the full impact of a Punchdrunk show. It is a cross between a maze. Typically, they take over an entire building, preferably with several floors.

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### START HERE

You can visit everywhere else in any order!

Once you enter the building, you are given a Venetian mask, and the other rule is that you cannot talk.

You see other masked people running towards a wooded area and so you follow - there is a choreographed dance scene. In another part of the building there is a spoken scene between two actors. Sometimes you stumble on a fight scene, or a love scene, or music, or a woman applying lipstick in the mirror, or a man writing a letter, which you can read if you look over his shoulder.

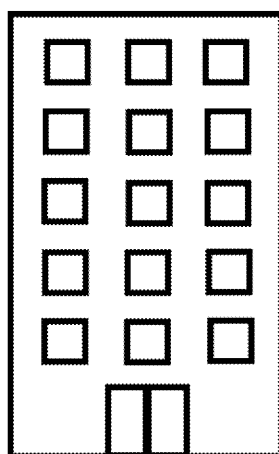
You can choose to stay in one place while - and see what happens. Actors ignore the audience members, get so close you can hear them.

Occasionally, members of the audience are pulled into a space and locked in with just one actor, where they remove your mask and you experience a one-on-one encounter. This could be a game of chess, or the actor may talk to you.

Some spaces you enter are deserted and you enjoy the meticulously designed set. You might be on the edge of a fountain and run your hand through the water, or go into rooms and look through design albums, or read notes on scraps of letters. On another floor you might find a floor completely covered in sand, or a room covered in tiles. You could find a child's nursery, a hospital ward, or a set. Everywhere is dimly lit, adding to the disorientation, and laden with scent. Some are woody and smoky, others more fragrant.

Punchdrunk shows are often based on a classical text, but it is completely deconstructed. There may be moments when you recognise a loosely-adapted scene or a character, but nothing is chronological. Some scenes are interpreted through dance.

You are completely free to wander the space, which includes going up and down the central stairwell to any of the numerous floors.



Staff in black clothing and black masks guard the space, ensuring safety and compliance. If an audience member heads for a restricted area, the 'Black Masks' will herd them back.

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## Ten Questions

One of the first things to do is visit the Punchdrunk website:

<http://www.punchdrunk.org.uk/home>

Firstly, click on the 'ABOUT' section.

1. What comments reveal Punchdrunk's attitude towards, and expectations from, the audience?
2. On the right-hand side of the 'ABOUT' page, Punchdrunk list all their productions. List at least 10 shows which were based on (or inspired by) classical texts. You may have to search the website to find this information!
3. Which of their productions was a *Doctor Who* adventure?

Now visit the 'PRESS' section and watch the video: 'Burn the Seats': Felix Barrett (For the Love of the Theatre)

4. What does Felix Barrett say his 'personal mission' is?
5. How does he describe the difference between the space (disused building) and a traditional theatre?
6. How does Felix describe his ideas for Punchdrunk Travel?
7. What does Felix say about the future of storytelling?

Next, go to the 'FAQ' section.

8. What is their answer to 'Why are you called Punchdrunk?'
9. Punchdrunk prefer not to use the term 'immersive' for their work. How do they describe their work? Why do they insist on this definition?

Finally, find the 'INTERNATIONAL' section of their website.

10. What can you find out about Punchdrunk's partnership with Rihanna?



### Assessment Top Tip

### A Level AQA: Component 2

Your devised pieces of theatre for Component 2 must be informed by a detailed understanding of their work and methodologies. The final performance must be entirely your own, reflecting your intentions and ideas, and you must produce a Working notebook which documents this process.

The research task above will come in handy for your Working notebook.

Section 1 of your Working notebook is for Research and Rationale. In this section, you must provide 'an explanation of [your] dramatic influences, including the influence of [your] research'. This will also bag you some AO1 marks (*Making links between dramatic theory and practice*).

Many teachers use drama to *immerse* students in subjects ranging from History to Science. Here are some examples on the topic! *For example:*

- **Physics:** students are split into protons, electrons and neutrons and devise a play about the relationship between rival gangs.
- **Biology:** a student is cast as 'the common cold virus' whose aim is to penetrate the body. Other students are the 'antibodies'. They devise a scenario in which they fight the virus and win!
- **History:** students love staging historical events, such as improvising conversations between historical figures or writing a comedy sketch of a historical event.
- **Languages:** students sculpt their partners to form an object – e.g. scissors, a cat – and then have to guess the word (in the appropriate language).

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## Prac-tivity 1

In groups, devise an immersive dramatic scenario to teach a topic to young people. Use immersive techniques. For example:

- How do magnets attract/repel?
- Creating the sounds and sights of a geographical location
- 'Behind the scenes' – helping a historical figure make a key decision

### Post-activity Questions

Having devised your activity (and maybe tried it out!), what could you do to make it bigger and better? Consider:

Venue .....

Performers .....

Design .....

Sound effects .....

Other .....

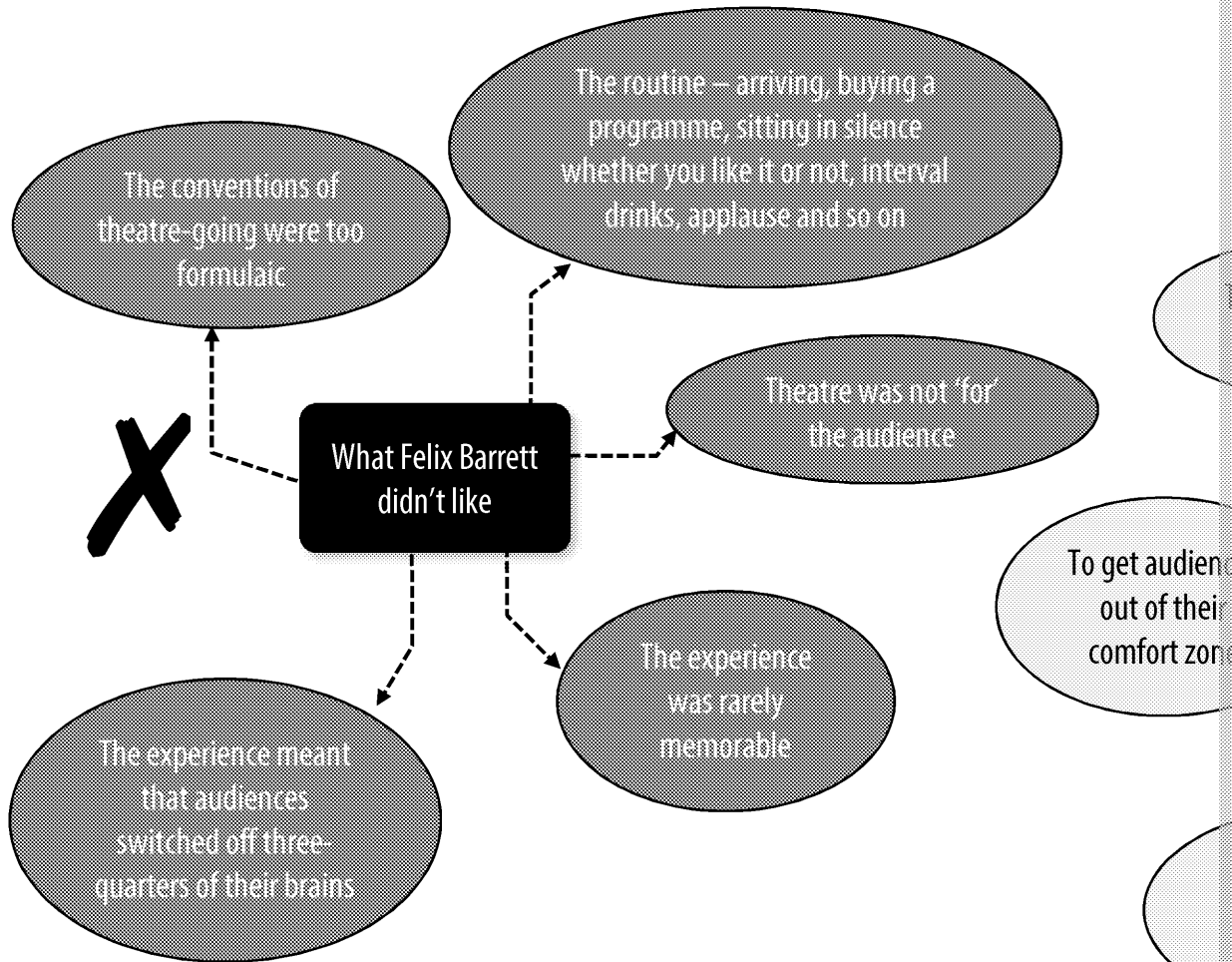
This activity will help you to start making connections between dramatic techniques and the text.

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# Artistic Intentions

Felix Barrett's artistic intentions for what would become Punchdrunk were formed at university. Although he hated the theatre. Punchdrunk was not formed as a protest; he just wanted to provide an alternative.



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## Activity 1

The following quotes describe the typical audience experience of a Punchdrunk show.

Using the information below, complete the table on the following page. This will allow you to explore the methodologies of Punchdrunk – *especially* their relationship with the audience.

‘There was no auditorium. We were shown into a really smart nightclub to get drinks and listen to the live music. We could return to the nightclub any time or use the bathroom. I didn’t realise it at the time, but all the ushers were dressed as characters.’

‘We were led into a lift which was being operated by a bell-boy character on each floor - but we couldn’t choose which one.’

‘I heard about the show when a friend sent me the link to a cleaning company website to reserve a timeslot.’

‘When I went to see *X* I quickly lost my friend - it was all so dark and maze-like. We stuck together. Luckily I found her later at the bar and we agreed to meet there was no interval. It was nice to sit down!’

‘We were offered several different entry times, which seemed to be standard. Once I was inside, I couldn’t believe how many people were already in the room. I was in a small group!’

‘The building was huge, and for a while I felt like I was in a labyrinth. I had been to places I’d visited before but I have no idea how.’

