Course Companion

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Theatre · HL

Every topic handout in one volume

exercises.lol

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Staging play texts

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IB Diploma Programme Theatre HL (first assessment 2024; current guide). This topic equips the PRODUCTION PROPOSAL – the first assessment task (30% SL, 20% HL): choose a published play text not previously studied and formulate a vision for the design and theoretical staging of the ENTIRE play for an audience, presented as a proposal of at most 12 pages with written text not exceeding 4 000 words. The craft this topic teaches is reading a play as a THEATRE-MAKER: from text to vision to proposal. The worked examples use an imagined staging of a classic realist text, with all design decisions original.

Must-know for the production proposal:

Family	Content
reading	given circumstances, spine, action units; the world of the play
vision	the director's concept: one governing idea tying every choice
design	set, costume, lighting, sound, space – each serving the concept
audience	who watches, where, and how the staging positions them
proposal	the document: vision, moments, design, justification

Reading the play as a theatre-maker

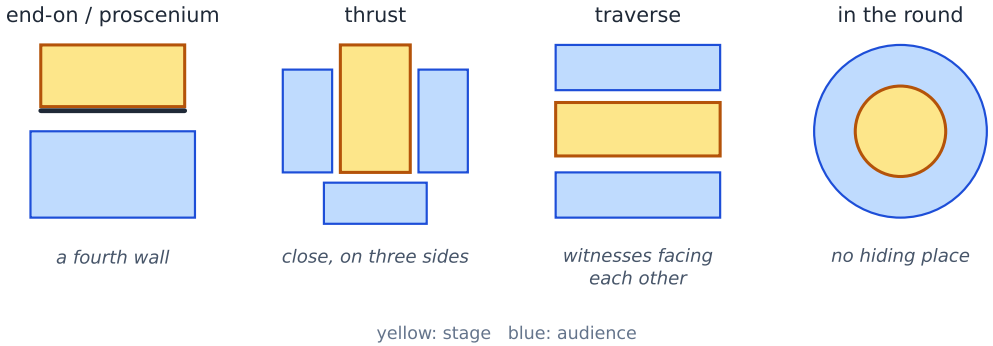
A play text is not literature on legs: it is a **score** for performance. The theatre-maker's read asks what the play DEMANDS: the GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES (the facts the text fixes – time, place, relations), the **spine** (the single through-line of the protagonist's want), the ACTION UNITS (beats where want meets obstacle and changes), and the WORLD of the play (its rules, its atmosphere, what it costs to live there). Alongside the academic read runs the **embodied** read the guide insists on: standing the key relationships up, walking the space, testing the text aloud: knowledge that resides in the body, the course's founding principle. From the read comes the question the proposal answers: what is THIS production's play about – not the play in general, but this staging's argument, held in one sentence.

> **Worked example.** In a naturalist family drama the read finds: the given circumstance of a mortgaged house; the spine – the daughter's fight to leave; units that each strip her of an ally; a world where love is currency. One-sentence argument: "this staging shows a family eating its young to keep its house." Every design choice below answers to that sentence.

Vision, design and the audience

The **concept** is one governing idea that ties every choice: not a decorative theme ("loneliness") but a performance argument ("the room shrinks as each daughter leaves"). Test a concept by its yield: how it stages the opening, the turning point and the ending – a concept that cannot stage the ending is a mood, not a concept. The design areas each serve it: the **set** (the room's shrinking is built – walls that track in per act); **Costume** (period held but fading – the family dresses in its own past); **Light** (naturalism narrowing to a lamp's circle – safety shrinking with the space); **Sound** (the house's own noises rising as people leave); **Space** (end-on and proscenium for the fourth wall, or a traverse for entrapment – the audience as witnesses who cannot intervene).

The **audience** is a design material: where they sit decides what they are (fourth-wall voyeurs, trapped traverse witnesses, promenade ghosts). The moment architecture carries the vision: choose THREE moments to plan in the proposal's detail – typically the opening image (which states the world in silence), the pivot (where the spine turns), and the final image (which lands the argument) – and let every other choice be inferred from them.



