

WHAT IS BEHIND THE MASK?

An Exploration of the
Human Experience Through
Physical Theatre

Senior Capstone I

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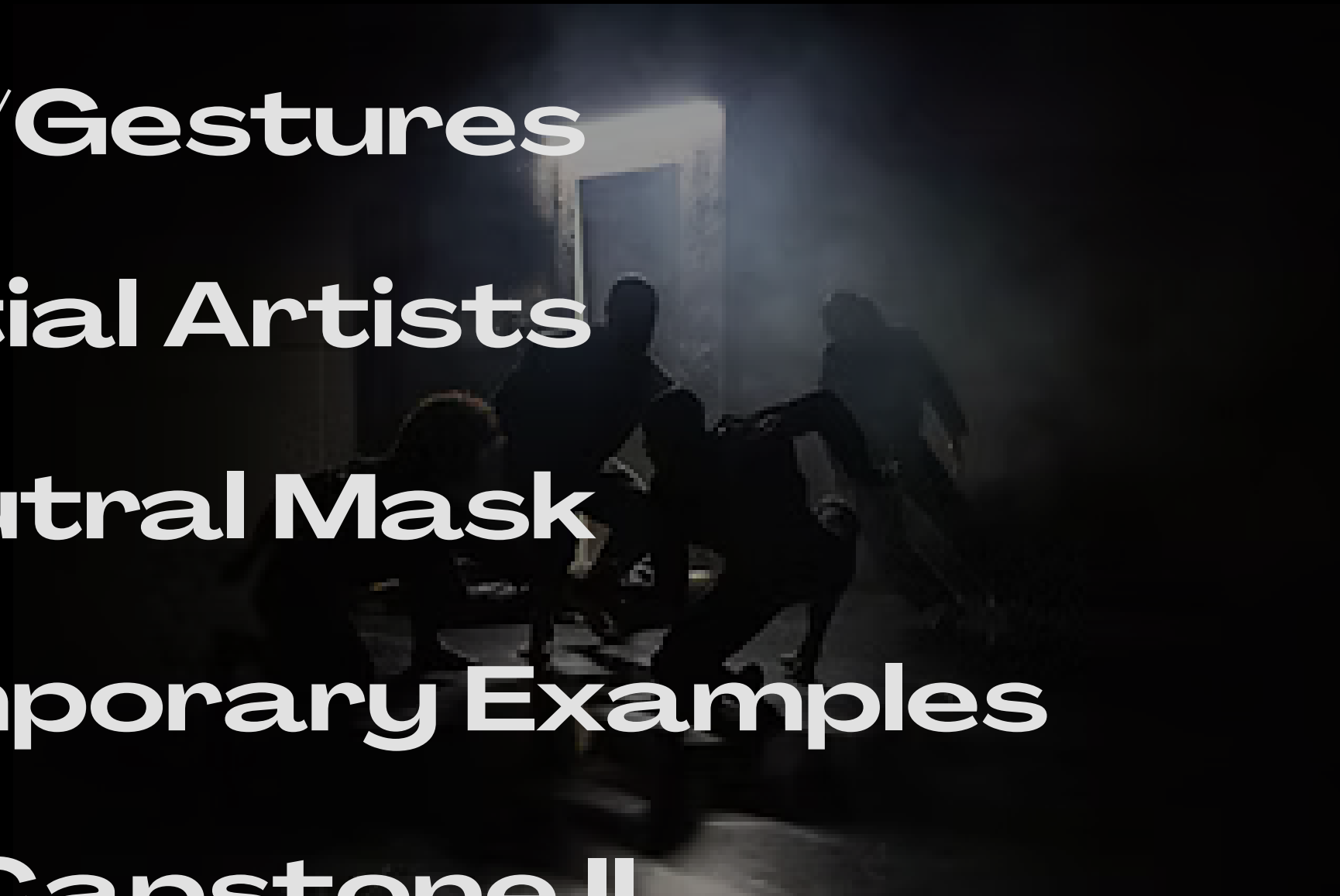




WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES A
DANCE PERFORMANCE
INTRIGUING ?

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WHAT IS PHYSICAL THEATRE?

How the physical body portrays a person's experience through dramaturgical and kinesthetic research (Kriegler-Wenk 397).