‘There were human hair samples in the hospital... We could pick them up and use them.’

‘My friend told me about a great scene she’d experienced in the ballroom. I went to the ballroom.’

‘I suddenly realized something was going on when everyone wearing masks was at the other end of the forest (real trees!). I tagged on to the end and was led into a choreographed dance scene.’

‘When we went to see *Sleep No More* we had to ‘check into the hotel’ in order to get our tickets, which were actually single playing cards...’

‘There were stewards dressed in black from head to toe (including their faces).’

‘I went into *X*’s bedroom, which felt a bit weird, like I was a burglar. I was in the room, the drawers and cupboards could be opened.’

‘I sat next to a character as she applied lipstick in the mirror. She came back but she wasn’t there.’

‘We agreed to leave together after three hours. My feet were really hurt but I was sure I hadn’t seen everything.’

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| <b>The <i>traditional</i> way to experience theatre</b>                                                                                                                                                              | <b>The <i>Punchdrunk</i></b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| You read publicity about the play and decide to buy tickets from the box office either by phone, in person or online.                                                                                                |                              |
| You get ready for your night out. You arrive at the theatre in good time to collect your tickets, meet friends and order interval drinks.                                                                            |                              |
| You enter by a main door.                                                                                                                                                                                            |                              |
| You buy a programme, chat with your companions and then make your way into the auditorium – are you in the stalls or the circle? One of the FOH staff members checks your ticket and directs you to the right aisle. |                              |
| Sitting in your seat, you flick through the programme and enjoy looking around. Perhaps you can see the set.                                                                                                         |                              |
| The house lights are dimmed – it's show time! You sit and watch from the comfort of your seat.                                                                                                                       |                              |
| Interval: you nip to the bathroom, have a drink and chat to your companions about the play so far.                                                                                                                   |                              |
| At the end, the actors take their curtain call. They bow and you join in the applause. If it's really good, there's a standing ovation.                                                                              |                              |

# Theatrical Purpose and Practice

The main purpose of any Punchdrunk production is to put the audience right in the epicentre of the experience.

To do this requires rethinking traditional performance space. Felix Barrett is interested in the 'life' of a space. What he means by this is the kind of emotional response you might have to a space.

## Research Task 2

Below is a list of some of the London locations used by Punchdrunk. Can you match the locations to the plays?

What else can you find out about each space? Why do you think these locations were chosen?

*The Drowned Man*

*Faust*

*The Firebird Ball*

*Tunnel 228*

*The Chair*

*The Duchess Of Malfi*

*Sleep No More*

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## Prac-tivity 2

Go for a walk! Walk into spaces in your school buildings, or in your local area standing in the spaces you find, simply soaking up the atmosphere.

Aim to find three contrasting spaces. These could be a sterile space, such as walls and strip lights; a historical space such as an old church or a local land such as a field or a beach. Try to find one space which is very restricted such as a doorway.

Record your impressions as you explore each space. You could film these or write adjectives down in a notebook.

- **Use your senses:** visual impressions; the size and architectural design; smells and scents; the quality of sounds or silence (distinct or muffled); temperatures, and so on
- **Emotional responses:** indifferent; detached; alert; hostile; unnerved; contemplative; sorrowful; curious and so on. Is it a place you would like to leave? Does the space energise you, or make you feel sluggish?

**Back in class, discuss:**

- shared and differing impressions of the same space
- the kinds of stories a space might have to tell
- how any of the plays you have studied might be reinterpreted by the spaces you have explored

**As a group:**

1. Choose one of the places you have explored and create a short piece of performance in that space. This could be inspired by the atmosphere, the history, the shape of the space or its current use.
2. Stage a scene from one of your set texts in two or three of the different spaces. Discuss how each performance is impacted by the space. Do new ideas emerge?



### Assessment Top Tip

**AS Level AQA: Component 2: Performance**  
**A Level AQA: Component 2: Performance**

This task will be particularly useful for AS Level Component 2 and A Level Component 2 if you have chosen to be assessed as a set designer or as a director. You need to 'learn how to design and realise sets that contribute positively to performance and are fully aligned with the dramatic aims of the text'. This is useful for directors as you must 'develop the ability to select, create and develop ideas for performance spaces', where you are required to develop ideas for 'Create and develop ideas', in a formal performance.

Keep in mind an audience for this exercise. How will they inhabit the space? What restrictions does the space have? Is there a limit to the number of people in the space? Make sure you note down your thoughts and findings for your Reflective report (A Level)!

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# The Innovative Nature of Their /

## Masking the Audience

What makes Punchdrunk stand out from other immersive theatre companies is the **masking** of the audience. There are many theories about the effects of this approach, many of which

1. Masks give audience members a **sense of anonymity and neutrality**. Therefore, each person will have the confidence to take more risks, such as getting really close to the performance space, as well as enjoying the voyeuristic element to take more risks.
  - *However*, other research has shown that masked audiences are *more* reticent and tend to keep their distance from the action, preferring to watch scenes unfold from a distance close to the action.
2. Masks **conceal facial expressions**, so there are no opportunities to exchange glances with other audience members. This enables each person to have an individual, rather than a collective, experience.
  - *However*, this introduces a competitive edge, rather than a herd mentality. Audience members vie for position and push themselves forwards to get the best view. So, despite looking like a Greek chorus, there is certainly no sense of working together.
3. Masks give the audience a **sense of empowerment** which is so crucial to Felix Barker's work.
  - *However*, despite the claim that spectators are liberated from their usual passive role, audiences are controlled during a Punchdrunk production, whether for safety or artistic reasons.



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## Prac-tivity 3

The only way to experience the masked audience is to try it for yourselves.

1. Individually, create a short solo mime scene. This should be a simple one, such as preparing a meal, writing a letter, or getting ready to go out. For example, apply make-up in one part of the space and then move to the other part to put your shoes on.
2. Everyone should perform their scene in turn, while the rest of the group act as spectators. They can watch and follow the performer, but must not speak or interfere with the performance. Masks must be kept on.
3. If you have a sizeable group, you can devise a short scene in pairs or small groups (with dialogue), following the same principle of using the whole space.
4. Whatever the masked spectators do, the performer(s) must ignore them and continue the scene as if they aren't there.

You could, of course, try this in one of the locations you identified in PRAC-1.

**Afterwards, discuss your experiences:**

1. Were the masks comfortable?
2. What was the effect of obscuring your vision?
3. How did you feel about the other masked spectators?
4. Did anyone feel braver – or did some people feel timid?
5. What were your impressions of the overall aesthetic (*the masked audience productions is often referred to as 'ghostly'*)?
6. Did the masks affect performer–spectator proximity?
7. Did the masks affect the way the spectators engaged with the space?



### Assessment Top Tip

### AS Level AQA: Component 2:

In AQA AS Level Component 2, you are required to practically explore and analyse your own work - thus fulfilling Assessment Objective 4, 'analyse your own work and the work of others'. You will do this by producing a written analysis of 'the interpretive process and analysis and evaluation of performance'. This provides you with the opportunity to start practising your evaluative skills. Answer the questions at the bottom critically about your own work and provide a critique when writing your portfolio.

In the Analysis and Evaluation section of your portfolio, you must discuss 'the contribution to the success of the final performance, with reference to [you] applied the ideas of [your] chosen practitioner' (AQA specification).

Punchdrunk like to document their development process. Notes, photos and sketches help develop ideas and track the progress of the piece. For you, keeping a portfolio will help your creative process! Don't forget you can include photographs and sketches to support your notes.

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## Set Design

Whether you are an acting or a design candidate, you cannot appreciate Punchdrunk's developed understanding of their meticulous attention to detail. Every single part of the story. The decor is part of the narrative – audiences often forget about following actors in exploring the interiors.

Punchdrunk staff members, alongside an army of volunteers, spend months sourcing details. The aesthetic of a Punchdrunk production is crucial to creating their parallel world, whether the space is inhabited by actors or left empty, to be explored by the audience. Creating a sense of time and place, suggesting a mood, adding texture, hinting at a mystery. The Punchdrunk world is a multisensory environment of sights, sounds, smells and tastes. You can find online about 'getting the most out of a Punchdrunk show', 'who to follow', or 'fun things to see'. Facebook discussions (containing spoilers!) with information on characters, maps and overlapping plots.

*The Drowned Man* had two settings. One was the fictional Temple Studios, a 1960s art installation, prop stores, soundstages and recording studios; the other a desert town, with a saloon in a forest. The movie setting was full of cinematic imagery, referencing the illusionary world, including film costume and prosthetic make-up. As an example, one of the characters is Dolores Grey. Her dressing room reflected a performer obsessed with her image and surrounded by mirrors, elegant jewellery, brushes, perfumes and specially made moisturisers. 'Youth'. Snow and faded pearls provided the colour palette. Each of the thousands of objects was designed, and audience members are encouraged to pick them up and examine them. As authentic as possible, so the textures underfoot – from woodchip, to sand, to sawdust. The forest had been purchased on eBay, perfume and powder scents had been sprayed into the air.

For *Sleep No More*, the music and mood were inspired by Hitchcock films, particularly *Psycho*. The set was soaked in Catholic and voodoo iconography, including a defiled shrine to a child's shoes. Other imagery included two wrapped parcels inside a pram, a blood-soaked Macbeth and his wife bathe after Duncan's murder, a room full of medical instruments, notes made by Lady Macbeth's psychiatrist, lots of stuffed, dead animals... while the lighting created different shades of darkness.



### Assessment Top Tip

**AS Level AQA: Component 2: Performance**  
**A Level AQA: Component 2: Performance**

Punchdrunk's designs are cohesive, and closely integrated with the meaning to the audience. If you choose to be assessed as a design candidate (AS Level), this will offer you plenty of opportunities to demonstrate your ability to support the creative intentions of your performance as a whole. Whether of set, costume, lighting, sound or puppet, AQA asks that you 'design an element so that it 'contributes positively to the overall effect of the performance'.