Where the audience sits decides what they are: four stage configurations

> **Worked example, continued.** The opening image: the family eats at a table filling the stage, walls wide. The pivot: the daughter stands; the lamp is the only light; the walls have halved the room. The final image: she is out; the parents face the table in a pool the size of a plate. The concept stages its sentence in three pictures, and the proposal's reader can SEE the production.

Writing the proposal

The document ($\leq$ 4 000 words, $\leq$ 12 pages of text and images) is judged on how the vision informs EVERY choice: structure it as (1) the play and its world, briefly – the reader knows the play; (2) the concept, stated in the one sentence and unpacked; (3) the three moments, each with its staging and design; (4) the design areas, each tied to the concept in a line; (5) the audience's position – literally and thematically. Justify by RETURNING to the concept: a choice unexplained reads as taste; a choice explained from the concept reads as direction. The images serve the text (a sketch of the shrinking room), never decorate it. The classic failures: the literature essay (analysis where direction belongs), the mood board (pictures without an argument), and the concept drop (a strong sentence the pages never cash).

Checklist

- The theatre-maker's read: given circumstances, spine, units, the world – plus the embodied read (reading).
- The concept: one performance argument, not a theme; tested against opening, pivot and ending (vision).
- The design areas, each serving the concept and each named: set, costume, light, sound, space (design).
- The audience as material: position decides role – fourth wall, traverse, promenade (audience).
- The document's five-part structure; justification always returning to the concept; images serving text (proposal).
- The worked staging's sentence, three moments and shrinking room understood (worked).

Boundary notes: the proposal is marked on the vision's coherence and its informing of every choice – the examiner must be able to see the production from the page. All worked staging decisions are original; the play referenced is the standard realist canon.

World theatre traditions

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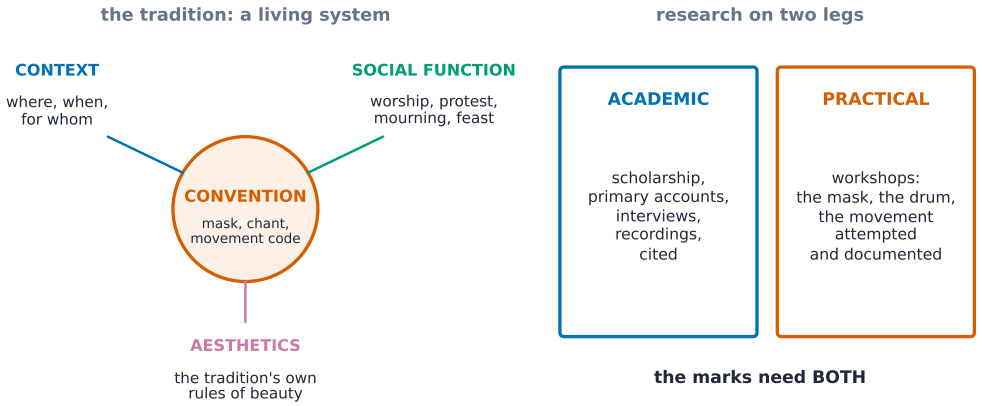
IB Diploma Programme Theatre HL (first assessment 2024; current guide). This topic equips the RESEARCH PRESENTATION – the externally assessed task (30% SL, 20% HL): plan, deliver and video-record an individual presentation of 15 minutes maximum, providing evidence of academic and practical research into an UNFAMILIAR world theatre tradition, with a list of all sources cited. The course's intercultural spine, this task asks the student to research a tradition academically and physically: the convention learned in the body, not just reported. This handout teaches the research-and- presentation craft and kits the traditions most commonly chosen. All worked framings are original.