Greek Theatre → 20th Century

Expressive body + Human emotion

✦ **“Physical theatre” - not used until late 1960s**

✦ **Acting techniques**

✦ **Mime** → commedia dell’arte, pantomime, and harlequinade

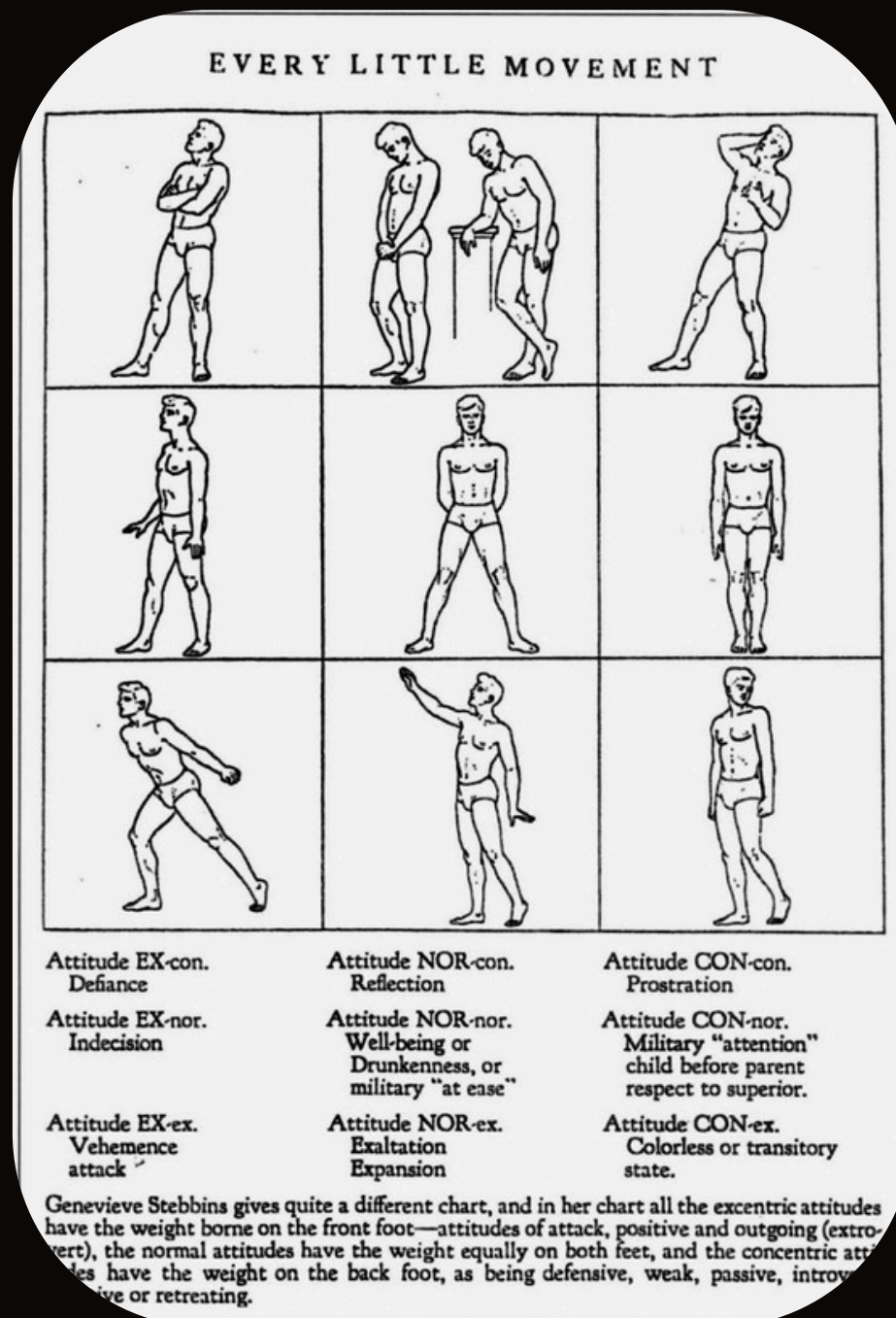
✦ **“Theatrical malady”**

✦ Gestures- “precede knowledge, thought, and language” (Murray and Keefe 21).