This is a great opportunity to collect some AO2 marks - 'apply theatrical artistic intentions in live performance'.

Be sure to communicate and collaborate with the rest of the members of the company to ensure that the design elements and the performance elements are

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## Prac-tivity 4

Your task is to develop a character by deciding what would go in a box or draw the box and its contents, or create it in Word or PowerPoint. Even better, a shoebox is perfect!

**THE RULES:** every single item must be significant for that character and their world (not outside the world of the play) and you must be prepared to explain your choices.

- Jewellery
- Letters
- Diary entries
- A typed note
- Photographs
- Something with a scent – a bottle of perfume perhaps
- Dried flowers
- A piece of fabric
- A feather
- Medical records
- A lock of hair
- A map, or part of one
- A playing card
- Something torn from a newspaper
- A key
- A book
- Poetry
- Ribbon, or string
- A doll
- Lipstick in a particular shade
- A mirror or piece of coloured glass
- ... the list is endless, and up to you!



### Assessment Top Tip

### *A Level AQA: Component 2*

This activity will be particularly useful for Component 2: Creative Text. In this component you are required to produce an original piece of devised text. You can choose to be assessed as a performer, designer or director. This activity asks that you develop your ability to 'explore devising and rehearsing'.

If you are a performer, this activity could be employed as a rehearsal exercise to 'interpret [your] characters or develop roles'. For a set designer, it provides an opportunity to 'develop ability to create opportunities for the performer to create for an audience'. This is part of A01 - 'create and develop ideas for a performance'.

Remember to note down these activities and ideas in your Workbook.

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# Working Methods

## Space

Once a space has been found, Punchdrunk company members have to decide how the space will be used. Barrett has always insisted that it is the space which informs the piece, not the other way round.

**Size:** The most important aspect is the size and scale, so that the audience can wander themselves in the building. This makes the audience seek out the performers rather than being entertained.

**Darkness:** Turning it into a Punchdrunk space requires key ingredients: blacking out the windows. Shows rely on darkness to create the sense of discovery and suspense for the audience. They also create pockets of light.

**Sensory Aspect:** Then the set designers take over (see the **Set Design** section) to create a sensory experience for the audience.



### Assessment Top Tip

### AQA A Level Component 2

As part of Component 2: Creating Original Drama, you are required to write in your notebook. In Section 1 (Rationale and Research) of the notebook, you must include an 'explanation of [your] dramatic influences, including influence from [...] [your] chosen practitioner'.

Understanding Punchdrunk's use of space will help you justify your methodology in your written work. You must have a comprehensive understanding of production elements and the performance choices of the practitioners, and the reasons for them. Finally, you must be able to detail this in your notebook. This will bag you some valuable AO1 marks - 'making connections between dramatic theory and practice'.

## Activity 1

Read the extract on the following page, taken from Act I, Scene i of *Dr Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe. Here, Faustus decides to abandon his scholarly studies of the law and divinity in order to 'ravish'd' his mind. Imagine you are attached to the set design team. What objects would you suggest for Faustus' desk?

### Hints and Tips:

1. Four areas of study/professions are mentioned, yet he feels he is frustrated by them.
2. He can read Latin, finds particular passages in the Bible with ease, and references them.
3. What aspects of magic does he find fascinating?
4. Faustus is keen on the possibility of being in command of 'All things that move upon the face of the earth'. What object(s) would that suggest?

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FAUSTUS discovered in his study.

FAUSTUS. Settle thy studies, Faustus, and begin  
To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess:  
Having commenc'd, be a divine in show,  
Yet level at the end of every art,  
And live and die in Aristotle's works.  
Sweet Analytics, 'tis thou hast ravish'd me!  
*Bene disserere est finis logices.*

Is, to dispute well, logic's chiefest end?  
Affords this art no greater miracle?  
Then read no more; thou hast attain'd that end:  
A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit:  
Bid Economy farewell, and Galen come:  
Be a physician, Faustus; heap up gold,  
And be eterniz'd for some wondrous cure:  
*Summum bonum medicinae sanitas,*  
The end of physic is our body's health.  
Why, Faustus, hast thou not attain'd that end?  
Are not thy bills hung up as monuments,  
Whereby whole cities have escap'd the plague,  
And thousand desperate maladies been cur'd?  
Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man.  
Couldst thou make men to live eternally,  
Or, being dead, raise them to life again,  
Then this profession were to be esteem'd.  
Physic, farewell! Where is Justinian?  
[Reads.]

*Si una eademque res legatu duobus, alter rem, alter  
valorem rei, &c.*

A petty case of paltry legacies!  
[Reads.]

*Exhoereditare filium non potest pater, nisi –*

Such is the subject of the ins  
And universal body of the la  
This study fits a mercenary  
Who aims at nothing but ex  
Too servile and illiberal for  
When all is done, divinity is  
Jerome's Bible, Faustus; view  
[Reads.]

*Stipendium peccati mors est*  
Reward of sin is death: that  
[Reads.]

*Si peccasse negamus,*  
*fallimur, et nulla est in nobis*  
have no sin, we deceive our  
us. Why, then, belike we ma  
Ay, we must die an everlast  
What doctrine call you this  
What will be, shall be? Div  
These metaphysics of magic  
And necromantic books are  
Lines, circles, scenes, letters  
Ay, these are those that Fau  
O, what a world of profit and  
Of power, of honour, and of  
Is promis'd to the studious  
All things that move between  
Shall be at my command: en  
Are but obeyed in their sev  
But his dominion that exce  
Stretcheth as far as doth the  
A sound magician is a demig  
Here tire, my brains, to get a

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## Going Further...

Below is a very rough guide to the floors of *Sleep No More*'s McKittrick Hotel, set in the city's nightclubs, with around 100 rooms occupying 100,000 square feet of space. The guide is nowhere near the amount of detail of the show. Even a three-hour viewing is not enough to see it all.

| The McKittrick Hotel |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Top floor            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The King James Sanatorium. Eight beds. A crucifix at the head of the bed. Unpleasant medical equipment and a case full of bottles. A room used by Lady Macbeth when she bathes her blood-soaked husband. There is a padded cell complete with straitjacket, and a psychiatrist's office from a therapy session with Lady Macbeth.</li><li>• A maze within the woods, complete with breeze, the sound of crickets, and fresh air.</li><li>• A hut, where a nurse chalks a message on a post, and takes an audience member to Punchdrunk's' coveted one-on-ones.</li></ul> |
| Third floor          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bar with a bartender serving shots.</li><li>• Gallow Green village, which has a taxidermist, a detective agency, a room where you can eat candy from the jars, and an embalming business.</li><li>• A cabaret area where the witches dance (topless) to techno music with strobe lighting.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Second floor         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bedrooms, one of which contains a crib. Headless baby dolls seen in the hallway.</li><li>• King Duncan's room and scene of his death, with blood on the walls.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| First floor          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The hotel lobby (including a check-in counter, lost luggage room, and the Porter's office).</li><li>• A small dressing room where one of the scenes takes place.</li><li>• The Manderley Bar.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Ground floor         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mezzanine overlooking the ballroom.</li><li>• The crypt.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Basement             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ballroom, with a long table where Banquo's ghost appears.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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## Activity 2

You won't have the four months and 200 volunteers available to create anything on the Punchdrunk, but it is possible to design your own floor plan for any text you choose below or, if you are feeling creative, why not create your own model?



### Assessment Top Tip

AS Level AQA Component 2

A Level AQA Component 2

A Level AQA Component 2

If you have chosen to be assessed as a design candidate for any of the components, you should use this activity to help you envisage your design decisions. While you have a colossal warehouse at your disposal, you can still incorporate Punchdrunk into your own work.

If you are a set designer, you will need to think about the kinds of sets that will inhabit the space that you have. A general AQA A Level requirement is that you produce sets that 'contribute positively to the overall effect of the performance' and 'create opportunities for performers and meaning for an audience'.

This will help you hit AO2 - *Apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions*.

| Your Location |  |
|---------------|--|
| Top floor     |  |
| Third floor   |  |
| Second floor: |  |
| First floor:  |  |
| Ground floor  |  |
| Basement      |  |

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## Non-linear, Multi-layered Narratives

We live in a world where we are exposed to still and moving images on an almost permanent basis. Punchdrunk base many of their shows on classical texts, particularly Shakespeare. The writing is highly visual – if not cinematic – in its impact. Punchdrunk capitalises on visual literacy by foregrounding non-textual forms of expression.

By using a classic text as the basis for the show, the audience have the opportunity (if they want) – if they don't already know the story. Felix Barrett believes that classical texts are richer and more multidimensional than modern drama.

### Less Is More

Felix Barrett believes that mute dancers hold more performance power than actors speaking. When they are spoken, are often recognisably from the source play ('Out, damn spot') but it is the visual elements around the vast space. Lines from source plays can turn up in all sorts of places, not just on the walls, scribbled on notepads, or embedded into part of the set in some way.

### Deconstructed

Without a beginning-middle-end storyline to follow, a Punchdrunk show is more of a puzzle. The clues about story and character are everywhere. It's like playing a video game in which you have to explore it further.

## Activity 4

If you had to choose **10 quotations only** from a play to form the basis of a production, what would they be, and why? (Consider set design, movement, lighting and sound effects, what would they be, and why?)

“

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## Prac-tivity 5

There is no requirement to have any dance training or experience for this activity.

