

# Resource Pages: Key Stage 4 & 5

## A Site Specific Project

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It can be challenging to develop your students' choreographic skills and the pressures of GCSE and A Level examinations can sometimes hinder the process of creating innovative, exciting dance work. A site specific project is a fantastic way of introducing your students to using their environment as a stimulus for generating new choreography.

I am fortunate enough to be working in a new school funded by the 'Building Schools for the future' project. The building is modern and spacious and allows many an opportunity to choreograph site specific pieces. However, if your school is small or of an earlier era there is just as much opportunity for inspiration. Begin by showing students films of site specific dance works such as *Rosas danst Rosas* by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, *Cross Channel* by Lea Anderson, or excerpts from works by DV8 Physical Theatre, some of which were created for the stage, then re-

worked for film in different locations - *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men*, *Strange Fish*, *Enter Achilles* and *Cost of Living* are available on DVD. Strong site specific works such as these are a great starting point for students and demonstrate a wide range of environments which can be used to develop choreography. There are some excerpts of the above works on YouTube. (Note that, due to adult content, some of the above mentioned works need pre-viewing by teachers so that appropriate scenes can be selected to show to students).

When your students have seen good, clear ideas and examples of what site specific work entails, it is time to begin exploring the possibilities within your school environment. The simplest of environments such as large windows, school fields, libraries, and corridors all make fantastic starting points, and allow for varied audience perspectives.

## ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CASE STUDY



The return of AS students from study leave can be an excellent time to experiment with ideas that there are not always time for during lessons prior to exams. The students were really excited about having the opportunity to create and perform a site specific piece. They always find it novel to perform outside, so we chose two areas within the school grounds; an area of the field with 5 trees, and the central hub space with stairs and a balcony.



We began by visiting these spaces and 'thought showering' the ideas that the environment gave us. The students liked the idea of dancing with the trees and between them. They were also inspired by the serenity of the sunlight beaming down and the smell of the freshly cut grass. In the hub space, the students were inspired by the smooth white floor, expanse of open space, and the different levels of stairs and balconies.

In the studio, the students began creating motifs based on their 'thought showers' from the different environments. They worked in groups of two and three to develop their motifs using relationships.

The students had several rehearsals in the environment as the end result was to become a piece of dance for the camera. This led to choosing costumes and then making further choreographic choices and changes during the editing process.



The students performed their dance in the spaces and were filmed with two cameras. One camera was used to take a long shot; the other camera was used to zoom in and allow for detail. The piece was filmed by both cameras simultaneously to allow for consistency in editing. It can make the editing process very difficult if there are any inconsistencies, for example in time, action, sound or light.

When we had all of the shots we needed, we took our footage to the media department who helped us to edit the shots together. We created a five minute film which was later shown at our Expressive Arts Summer Show, accompanied by live percussion.

Site specific choreography is well worth a try, and will give your pupils a range of ideas for their GCSE, BTEC, and A Level work.