Must-know for the research presentation:

Family	Content
task	15-minute video; academic + practical evidence; sources list
tradition	performance convention in context: ritual, social function, aesthetics
method	embodied research: learn the convention, not about it
ethics	attribution, ownership, avoiding appropriation and stereotype
presentation	structure: hook, context, demonstration, analysis, reflection

Researching a tradition

A **world theatre tradition** is a living performance system: its **convention** (the distinctive performance practice: a masked form, a chant, a movement code, a staging custom), its CONTEXT (where, when, for whom, inside what ritual or celebration or entertainment), its **social function** (what the performance DOES in its community – worship, protest, mourning, feast), and its AESTHETICS (the rules of beauty and effectiveness the tradition itself holds). The research runs on two legs, and the marks require BOTH: ACADEMIC (scholarship, primary accounts, interviews, recordings – properly cited) and PRACTICAL (the student learns the convention in workshops: attempting the mask, the drum pattern, the movement – and documents the attempts). Knowledge resides in the body: a presentation that only describes is half the task.



Research the tradition as a system, on both legs: academic sources and practical workshops.

Research ethics: attribute living practitioners and sources; treat the tradition as its community's property (what may be learned, what performed, what is closed); avoid the stereotype compile and the exotic montage – the tradition is a system, not a curiosity. The presentation says what the researcher could NOT learn and why: the honesty the top band rewards.

> **Worked example.** A student researching a masked dance-drama tradition: academic leg (the scholarship on the mask's meaning, an interview with a teacher-practitioner, festival recordings); embodied leg (workshop attempts at the posture and the walk, filmed – the first attempts failing is DATA: what the body must unlearn to wear the convention); presentation analysis (why the mask works only with the chant – the convention is a SYSTEM, and isolating one element breaks it, which the embodied failure demonstrates).

The presentation craft

The 15-minute **presentation** is structured, not streamed: HOOK (30 seconds of the convention itself – the mask enters before the explanation); CONTEXT (the tradition's world: place, occasion, community, in two minutes); DEMONSTRATION (the embodied research shown: the workshop attempts, the learning curve); ANALYSIS (the convention unpacked as a system – what each element does, how the elements interlock, what the tradition's own aesthetics value); REFLECTION (what the research taught about theatre itself – the transferable insight, and the limits owned: what could not be learned from outside the community). The video is continuous and unedited: rehearse to the clock, and let the demonstration carry the analysis – show, then say what the showing showed.

The tradition kits (chosen examples)

Four commonly chosen families, each with its anchor convention and its intercultural lesson. COMMUNAL RITUAL FORMS: performance embedded in ceremony – the convention is the community's act, not a repertoire; the lesson: "theatre" and "ritual" are our boxes, not theirs. MASKED DANCE-DRAMA TRADITIONS (Asia): the mask as a spiritual technology – the performer becomes, not represents; the movement code trains years; the lesson: convention as accumulated body-knowledge. DANCE-THEATRE AND MOVEMENT CODES: codified gesture vocabularies where the hand's angle carries meaning; the lesson: movement as a language with grammar, learnable only in the body. STREET AND PROTEST FORMS: performance as public claim – the audience is the street, the state is the context; the lesson: theatre's function is political wherever it is made. The choice rule: a tradition the student can research BOTH ways – where practitioner contact or workshop access genuinely exists.

Checklist

- The task's facts: 15-minute continuous video, academic AND practical evidence, sources list (task).
- The tradition researched as a system: convention, context, social function, aesthetics (tradition).
- The embodied leg: workshop attempts documented, failure as data (method).
- Ethics: attribution, ownership, limits owned (ethics).
- The presentation's five moves: hook, context, demonstration, analysis, reflection – show, then say (presentation).
- The four kits' anchor conventions and intercultural lessons (kits).

Boundary notes: the presentation is marked on research breadth and depth, practical exploration, presentation skill and reflection – the demonstration must carry the analysis. All worked framings are original; the traditions referenced are the standard canon of world theatre study.