EUROPEAN ORIGINS

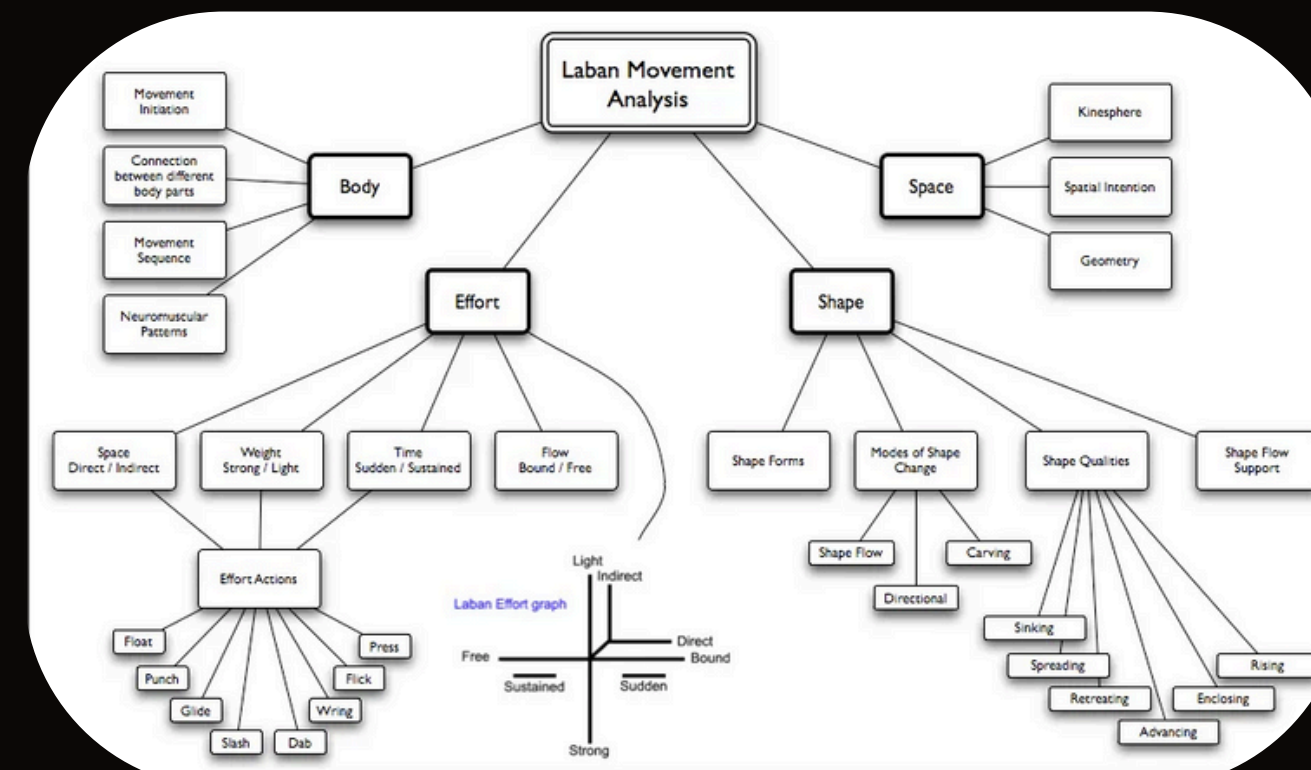
DELSARTE AND LABAN



“Man moves to satisfy a need”
– Rudolf von Laban

- “Applied Aesthetics” (1839)
- **Body divided into three sections**
- Rationality and exactness
 - Influenced Ted Shawn, Isadora Duncan and Rudolph von Laban

- “Laban Movement Analysis” (1920s)
- **“An action that a person completes directly parallels their inner feelings” (Newlove 27).**

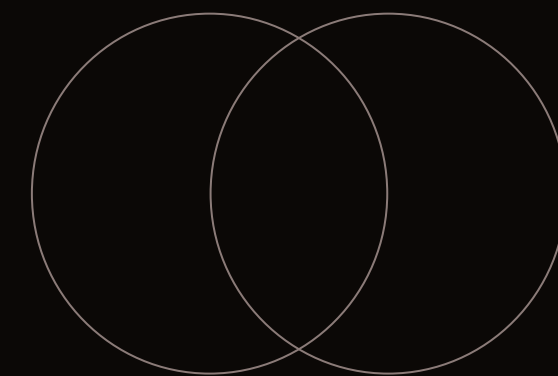


GESTURES

- **Symbols = people, places, objects**
- **Semiotics**
 - Kinesics – code for translating movement of the body on stage
- **Interpretation of a symbol**
 - “Smile” = jealousy or rage
- **Humans inherently view others as we view ourselves**