### ACTION AND RESPONSE

1. The first step in the process of creating choreographic storytelling is to select a text below (and, indeed, in the play as a whole), a key theme is power. Identify certain qualities of movement. Underline all the vocabulary which might

#### FAUSTUS

O, what a world of profit and delight,  
Of power, of honor and omnipotence,  
Is promised to the studious artisan!  
All things that move between the quiet poles  
Shall be at my command. Emperors and kings  
Are but obeyed in their several provinces,  
But his dominion that exceeds in this  
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man.  
A sound magician is a demigod. (I.i.52–59)

2. Now – find a partner and find a space. One of you starts by making a movement which your partner responds to instinctively. Think of it as a conversation carried out forth progressively, so each response is triggered by what went before.
3. Try to utilise different body parts, angles and levels.
4. Repeat this process so you build up a series of between 6 and 10 distinct movements. Less is more if you find it hard to remember them. Then practise them until they are memorised.
5. Once you have devised your movement sequence, choose some music to accompany it and show your piece to the class.

**NEXT STEPS:** you can play with these movement sequences as part of the devising process for your project. For example:

- Experiment with a contrasting style of music. How does this affect the quality of your performance? Does it make your piece stronger or softer, spikier or smoother? Is the speed or rhythm affected? Does this variation reinforce or dilute the theme?
- Take your performance to a different space – somewhere smaller or larger, one which frames your sequence. How does this affect the piece?



### Assessment Top Tip

### A Level AQA Component 2: Create and Develop

This Prac-tivity would be a great way to start your devising process, to 'research relevant processes and practices of theatre making to inform your work'. In this component you must choose a stimulus from which to begin your work. The stimulus can be chosen from a range of different material: literature, film, music, etc. The activity above is a great way to begin thinking more deeply about a stimulus. It will also earn you some AO1 marks - 'create and develop your work'.

Be sure to keep in mind your findings from this activity for your Work-based Learning project.

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# Performance Style / Theatrical Co

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Art? Dance? Theatre? Design? Cabaret? Architecture? Spectacle?  
Site-specific?

Punchdrunk's performance style is unique, because they merge so many  
It has been suggested that they have created an entirely new theatrical ge

Having thought about the significance of the space and the intricacies of its design, you are overlooking the fact that the space is actually designed to contain a performance! For them, the performance is an essential and integral part of the space, not separate from it. Their performance style is a blend of movement.

## Choreography

Felix Barrett's dissatisfaction with text led to the appointment of Maxine Doyle to choreograph *Sleep No More*. Both Doyle and Barrett agreed that the 'story' was the least important. They sought to communicate the metaphorical, sensual and visceral luxuriousness of language.

Maxine Doyle's choreography was focused on finding a physical response to the play's themes of waking and sleep. She has spoken about the need for the performers to respond to the space. For example, the performer playing Faust found a place under a dark stairwell which

Athletic dance movement is a key part of a successful Punchdrunk show. Paul Zivkoski, who played a professional gymnast. Leslie Kraus, who played Lady Macbeth, is quoted as saying: *furniture, like a huge double bed, a dresser, or even a wall. I almost never dance with it*

Maxine Doyle's emotionally driven choreography has been compared in style to contemporary dance. The company also offer workshops, where professional dancers / physical theatre performers teach choreographic storytelling techniques, devising their own movement sequences which integrate story, space, sound, and set design.

Although audiences may feel that a Punchdrunk show is slightly chaotic, all the sequences are carefully planned and meticulously timed. This is all the more important when you consider the physicality of the performance; Felix Barrett references Artaud when he talks about how the physicality of the performance affects the audience.

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## One-on-ones

Theatre performed to an audience of one is powerful, not least because of the proximity of the performer. There is no chance to sit back and passively take it all in. Boundaries disappear completely. The one-on-one encounter is the most coveted experience in a Punchdrunk production.

The one-on-one is when an audience member is selected by one of the cast and led away from the main space into a locked closet; a caravan; an office; a cabin; a bathroom – where the mask is removed and the experience is shared between performer and spectator.

Those who have experienced a one-on-one tend to be quite cryptic about the actual experience, using terms such as ‘intense’, ‘seductive’ or ‘emotional’. They tell stories of the actor speaking directly to you, then smearing some of his make-up from his face onto yours; of being told a story and sniffed; being tucked into bed by a nurse and gently caressed; drinking whisky being offered by a bartender; being greeted by an actor in a Pierrot costume and being told a story; being pulled into a bed by a character; being told Banquo in *Sleep No More*, made to kneel down and pray, given a sword, having your face kissed by a kiss and the words: ‘Don’t forget me.’ The experience usually ends with a deliberate action, such as being led over sandy ground to stand under a blazing hot lantern; or following a path through complete darkness then engulfed with a flash of blinding white light.

### Activity 5

**Read** this experience of a one-on-one encounter below. It was written by Tara Elizabeth, a London-based culture and religion journalist.

An hour into *Sleep No More*, I was sure that I was about to die. Shortly after entering New York’s McKittrick Hotel – the deceptively realistic setting of Punchdrunk’s *Sleep No More* Macbeth mashup – an eerily alluring woman in a floor-length red satin dress (I later discovered), had singled me out as I wandered, unspoiled and suffering from the appropriate vertigo, into the dilapidated Deco bar where she was performing. “Is that All There Is?” After staring me down – ensuring that I was suited to the experience – she led me into a private boudoir: removing my mask and feeding me a vial of tears.

Then things began to get strange. Hecate seized hold of my wrists, leading me into a dark forest, forcing my hands against a series of branches, telling me the history of the forest and a wood. Her hair fell into my face; her hands were tight against my shoulders, close enough for me to feel her breath against my cheek. I wondered – half-initiated, or perhaps murdered; was I expected to spend the rest of the night in this space, unmasked, in collusion with Hecate’s subservient witches? Instead, my fingernails digging into my skin, and my fear gave way to a stronger impulse: she had entrusted me with a mission – to retrieve a stolen ring – a quest that sent me back to McKittrick as I dug up graveyards, rifled through hotel lockers, crawled through the corridors increasingly desperate to dry her tears.

<http://www.litro.co.uk/2014/05/manderley-revisited/>

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In the space below, note down the specific techniques used in the encounter and the

**Techniques:**

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

**Effects:**

1. ....  
.....
2. ....  
.....
3. ....  
.....
4. ....  
.....
5. ....  
.....

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# Collaborations

## Activity 6

Punchdrunk have collaborated with a number of organisations, some with a more commercial focus than others. Here are just a few of them.

★ *Against Captain's Orders* with the National Maritime Museum

★ *Under the Eiderdown* - primary school project

★ Stella Artois - *The Night Chauffeur* in 2010 and *The Black Diamond*, 2016

★ *The Drowned Man* with the National Theatre and *Time Out* magazine, where clues were planted in print and online, directing readers to a website where they could enrol as members of a secret society called The Black Room. A few lucky people were given a secret password which they had to repeat to a *Time Out* vendor, as well as having an assignation with a stranger. This stranger would perform a 'one-on-one' experience before handing over an amulet, granting special access to various areas of *The Drowned Man's* performance space.

★ Louis Vuitton - new store launch

★ Playstation

★ *The Uncoloured* conjunction group project, funded by the Council, with audio tour included. Karo

★ with

★ Pro second

★ Alex sec

★ The with the

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Can you work out which are ‘pure’ Punchdrunk theatre productions, which are corporate and which might be enrichment activities? The sections on Partnerships and Enrichment on the table below to record your responses:

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Theatre</b>    |  |
| <b>Enrichment</b> |  |
| <b>Commercial</b> |  |

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# Influences

## Music and Film

Music and film often inspire Felix Barrett.

- *Tunnel 228* was inspired by Fritz Lang's expressionist silent sci-fi movie, *M*.
- *It Felt Like a Kiss* was set in 1960s America, during the golden age of pop music. Adam Curtis, experimental film-maker.
- *The Drowned Man*, set in the 1960s, swayed to the sounds of doo-wop and a Lynchian dreamscape aesthetic, the experience was described by some audiences as 'like the film *Mulholland Drive*, including hearing blended tracks from the film's soundtrack.'
- *Faust*'s soundtrack was inspired by the Blues – the music of the devil!
- Prior to *Sleep No More*, Felix Barrett came across an album of film noir soundtracks.

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## Activity 7

In pairs, discuss and match the quotations below to a suitable film noir visual motif.



### Assessment Top Tip

### AS Level AQA: Component 2: P

As part of Component 2: Process and Performance, you are required to submit a portfolio which details your 'creative and interpretive processes'. In the development section, AQA asks that you explain 'the possibilities offered by the extracts in performance and the opportunities/challenges presented by the ideas and methodologies of [your] chosen practitioner'.

Understanding Punchdrunk's filmic approach to texts will not only help you identify the possibilities offered, and justify your application of their methods to your work, but you some AO1 marks - 'making connections between dramatic texts and filmic representations'.

### Film Noir motifs

### Macbeth

Urban settings, often industrial, always maze-like

'Stars, hide your fires; let not light see my black and deep desires.'

Bars, nightclubs, gambling dens

'All my pretty ones? / Did you look  
What, all my pretty chickens and their dam's at one fell swoop.'

Smoke-filled interiors

Shadowy alleyways

'... blood will have blood...'

Neon signs

'Come, thick night, and pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell.'

Lamplight

Smoky backdrops

'... the sleeping and the dead.'

Silhouetted figures

'There is husbandry in heaven.'

Claustrophobic spaces: doors, windows and stairwells

'A light, a light!'

Rain glistening on windows

'Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand?'

The shadow of Venetian blinds across faces

'... he unseam'd him from the nave to the chops.'

Cigarette smoking

'Light thickens; and the crow / Lays his base / Upon the fallow-plough.'

Unsettling mise en scène with a lack of balance in composition

'Is this a dagger which I see before me?'

Mirrors and reflections

'... And on thy blade and dudgeon / Gashes the fell fellows.'

Framed portraits

'Yet who would have thought / Thaw'd thus our little summer's day?'

Small areas of light surrounded by darkness

'I have given suck, and know / That milks me: / I would, while the pluck'd my nipple from his booby's entrails, had I so sworn as you have sworn.'

Faces lit with harsh lighting

Chiaroscuro

Skewed angles

Birds of all kinds – especially crows and ravens

### DISCUSS

Why is film noir a suitable style for a production of Shakespeare's Macbeth?