Worked demonstration move. From the workshop: twenty seconds of the tradition's core convention performed live – the audience meets the convention as its makers use it – and only then the analysis: what the convention carries that plain speech cannot. Show first, say second; the reverse is a lecture with photographs.

Collaborative original theatre

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IB Diploma Programme Theatre HL (first assessment 2024; current guide). This topic equips the COLLABORATIVE CREATION of original theatre – the syllabus area (60 teaching hours) that culminates in the collaborative project assessment: an ensemble of theatre-makers formulates intentions, examines how intentions are realised in collaboration, and creates original performance work inspired by a starting point. This handout teaches the devising craft – from starting point through ensemble process to performance and evaluation. All worked examples are original.

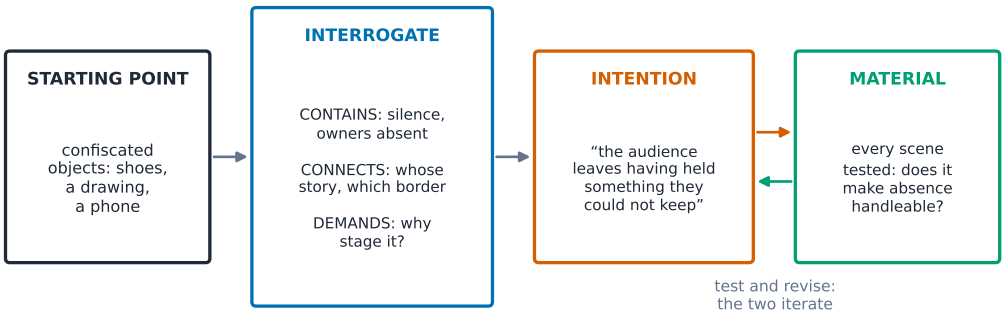
Must-know for collaborative creation:

Family	Content
starting point	image, text, object, question – the seed chosen and interrogated
intention	what the piece is FOR: the theatre-maker's aim, stated and testable
devising	workshop methods: image theatre, improvisation, writing in the room
ensemble	roles, agreements, feedback: how collaboration is structured
evaluation	did the intention reach the audience? evidence, not vibes

Starting points and intentions

A **starting point** is the seed: a photograph, a news item, an object, a poem, a question, a memory – anything the ensemble agrees to interrogate. The craft is interrogation, not illustration: the starting point is asked what it CONTAINS (its facts, its tensions, its silences), what it CONNECTS to (whose story, which structures, which audience), and what it DEMANDS of theatre (why this must be staged, not essayed). From the interrogation comes the **intention**: what this piece is FOR – not a theme ("migration") but a performative aim ("make the audience feel a border in their bodies"). The intention is written, visible in the rehearsal room, and revisited: every material choice is tested against it, and the intention may be REVISED by the process – the two iterate.

> **Worked example.** Starting point: a pile of confiscated border-crossing objects (shoes, a child's drawing, a phone). The interrogation: the objects are silent (their owners absent), the tension is presence-through-absence, the demand is that the audience handle what the owners cannot carry. Intention: "the audience leaves having held something they could not keep." Every scene generated must be tested: does it make absence handleable?



Interrogate the starting point, write the intention, then test every scene against it; the intention can change too.

The devising process

Devising generates material in the room rather than interpreting a written text. The generating methods: **Image theatre** (ensembles build still images (sculpted bodies) and the images are re-sculpted against the intention; fast, wordless, exposes staging instantly); IMPROVISATION (structured play that generates scenes – with rules that keep the intention in the room: "every improvisation ends with an object left behind"); WRITING IN THE ROOM (monologues, lists, letters generated from the material, then edited by the ensemble); and PHYSICAL/VOCAL COMPOSITION (transferring found material into the body – a rhythm from the objects, a choral list, a repeated gesture). The material accumulates on the wall; the shaping phase selects and orders it against the intention, building the piece's SPINE (its own through-line, topic 01's read now applied to the ensemble's own work).