INFLUENTIAL ARTISTS



Jacque Lecoq



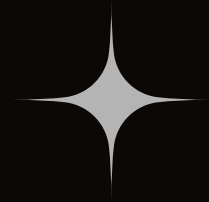
Pina Bausch



Lloyd Newson



JACQUE LECOQ

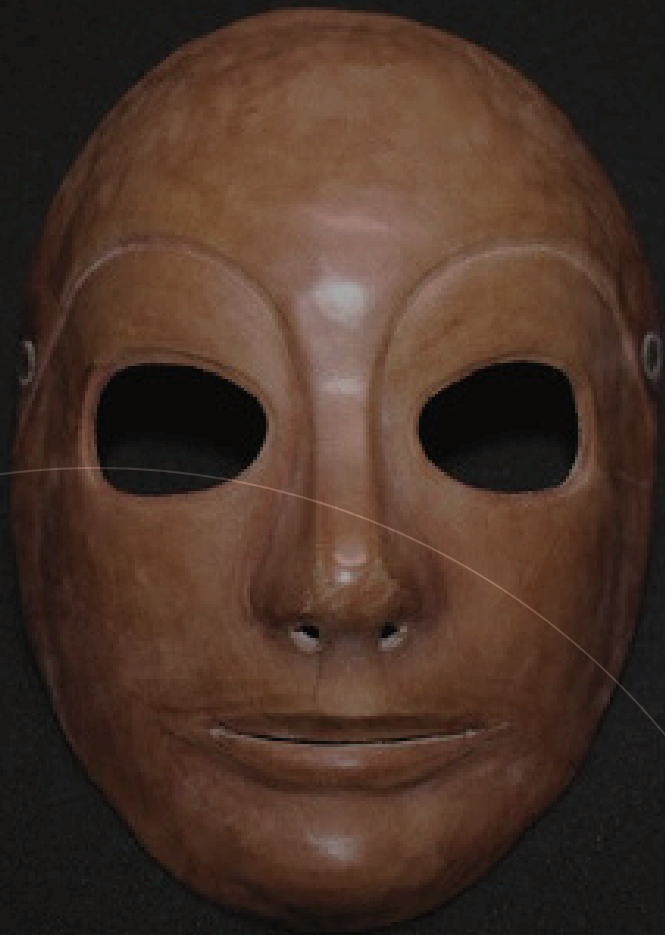


“The body is to be feared,
villified, denied, or admired
as some ‘other from a safe
distance in the gallery’
(Lecoq 54).



- Sports → Theatre
- Travail et Culture (TEC)
 - Mimed improvisation
- Can the body itself convey emotions without the use of facial expressions?
 - **Neutral mask**
- Simplicity and sensations

THE NEUTRAL MASK



Video of Neutral Mask
Performance

- Leather mask made by Amleto Sartori (1930s)
- Reference point
- **No inner conflict, a state of receptiveness, and a state of neutrality before action**
- Increased sensations
- **The body becomes the face**

“Beneath every expressive mask or commedia dell’ arte masks, there is a neutral mask supporting the other”
(Lecoq 38)



✦ PINA BAUSCH

“I am not interested in how people move, but what moves them” (Pina Bausch 1997)

- Dance + Physical Theatre
- 1973 – Tanztheater Wuppertal
- **Human actions → Choreography**
 - Performer's personal history/identity
- Evoke > Console
- **Café Müller (1978)**
 - Gestures = lived experiences

“Bausch takes quotation, physicality, and gestures and turns them into something **extraordinary, awful, and sometimes sublime** through precision, repetition, and exaggeration”
(Murray and Keefe 78).



CAFE MÜLLER

PHYSICAL THEATRE IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

Lloyd Newson

**“DV8 Physical Theatre
Company”**

(1986-2022)

Enter Achilles

“DV8 is dance about something... I feel genuinely
frustrated by most contemporary dance”
(Newson, 2015, as cited in Frost).