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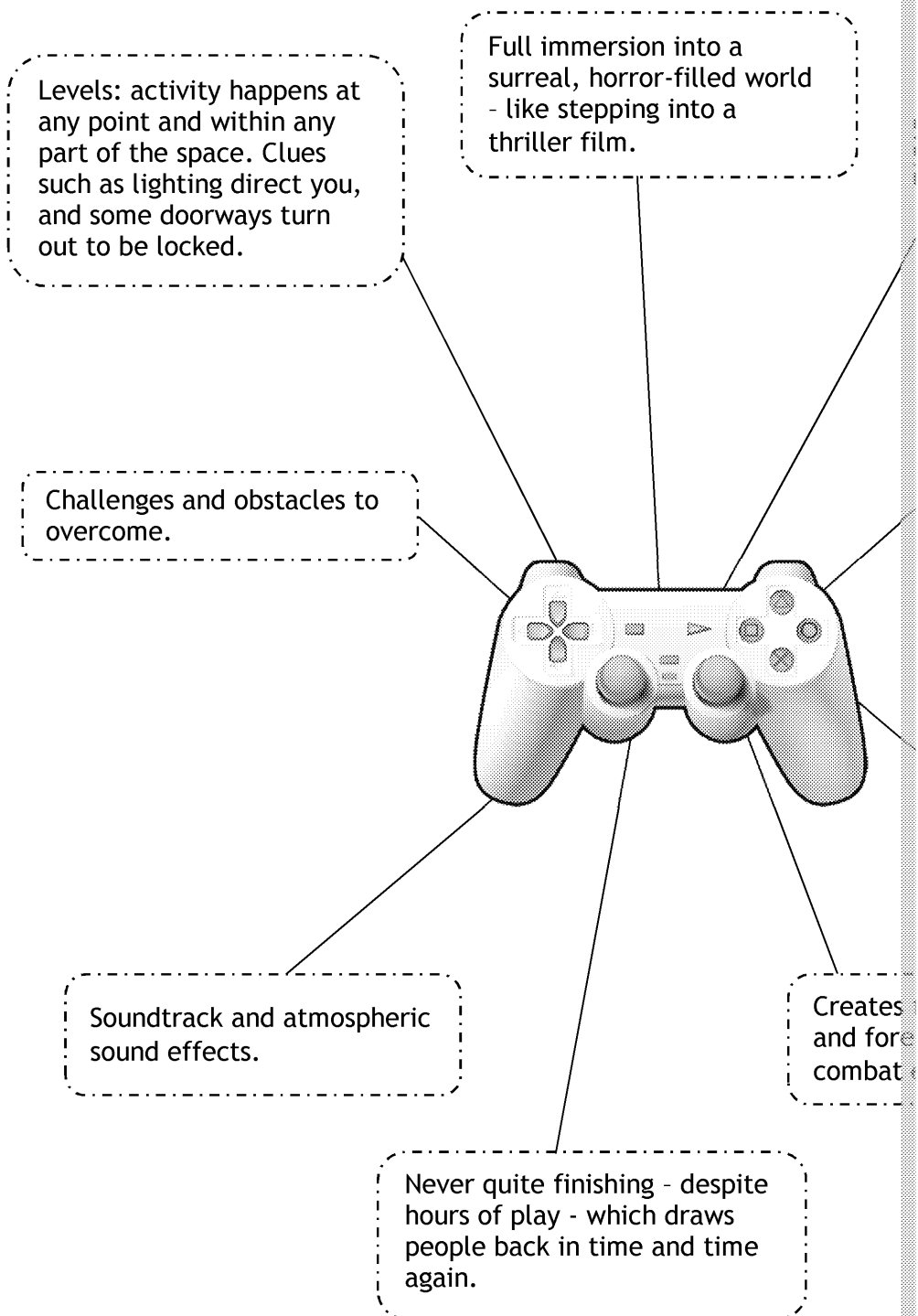
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## Gaming

The game-like aspect of their shows is undisputable, to the extent that there are several communities discussing different ideas about solving the puzzles embedded in a *Punchdrunk* show. In *Sleep No More*, finding Hecate's Ring is the crowning achievement for regular attendees. Many fans say that *Sleep No More* is a similar experience to playing *Bioshock*, a first-person shooter. The search starts if and when an audience member is selected for a one-on-one experience with one of the three witches, and sent to find her missing ring.

Many fans say that *Sleep No More* is a similar experience to playing *Bioshock*, a first-person shooter. For example:



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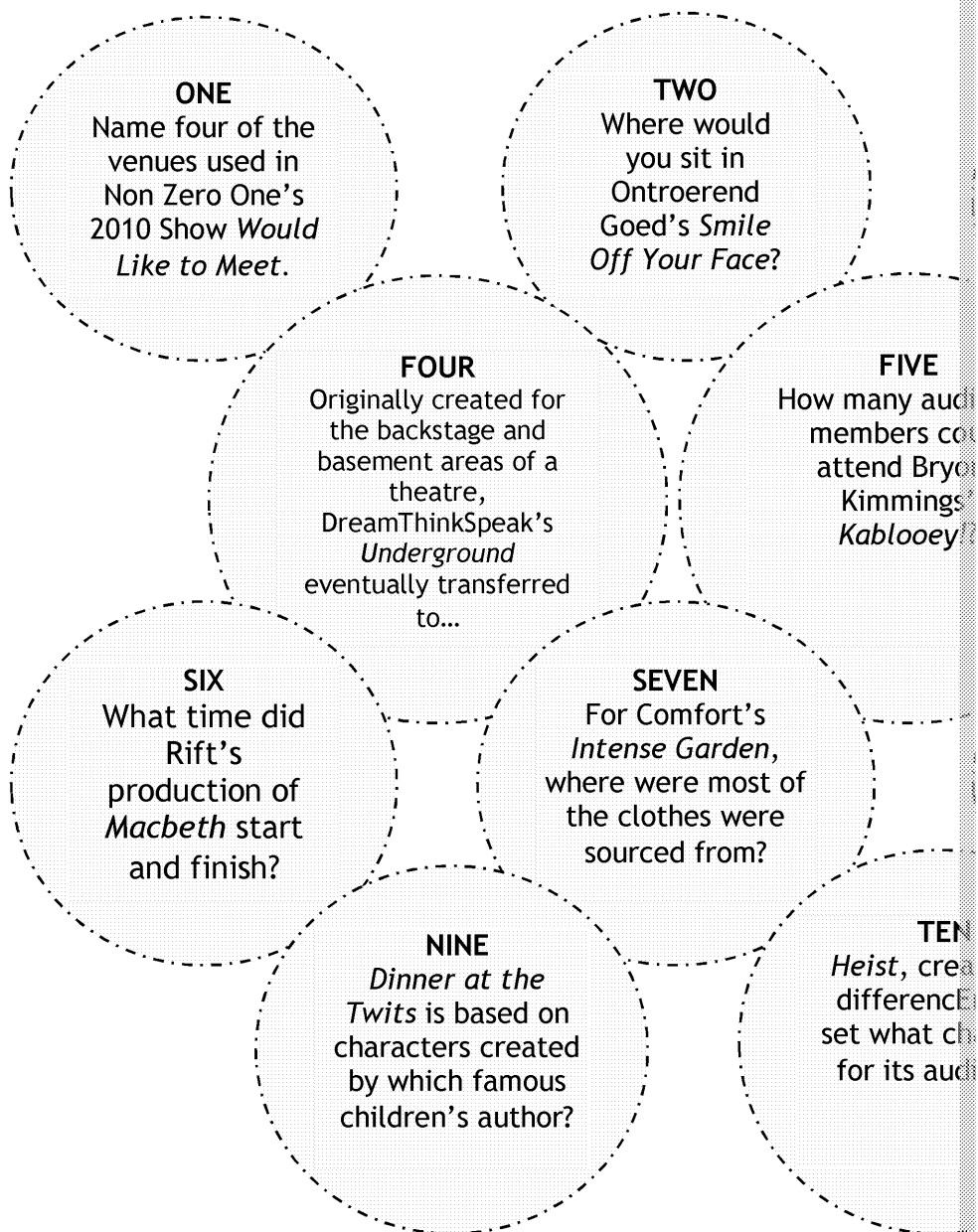


## Influences on Others

Punchdrunk arrived on the scene just as immersive theatre was emerging as the next big thing. **Cinema**, **You Me Bum Bum Train** and **Shunt** are all companies who specialise in the same type of theatre. Many immersive/interactive theatre companies have launched in the wake of Punchdrunk.

One of the most unexpected influences of Punchdrunk has been on the world of advertising. **Stella Artois** and **Cornetto** are just a few of the companies who have embraced the immersive experience in their marketing campaigns. These pop-up immersives generally happen for one night only and are often used for magazine and TV ads.

Try the fun quiz below to help you find out more about the range of immersive theatre in the 21st century.



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## Shelf Life

In a recent feature article for *Exeunt* magazine (a free, online publication about theatre) writers debated the topic: *Is immersive theatre broken?*

This is part of a growing feeling among critics and audiences that the novelty that is immersive theatre is beginning to wear off.

### Criticisms of immersive theatre

- ✗ It's *IMPOSSIBLE* to follow the story!
- ✗ The whole experience can be overwhelming - too big, too much stuff, and not enough satisfaction.
- ✗ There is no thing as freedom of choice in immersive theatre - it's actually full of circumscribing and invisible restrictions.
- ✗ The audience aren't *REALLY* involved, are they? They're just standing around dark corridors wondering where everyone has gone - that is deeply unsatisfying.
- ✗ Audiences have become more savvy, which has made immersive theatre an enjoyable exploration and more competitive.
- ✗ Just because you are closer to the actors doesn't mean it's more immersive. The masks are like a fourth wall, just closer.
- ✗ Some critics say that the shows are too sexual: the characters are always semi-naked or simulating sex to the point that it's like a seedy strip club.
- ✗ The masks are a pain - they're hot, they make you sweat, and they are uncomfortable if you wear glasses.
- ✗ The shows are ridiculously expensive...
- ✗ Some people working in the arts object to the fact that the production company uses hundreds of volunteers - unpaid!