> **Worked example, continued.** Image theatre generates "the line at the fence"; improvisation generates the guard who cannot stop apologising; writing generates the owner's letters read by strangers. Shaping orders them: the audience enters past the objects; the letters are given to them; the piece ends when every object has been held and put down.

Ensemble, performance and evaluation

The **ensemble** is structured collaboration, not a friendship: agreed ROLES (facilitator rotates; the scribe keeps the wall; the timekeeper protects the clock), working AGREEMENTS (how decisions happen, how disagreement is voiced, what is said at the end of each session), and FEEDBACK protocols (specific, behavioural, about the work not the person – "the third image repeated the first; cut or change"). The classic collaborative failures have names: the director-in-disguise (one member's vision silently governing), the polite silence (agreement without scrutiny – the enemy of original work) and the workshop loop (generating endlessly, never shaping). The **performance** is the test: the audience either receives the intention or not. EVALUATION gathers evidence – what the audience DID (held, put down, kept talking at the door), what worked in performance against intention, what the process taught about collaboration itself – and owns what failed. The reflective weight the marks assign falls here: process and product are evaluated together.

Checklist

- Starting points interrogated (contains, connects, demands), never illustrated; the intention as a performative aim, written, tested, revised (intentions).
- The generating methods: image theatre, improvisation with rules, writing in the room, physical/vocal composition; material accumulated then shaped into the piece's spine (devising).
- Ensemble structure: rotating roles, agreements, feedback protocols; the three named failures (ensemble).
- Performance as the test of intention; evaluation with audience evidence, process owned alongside product (evaluation).
- The worked border-objects piece: interrogation, intention, generated scenes and shaped order understood (worked).

Boundary notes: the collaborative project is marked on the making, the performance and the evaluation together – the ensemble's reflection carries real weight. All worked examples are original.

Worked evaluation sentence. "The silences worked: three audience members leaned in at the second freeze, and one answered the direct question aloud – but the ending's meaning went unlanded, asked after, unproven." Evidence first, judgement second, limits named: the evaluation criterion pays for sentences like that, not for "we think it went well".

Performing theatre theory

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IB Diploma Programme Theatre HL (first assessment 2024; current guide). This topic is the HL-ONLY EXTENSION – PERFORMING THEATRE THEORY (90 teaching hours across the course), assessed through the SOLO THEATRE PIECE (35% HL): research a theatre theorist not previously studied, identify an aspect of their theory, and create and present a solo piece (4–7 minutes maximum) demonstrating the practical application of that theory to a theatre piece for an audience – submitted as a report of 2 500 words maximum plus sources, and a continuous unedited video of the whole piece. This handout teaches the theorist-to-practice craft. All worked examples are original.

Must-know for the solo piece:

Family	Content
task	theorist not previously studied; aspect identified; 4–7 min solo; 2 500-word report + sources; continuous video
theory	the theorist's claim, its terms, its context and its controversy
aspect	the ONE aspect selected and translated into a performance principle
application	the principle generating concrete performance choices
evaluation	did the piece demonstrate the theory? evidence from the video

