

Physical theatre performance analysis

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Dante Alighieri, it was clear that the combinations of various dramatic languages ultimately enhanced both the mood and symbolism of this live performance.

These dramatic languages include the utilisation and management of physical composition, complicity, space, language and movement dramatic languages to create and enhance both mood and symbol.

This particular performance guided the audience through the literature to experience the different stages of purgatory performed at the Old Museum. This successfully provided both the audience and the cast with intimate theatre experiences. In order to successfully achieve a powerful performance and obtain this experience, physical composition was clearly utilised. In Dante's *Inferno*, the manipulation and management of physical composition, particularly in the development of this production, provided the audience with an intimate experience.

Physical composition refers to the way in which someone or something is composed.

Zen Zen Zo has excelled in this dramatic language, particularly through the use of music, movement and drama. To achieve physical composition, the ensemble must recognise and maintain spatial relationships with the architecture, kinaesthetic response, tempo, repetition and sensitivity to the dramatic manipulation of both space and time. The spatial relationships between the actors of Zen Zen Zo and the architecture of the Old Museum were managed to allow the audience to feel the intimacy of the actors in any particular scene.

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Humor was a key component in not only providing a contrast to the mood of the performance, but also in enhancing the composition of Dante's Inferno. In particular, humor was demonstrated through the comic relief tour guides, and in the lustful level of purgatory.

The two tour guides comic relief composition created a strong contrast in comparison to the disturbing ensemble members of the production. Another element which assisted in creating a contrast was the Cabaret style song and dance provided in the "lustful" circle.

This joyous song created not only a strong contrast to the other ensemble members of hell, but also contrasted against the literature of Dante's Inferno where the lustful are sentenced for their souls to be blown around in a violent storm needlessly and aimlessly, as lust has the power for one's desire to sway their reason. In the Zen Zen Zo version however, the ensemble are dancing and singing in cabaret. They are still aimlessly moving without reason, but it is interpreted in a humorous way, especially in contrast to the other levels of hell.

These two compositions of humor, aid in enhancing both mood and symbol through contrasting elements, ambiance, and physicalisation. Another component of physical composition used was surprise entrances. The use of surprise entrances provided a contemporary experience when the "gluttonous" circle of devil-like ensemble members appeared from behind the audience, attacking the comic relief tour guides. Not only did this provide a strong contrast between the solemn actors of the "heretic" circle and the

animal-like, blood thirsty ensemble, but the surprise entrance provided the audience with a disturbing mood.

The use of physicalisation of the ensemble involved the audience members by invading their comfort zones and taking away their tour guides, their only source of escape. The audience then became lost and frightened as there were no signs leading them to their next destination, once again forcing them to partake in the performance.

This physicalisation not only successfully involved the contemporary audience, but demonstrated the necessity of physical composition to give audiences that real experience. This use of physical composition provided immediate reaction and emotional expression through action and contrast.

These elements ultimately enhanced the mood and symbolism of the performance, allowing audiences to not only partake in the production on an intimate level but also on an emotional level. Another way in which mood and symbol can be created is through the use of complicity. Another element used to enhance the physical theatre experience is complicity.

This dramatic language refers to the use of an ensemble. In Dante's *Inferno* the benefit of an ensemble is demonstrated throughout the whole course of the production as it provided bigger representations and enhanced the powerful concepts.

In particular, the "violent" circle representing murder, death and the element of fire, excelled in the utilisation of an ensemble. The audience were guided into a large hall where approximately thirty ensemble members were

positioned around the architecture. The ensemble worked together, manipulating their bodies into unnatural, unsettling postures. Through precise choreography, the ensemble provided an explosive, demonic re-enactment of the torture inflicted upon their bodies for their violent crimes.