### DISCUSS / ESSAY TITLE

'Choice is an illusion,' says Merovingian in the second of *The Matrix* films.

Do you agree? If, as in a video game, the whole 'matrix' of a Punchdrunk show is a choice do we really have?

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# Exam Preparation

## Punchdrunk at AS: Component 2, Process and Performance

For this component, you will study and practically explore **two** key extracts from different range of roles, including performer, director, set designer, costume designer, puppeteer or lighting designer. This component is assessed through a portfolio that documents your performance of the second extract, which must be influenced by the methodology of a practitioner, in front of a live audience.

Component 2 is worth 60 marks and accounts for 60% of your AS Level qualification. The live performance is marked out of 30. Section 1 of the portfolio (research and performance development) is marked out of 20. Section 2 (analysis and evaluation) is marked out of 10. This component assesses AO1, AO2 and AO4.

### Five Top Tips

1. You may feel that you are confined to an unsuitable space (e.g. a small, square drama square drama studio can be divided up into sections, all of which can be within it). Think about the action and the locations in your extract, and how they might be used.
2. The key to success is to **choose the right text**. Look for a text that is crammed with ideas that are the most foolproof and are also accessible in terms of updating the setting – e.g. a contemporary play. You can have success with contemporary plays, often those which already have a reputation, particularly by female/feminist writers.
3. You may be dismantling the narrative, but the **central character** must be the sort of character you can pursue. In the space of an examined performance, you won't have time to introduce a character; you *can* immerse the audience in a character's journey: his/her motivations, actions, psychological traits, moral qualities, ambitions and disappointments, and so on.
4. **Language** has to be minimal. Many students find this aspect the most unnerving. Remember the idea that theatre = spoken word. To combat the temptation *not* to cut, start with a design concept; film inspiration; music/sound effects; movement – usually these are the things you are doing it the other way round!
5. In **planning your design**, don't feel that every square inch of your space has to be used. That would be unrealistic, and rather overwhelming. Just one area needs this treatment.

### Portfolio Tips

You must record your process for your portfolio. As well as written material, your portfolio can include photographs, drawings or cue sheets, or audio/visual recordings. A good way of keeping track of your work is by filling out a table (such as the one below) during/after every rehearsal.

| Rehearsal Date:                       |                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rehearsal Objectives                  | Rehearsal Notes                                                                      | Punchdrunk Theories Applied?                                                                                                        | Evaluation                                                                        |
| e.g. Block Hamlet and Gertrude scene. | e.g. Hamlet should come down S.L. on his line 'nay but to live in the rank sweat...' | e.g. Applying Punchdrunk focus on proxemics and audience movement – Hamlet moving away from his mother suggests emotional distance. | e.g. Gertrude's movement is believable. No need to find right moment for her move |

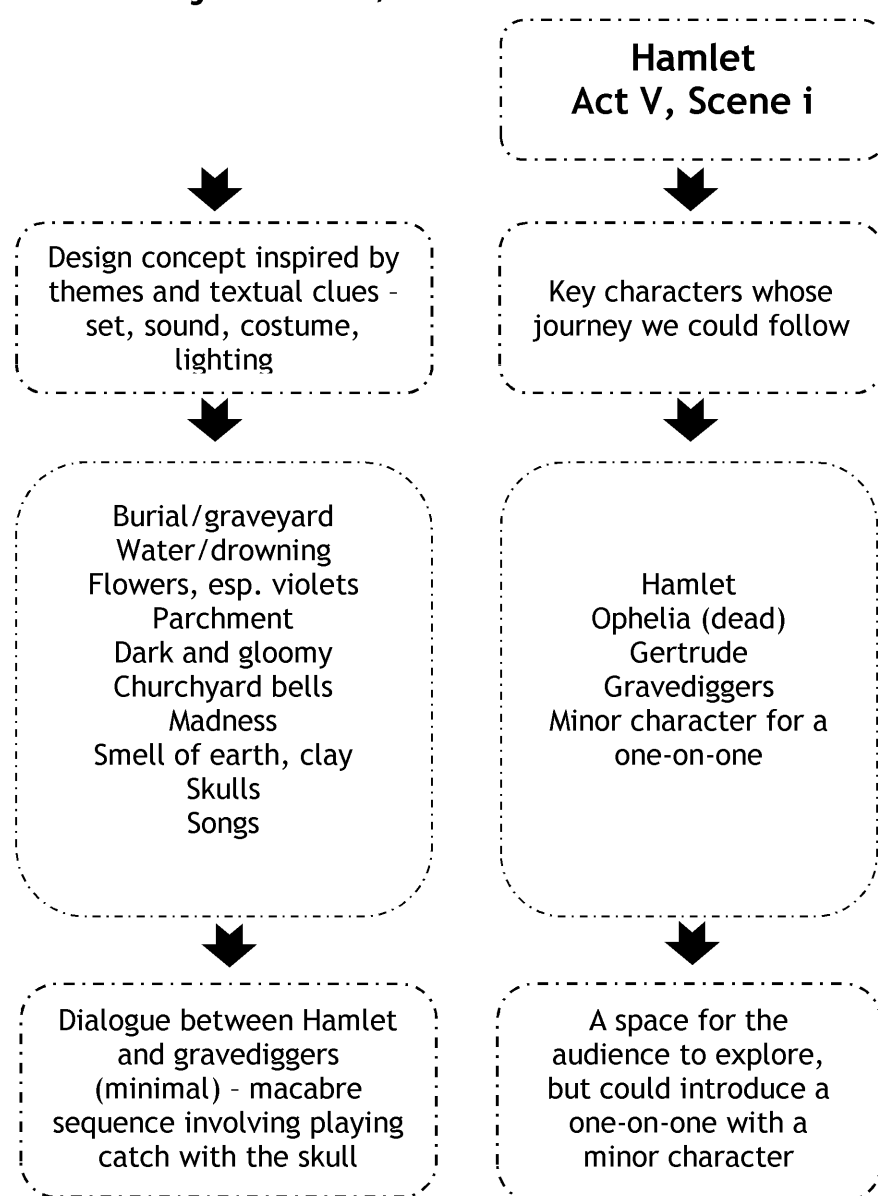
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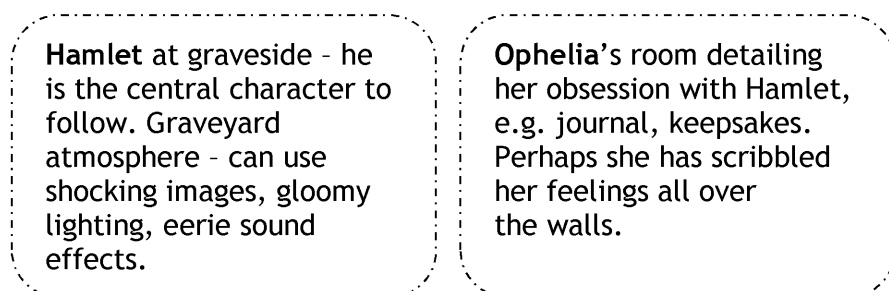


## Brainstorming (making connections between theory and practice)

### EXAMPLE using Hamlet Act V, Scene i



### Possible Scenes/Spaces to Create (applying practitioner methods)



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## Punchdrunk at A Level: Component 2, Creating Original Drama

For this component, you will devise a piece of original theatre from a stimulus of your choice. Stimuli might include literature, art, newspaper stories and history, or they might be entirely original ideas. The piece must be informed by the methodology of a well-known theatre practitioner. You can choose from a range of roles, including performer, director, set designer, costume designer, puppet designer, sound designer and lighting designer. This component is assessed through a live performance of your final piece and a Working notebook, in which you must record your process and evaluate your contribution.

Component 2 is marked out of 60 and accounts for 30% of your A Level qualification, marked out of 20. The Working notebook is marked out of 40. This component asse

### Applying Punchdrunk to Devising

Punchdrunk is primarily a devising company; as such, their theories can easily be applied. Remember that the process is just as important as the finished project, so ensure that ideologies and techniques throughout the process, rather than simply recreating their style. For example, this might mean putting the performance space and environment process, and using it, like Punchdrunk, to inspire, inform and shape your performance.

“ Everything starts with the space – until we get this, we don’t plan. The first time you walk around it and listen to its story. I see where it feels threatening, where it hits on your core response. You’re always able to apply some narrative. For example, quite claustrophobic, inducing paranoia and loss of control. It reminded me of a point onwards, we’re in show mode. ”

You must not only show that you understand how to convey meaning by *using* performance, your performers must **integrate and respond** to the space.

### Key Questions

Below is a list of key questions to consider when devising a Punchdrunk-inspired piece, and attach them to your rehearsal room wall, along with other key texts and images that

Which **space** will you use?  
How does this space make  
your feel? What **atmosphere**  
does it create? What stories  
does it suggest?

How will you mark the **limits**  
of the **performance space**?  
How will the audience know  
where to go?

**Deconstruct your text.** What  
key moments/lines/themes  
could inspire your devised  
narrative?

How might you use **dance and**  
**movement** to tell an  
emotional story?

**Sets and props** must be  
incredibly detailed. Which  
props are vital to your  
narrative?

Intimate One-on-Ones?

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## Punchdrunk at A Level: Component 3, Making Theatre

For this component, you will study and practically explore three key extracts from different plays. You can choose from a range of roles, including performer, director, designer, costume designer, puppet designer, sound designer and lighting designer.

This component is assessed through a formal presentation of the third extract – which must be influenced by the methodology of a practitioner – in front of a live audience, and an individual reflective report which analyses and evaluates your process and performance.