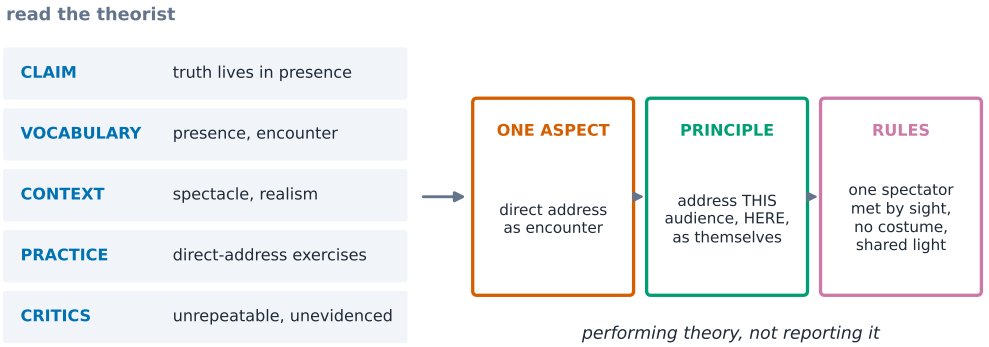
Reading a theorist

A **theatre theorist** is a systematic thinker about performance – a maker of claims about what theatre IS and what it should DO. Reading one for this task means: the **claim** (the theory's central assertion, stated in the theorist's own terms), the **vocabulary** (the technical terms the claim runs on – and their precise meanings), the CONTEXT (what theatre the theorist was answering: whose practice, which tradition, what historical moment), the PRACTICE (the exercises and productions the theory generated – theory in the body), and the CRITICS (the standard objections and the theorist's defence). The choice rule: a theorist whose theory yields PERFORMABLE principles – one whose vocabulary becomes stage action. The classic failure: reading the theorist as philosophy (the claim summarised, never staged) – the task is performing theory, not reporting it.

> **Worked example.** A theorist claims that theatre's truth lives in the performer's presence, not in representation: vocabulary of presence, encounter, the empty space; context: a commercial theatre of spectacle and psychological realism; practice: exercises that strip the actor to address the audience directly; critics: presence is mystification, the encounter unrepeatable and unevidenced. The ASPECT chosen: the direct address as encounter – the performer meets the audience as themselves, not as a character.

From aspect to application

The **aspect** is one operational slice of the theory, and the craft is TRANSLATION: aspect to performance principle ("the performer always addresses THIS audience, HERE, as themselves"), principle to GENERATIVE RULES (every passage of the piece must be addressed to an individual spectator by sight at least once; no costume; the space shared light – audience and performer visible to each other; the piece's events happen in the room's real time, not a play's fictional time), rules to the PIECE (a 5-minute solo built from the performer's own material – arriving, choosing a spectator, telling what is true, leaving – where each event tests the principle and its failure is visible). The piece is the theory's experiment: the report narrates the translation (theorist, aspect, principle, rules, piece) and the video evidences it.



One aspect of the theory becomes a principle, and the principle becomes rules that generate the piece.

> **Worked example, continued.** The piece: the performer enters, sees, chooses one spectator, and tells them the true reason they chose them; repeats with a second; finally asks the room to choose THEM – the encounter's symmetry demonstrated, the theory's claim staged rather than described. The report's evaluation: the video shows the chosen spectators' responses (the evidence the critics demand), and owns the limit – presence is indeed unevidenced beyond the recording, which is the theory's own contested ground.

The report

The **report** (2 500 words max) is the task's written half, structured as: the theorist and the theory (claim, vocabulary, context – compact); the aspect selected and WHY this aspect (yield, not convenience); the translation (principle, generative rules, the piece's events); the performance and its evidence (what the video shows of the theory working); the evaluation (did the piece demonstrate the aspect? where did the translation strain? what would be revised). The sources list separates primary (the theorist's own writings, interviews, recordings of their productions) from secondary. The top band couples theory and practice throughout: no paragraph of summary without a staging consequence, no staging choice without its theoretical warrant.

Checklist

- The task's facts: theorist not previously studied, aspect, 4–7 minute solo, 2 500-word report + sources, continuous unedited video, 35% HL (task).
- The theorist read five ways: claim, vocabulary, context, practice, critics; the choice rule of performable principles (theory).
- The aspect as one operational slice; translation to principle, generative rules and piece events (aspect).
- The piece as the theory's experiment: each event tests the principle; failure visible (application).
- The report's five-part structure; primary and secondary sources; evaluation with video evidence and owned limits (report).
- The worked presence-theorist translation and solo understood (worked).

Boundary notes: the solo piece is marked on the theory's practical application – the video must SHOW the aspect, and the report must warrant every choice from the theory. All worked examples are original.