Component 3 is marked out of 60, and accounts for 30% of your A Level qualification. The extract is marked out of 40. The reflective report is marked out of 20. This component

As well as reading the advice below, you may also want to take a look at the pages on which contain some helpful tips for dealing with extracts!

### Questions about Performance

As always (you should be getting used to this by now!) your starting point must be the Punchdrunk immersive experience, that is the place from which all things flow. Every character and the scenes they play, the details of set design, the sound and lighting effects or music – all this is shaped by the **energy** of the space.

When exploring your extracts, you must first think about the setting and the space that the audience seating plan or route (if your piece is promenade), and how big you would

If you already have a set location for your final performance, you should now consider how you will interact with the space. Think about the relationships that you will build between the performers and the performance space. How many performers will you need? Will you direct large groups or intimate, one-on-one experiences? How will the performers interact with the audience? Will the experience be looped and layered?

### Questions about Production Design

A Punchdrunk show is not *site-specific* – it is *site-sympathetic*. Therefore, you will be expected to demonstrate your understanding of the space as so much more than a mere backdrop. The space is a character; a creator of narrative; it responds to the characters and their stories; it absorbs and reflects their emotions; it teases and torments, beguiles and bewilders; it is both a puzzle *and* a solution.

**EVERY SINGLE DETAIL MATTERS!** The tiniest object on set may be the most significant. It may be the longest journey, the one which carries the secrets everyone wants to know. The beauty of the space is in the understanding of the way the space/design interweaves with the narrative/characters.

You should also show your ability to immerse the audience within the set, rather than just observe it. Your design must show how you have created journeys, levels and layers for your audience. The set and the performance combine to create an atmospheric, immersive experience. This is how you communicate with your audience.

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## Questions for Discussion and Discursive Writing

NOTE: these questions are for practice only, and not designed as 'exam-style' questions

1. In the role of director, explain how you might reimagine your play in a particular context.
2. How can a contemporary interpretation of a play demonstrate an appreciation of its original context?
3. Explain how you would use the design elements in a production of your play. Consider how your ideas may be realised in performance.
4. Explain how you would use Punchdrunk's performance style to interpret the opening of your play, making it relevant for a contemporary audience.
5. Choose a brief extract from your text and explain how you could use immersive performance to create a sense of mood and atmosphere in performance.
6. You are directing a complete performance of your set text. The producer is demanding that you must engage a contemporary audience. Discuss how the methodologies of Punchdrunk can be used to achieve this (choose one):
  - the acting styles
  - the set design
  - the sound design
  - the lighting design

In your answer, you must:

- explain why you think your production concept will be successful in engaging a contemporary audience
- show how your ideas compare to the original performance conditions
- give detailed examples of specific scenes to illustrate your ideas

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# Answers and Further Information

## Social Context and Historical Perspective

### *A brief Introduction to Punchdrunk*

For further research into twenty-first-century theatre practice, students could examine the work of

- Complicite / Simon McBurney
- Ex Machina / Robert LePage
- Pilot Theatre
- Hide and Seek Theatre Company

There is also an interesting lecture by Canadian theatre maker **Rod Carley: Theatre in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century** at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cUXEOqDk00>

### *A (Very) Rough Timeline of Immersive Theatre*

#### Research Task 1

NOTE: this activity can be carried out in class or as an independent homework task, depending on the level of the students.

##### 1. Artaud, Grotowski and Boal

- Antonin Artaud was an actor, director and playwright at the beginning of the twentieth century. A pioneer of surrealism, and spending much of his life in and out of various asylums, he developed his 'Theatre of Cruelty', in which spoken dialogue was of no more significance than other elements. Artaud's theatre spaces were places of ritual, in which audiences could be purged and 'assaulted' by an assortment of clashing vocal and instrumental sounds including growls, screams, moaning; life-sized, grotesque puppets; masks and oversized props; unsettling lighting; and images; facial expressions and gestures inspired by Artaud's experience of Balinese dance. He favoured a more intimate audience-actor relationship, preferring the audience in the centre of the stage, surrounded by the actors, who would use all corners of the performance space. His ideal was to involve the audience so that they could feel part of the performance. However, the ideal of involving the audience so that they could feel part of the performance is at the heart of immersive theatre. Equally, Punchdrunk performances can be described as 'total immersion' in sound, light and movement rather than dialogue.
- Born in 1933, Polish practitioner Jerzy Grotowski wanted to strip the theatre down to its essentials: the audience and the space they were in mattered, creating a relationship and a shared emotional experience. He developed the concept 'poor theatre' in contrast to 'rich theatre', which padded itself out with excessive costumes and sets. He sought non-traditional spaces, with the audience placed on all sides or in the middle, making them active rather than passive participants. His actors underwent intense training to develop excellent physical skills. Like Punchdrunk, he experimented with classic texts. The similarity is in seeing the point in competing aesthetically with film and television, so his ideal acting area was a circle and no specific costume.
- Augusto Boal's approach was revolutionary because he saw little division between actor and audience: in life, and everyone a spectator: Spect-Actors. His 'Theatre of Oppression' included forms of theatre in which audience members could stop the action and suggest different approaches to the situation in front of them – or even take over the actor's role. Boal used a facilitator, called a Joker, to guide audiences and actors. Boal saw the audience as active participants in recreating, investigating and transforming situations that affected them directly. For him, theatre was an agent of social and political change.

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## 2. Immersive theatre companies include Shunt and You Me Bum Bum Train.

- Shunt has performed in places such as a Bermondsey warehouse, the Shunt Vaults (tucked away via an unmarked door), and on a jetty on the Thames. This sense of adventure is part of its appeal. A reviewer stated that Shunt's USP was 'to play games with your mind'. Students should watch *Boy Who Climbed Out Of His Face*, *Amalto Saltone* and *Money*. Like Punchdrunk, Shunt and Punchdrunk, the carefully designed interior spaces are a key part of the audience experience. Watch a film of their 'Shunt Lounge' on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/12795105>
- You Me Bum Bum Train tickets are notoriously difficult to get hold of. Lucky holders receive a ballot. The location is kept under wraps, audience members are sworn to secrecy and once in, however, audience members – called passengers – get the chance to be cast as characters. This cloak-and-dagger approach is highly effective and key to their success. Or is it hype? For further research, students can also look at some of the more recent successors to Punchdrunk.
- With production titles such as *Hijack*, *Hostage* and *Prison* (which invited audiences to break the bars) Colab Theatre is not for the faint-hearted.
- Secret Cinema bring films to life, and productions include a *28 Days Later* themed zombie event. Their website contains a number of films of their productions.

## 3. Shakespearean Theatre, Restoration Theatre and Panto

To get a feel for more traditional versions of participatory theatre, split students into two groups. Group A, as the performers, perform a story, such as a fairy tale or nursery rhyme. Group B, as the audience, must jeer, heckle, shout and heckle as much as possible while the other group perform. This can be complemented by some research.

- Shakespearean audience participation can be studied by exploring the audience experience in *Titus Andronicus*.
- Restoration Theatre spectators generally belonged to the upper classes, but they weren't immune to the thinly veiled vulgarity on stage (and off, due to the many prostitutes who used the theatre to arrange business).
- Panto is not panto without audience participation. It is sometimes seen as the 'mother of all participatory theatre' and will be many people's first experience of theatre attendance.

## The Work of Punchdrunk

### Experiencing a Punchdrunk Show

#### Ten Questions

NOTE: this activity requires viewing online content, so availability of suitable resources will dictate whether this is a class activity or set as an independent study task.

1. What comments reveal Punchdrunk's attitude towards, and expectations from, their audience?
  - roaming
  - focus on audience is as important as that on the performers
  - childlike excitement and sense of adventure are foregrounded

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2. **On the right-hand side of the 'ABOUT' page, Punchdrunk list all their productions to date. Which were based on (or inspired by) classical texts. You may have to dig a little deeper on this.**
  - *The Borough* – based on Peter Grimes' Aldeburgh
  - *The Drowned Man* – loosely based on Woyzeck
  - *Sleep No More* – *Macbeth*
  - *The Duchess of Malfi*
  - *The Masque of the Red Death* – inspired by Edgar Allen Poe stories
  - *Faust*
  - *The Fire Bird Ball* – a blend of the Firebird myth with R&J
  - *The Yellow Wallpaper* – a short novel by Charlotte Gilman Perkins
  - *Marat/Sade*
  - *Woyzeck*
  - *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
  - *The Tempest*
  - *Chair* – inspired by *The Chairs* by Ionesco
  - *The House of Oedipus*
  - *The Cherry Orchard*
3. **Which of their productions was a *Doctor Who* adventure?**  
The Crash of the Elysium
4. **What does Felix Barrett say his 'personal mission' is?**  
He seeks to offer audiences an experience they've never had before, packaging the moments of your neck'.
5. **How does he describe the difference between the space (disused building) and a traditional theatre?**  
The architectural demands of a Punchdrunk space hurtle you into the present – everything is constructed in meticulous detail. In an auditorium, the space is clearly defined and the audience's theatre-going experience is formulaic – but in Punchdrunk the audience becomes a character.
6. **How does Felix describe his ideas for Punchdrunk Travel?**  
The idea is that a person books a holiday. They receive one instruction and from this, take a journey could be part of the show. They are the hero of their own film, a character in their own story.
7. **What does Felix say about the future of storytelling?**  
He believes that storytelling places the audience at the heart of the experience. Punchdrunk and the Internet has skewed the way we read the world. They have made us more passive and Punchdrunk's storytelling attempts to make us **feel** life, to make life more difficult again.
8. **What is their answer to 'Why are you called Punchdrunk?'**  
'This is the way we want to make our audiences feel'
9. **Punchdrunk prefer not to use the term 'immersive' for their work. How do they describe it in their own words? What is this definition?**  
They use the terms 'site-sympathetic' and 'experiential', meaning audiences can engage with forms and conventions such as site-specific and promenade theatre.
10. **What can you find out about Punchdrunk's partnership with Rihanna?**  
Punchdrunk International collaborated with Samsung and Rihanna on a major campaign for the Samsung Galaxy S6. They created a cross-platform experience called ANTIdiaRy. Audiences were able to travel the story of Rihanna's life. It is available to view on YouTube.

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## Artistic Intentions

### Activity 1

| The <i>traditional</i> way to experience theatre                                                                                                                                                                     | The <i>Punchdrunk</i> way to experience theatre                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| You read publicity about the play and decide to buy tickets from the box office either by phone, in person or online.                                                                                                | Shows have to be publicised. Audiences have to use the same route to the show. There is often a buzz created via word of mouth. <i>Tunnel 228</i> , potential audience link to a website for a chance to reserve a timeslot.                                             |
| You get ready for your night out. You arrive at the theatre in good time to collect your tickets, meet friends and order interval drinks.                                                                            | Start times are often staggered.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| You enter by a main door.                                                                                                                                                                                            | There are often multiple entrances. Audiences can grant an additional pre-show experience.                                                                                                                                                                               |
| You buy a programme, chat with your companions and then make your way into the auditorium – are you in the stalls or the circle? One of the FOH staff members checks your ticket and directs you to the right aisle. | There is often a maze or some other way to get to the show. Information to absorb on the way.                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Sitting in your seat, you flick through the programme and enjoy looking around. Perhaps you can see the set.                                                                                                         | You enter a different world. You are anonymised with a mask, for your own choice. Members of staff are in security, making sure that no one is out of place and also watching out for any potential quick exit. You probably don't sit down in the centre of the action. |
| The house lights are dimmed – it's show time! You sit and watch from the comfort of your seat.                                                                                                                       | The show starts the second time. The show is dictated by whatever 'world' you are in.                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Interval: you nip to the bathroom, have a drink and chat to your companions about the play so far.                                                                                                                   | There are no intervals. There are no breaks. You can arrange to meet up with your companions and have a drink at any point in the show.                                                                                                                                  |
| At the end, the actors take their curtain call. They bow and you join in the applause. If it's really good, there's a standing ovation.                                                                              | Audiences leave when they want. They do not see the actors at the end.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| You read the reviews and tell your friends about it.                                                                                                                                                                 | Reviews are almost impossible to come by. There are often no reviews. There is most out of a Punchdrunk show. It's a time to go, or whether to feel it. It's a time to wear (comfortable shoes).                                                                         |

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## Theatrical Purpose and Practice

### Research Task 2

1. *The Drowned Man* – a disused postal sorting office in **Paddington**, London
2. *Faust* – derelict five-storey archive building at **21 Wapping Lane**
3. *The Firebird Ball* – **Offley Works**
4. *Tunnel 228* – beneath Waterloo station abandoned tunnels
5. *The Chair* – **Old Seager Distillery**, Deptford
6. *The Duchess of Malfi* – decommissioned pharmaceutical headquarters at London's **Great Eastern**
7. *Sleep No More* – The **Beaufoy Building** in London and, in New York, a disused Manhattan 'McKittrick Hotel' for the show.

### Prac-tivity 2

Questions to prompt students when looking at locations:

- Overall appearance: is there anything particularly unique about the space?
- Function: past, present and future.
- Occupants: past, present and future.
- Size: are there different-sized areas within the space?
- Levels: how could they be used (safely!)?
- Sightlines: restrictions such as screens or pillars can be useful.
- Acoustics: is there an echo? Can everyone be heard from all parts of the space?
- Smells: pleasant or not? Evocative?
- Textures: natural and organic or artificial and synthetic?
- History: has anything significant ever happened in the space, or to the people that use/use it?
- Emotional response / gut instinct: in response to any of the above, or the general mood of the space, prompt any memories, for example, of a place, a time, certain people or stories?

## The Innovative Nature of their Approach

### Masking the Audience

#### Prac-tivity 3

- Students should be encouraged to create a detailed scene that has several elements to it. If they are writing a letter, they can split the activity into a) looking for paper and pen; b) writing the letter; c) putting the letter in an envelope; d) walking to an imaginary postbox. This sequence is a good combination of a passive and an active one.
- It is possible to buy white, plastic, Venetian masks online – otherwise half-masks will do. The style used by Punchdrunk is that the bottom half obscures the mouth without covering the eyes.

### Set Design

#### Prac-tivity 4

- This activity can be introduced by setting up a trail of clues before students arrive in class. On the first day of rehearsals, by scattering information about each character around the room, they can discover (rather than impose) their characters. Bearing in mind that the preparation for the show is time-consuming, a simpler method is to collect a number of supermarket till receipts (frequently used in the show) and ask students to construct their character from the items bought.
- The list of possible items, as you may have noticed, does not include modern technology. This is because the show includes something like 'a message on a mobile phone'; however, this is not in tune with the show's aesthetic.

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## Working Methods

### Non-linear, Multi-layered Narratives

#### Activity 4

A way into this activity:

- First, to practise telling the story of the play using as many sentences as there are students. The class must agree how they are going to tell the story of the play in 10 sentences. Smaller groups of 5-6 sentences each.
- The class should select the most important moments of the play when deciding on their sentences.
- They can then use that same structure to select appropriate quotes.
- Watch some clips from the Reduced Shakespeare Company for inspiration!

## Performance Style/Theatrical Conventions

### One-on-ones

#### Activity 5

Students should notice:

- the sensory details, both implied and specific, such as the satin gown, the boudoir, the candlelight
- the story of the lost child: disconcerting and eerie
- the removing of the mask – increases intimacy but may also have made the author feel vulnerable
- her odd personal ‘gift’ – the vial of tears (probably flavoured water!) which prompts a reaction
- the increased (almost sexually violent) physical contact – hair, lips, breath, hands and feet
- the author’s varying reactions, e.g. half-dazed, fearful and desperate
- the secretive and, therefore, exclusive nature of this rendezvous, as well as the quest given to the child

## Collaborations

#### Activity 6

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Theatre    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tunnel 228</i></li> <li>• <i>The Drowned Man</i></li> <li>• <i>The Duchess of Malfi</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                          |
| Enrichment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Against Captain’s Orders</i></li> <li>• <i>The Uncommercial Traveller</i></li> <li>• <i>Prospero’s Island</i></li> <li>• <i>The Uncommercial Traveller</i></li> <li>• <i>Under the Eiderdown</i></li> </ul> |
| Commercial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stella Artois</li> <li>• Alexander McQueen fashion show</li> <li>• Louis Vuitton</li> <li>• PlayStation</li> </ul>                                                                                             |

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## Influences

### Music and Film

#### Activity 7

The film *It Felt Like a Kiss*, which formed the basis of the Punchdrunk show of the same name, is available on BBC iPlayer: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p003x62n> or on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/22589118>

- Introduce this activity by watching some clips from film noir.
- Listen to some film noir soundtracks and ask students if they can identify the urban, moody musical cues in addition to the 'traditional' film noir soundtrack of sleepy jazz piano, trumpet and double bass. *Blade Runner*, with its unsettling and evocative zither music is a fantastic example.
- This is not a matching exercise – the content in this activity is designed to provoke thought and discussion. There are several ways to interpret a single quotation.
- If the class is studying a suitable text, they could do the same exercise using the stylistic qualities of the music of the Roll years of the 1950s, or 1970s Punk Rock. Alternative inspiration could be drawn from a cult film or TV show.

### Gaming

- There may be dedicated gamers in the class who can assist in a discussion about gameplay and how everyone can have a go.
- Turning a text into a game is likely to be beyond the resources of most schools; however, creating a storyboard a scene. This will help them to think visually. An ever-popular alternative is to create a game with include challenges, false trails and clues along the way.
- You can watch the trailer for Bioshock here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTx6SMSe5f8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTx6SMSe5f8)

### Influences on Others

Headlong commissioned Coney for their play *People, Places, and Things*, in which a young addict called Emma checks into a rehab clinic. Anyone can play the game, whether or not they have seen the play. Try it here: <http://whatsshelike.net>

1. Bars, cafés, foyers, toilets, in the street. [www.nonzeroone.com](http://www.nonzeroone.com)
2. Blindfolded and tied up in a wheelchair.
3. Playing an interactive 'game' set in a rehab clinic. Headlong commissioned Coney for their play *People, Places, and Things*, in which a young addict called Emma checks into a rehab clinic. Anyone can play the game, whether or not they have seen the play. Try it here: <http://whatsshelike.net>
4. A disused underground abattoir in Clerkenwell, London. [dreamthinkspeak.com](http://dreamthinkspeak.com)
5. 10. [www.bryonykimmings.com](http://www.bryonykimmings.com)
6. 8pm–8pm. [www.r-ft.co.uk](http://www.r-ft.co.uk)
7. Oxfam. See the Comfort garden here: <https://vimeo.com/153255062>
8. Mobile phones and social networking. [www.hannahjanewalker.co.uk](http://www.hannahjanewalker.co.uk)
9. Roald Dahl. [www.twitsdinner.com](http://www.twitsdinner.com)
10. Break into a sealed room, steal what is inside, and escape without being caught! <http://differentrooms.com>

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## Exam Preparation

### *Punchdrunk at A Level: Component 3, Making Theatre*

#### **Questions about Production Design**

There is little agreement among either theatre makers or academics regarding the difference between sympathetic, site-responsive, site-sensitive and even site-generic. In practice, they are quite interrelated.

‘Site’ is the key term. Is the performance to be located within a particular structure, where the architecture is the inspiration? Is the performance responding to the purpose of the space; for example, an airport terminal where the space the stimulus?

What site-specific/sensitive/responsive theatre is NOT: just staging a play in a non-traditional theatre space. There must be some organic connection to the space.

For further research, take a look at the website for the Oerol Festival, an annual theatre, dance and music festival on the island of Terschelling – every part of the island is used and performances take place within and against the landscape (everywhere)! Website: [oerol.nl](http://oerol.nl)

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