Amandi “Baye” Washington
and Sam “Asa” Pratt

“Baye and Asa”

(2015-Now)

“Baye & Asa's 4 | 2 | 3 is a cathartic and
visceral experience like none other. It must be
seen.” – Mikhail Baryshnikov (Baye & Asa)

4 | 2 | 3

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

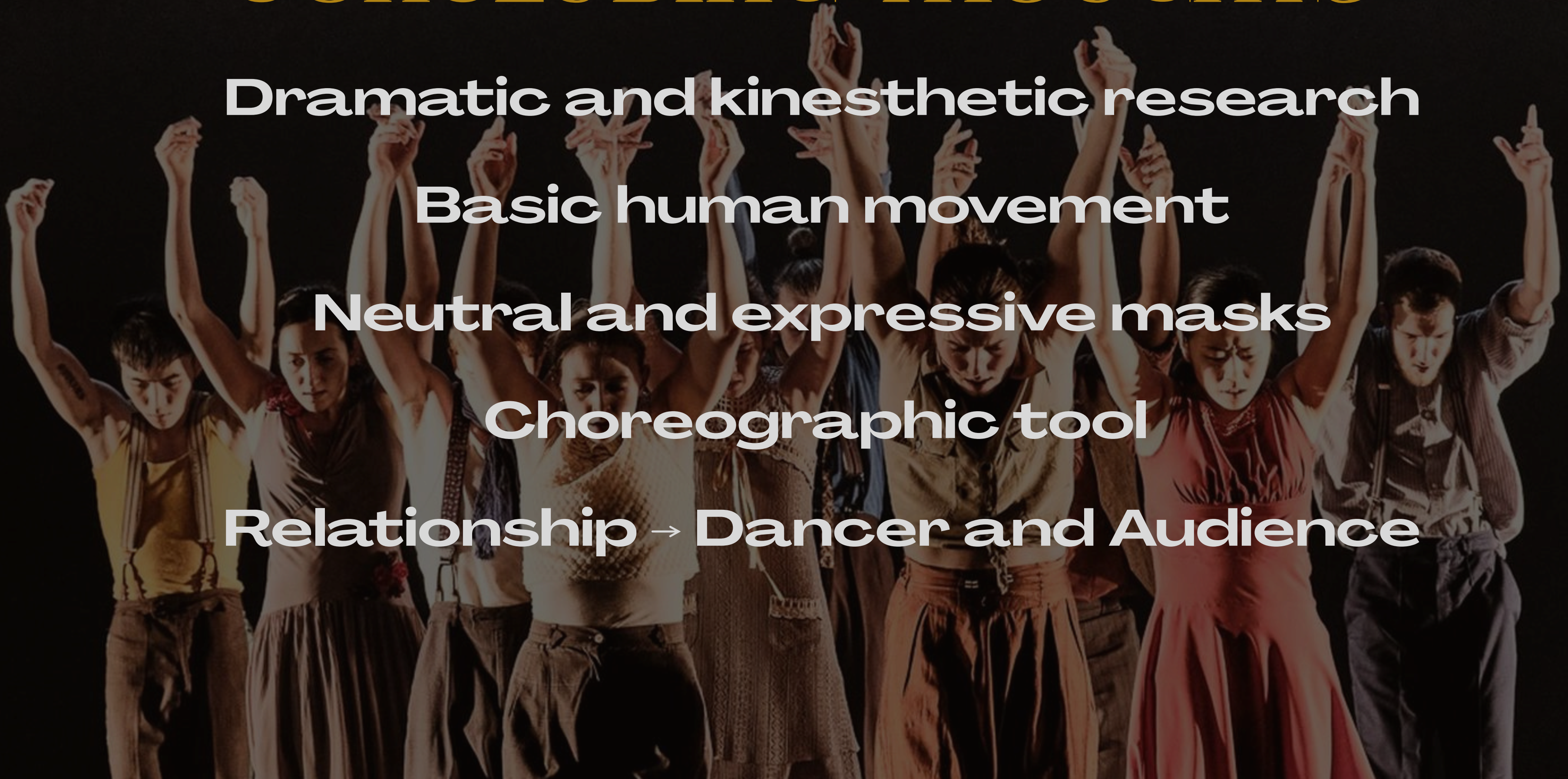
Dramatic and kinesthetic research

Basic human movement

Neutral and expressive masks

Choreographic tool

Relationship → Dancer and Audience



- Investigating “Neutral Mask”
- Gestures
 - Coventional and unconventional
- Acting techniques
- Spoken word, props, etc.
- Conveying narrative

SENIOR CAPSTONE II





“IT IS BOTH ARRESTING AND
ENLIGHTENING TO SENSE THAT WE
ARE ‘HARD-WIRED’ TO SEE
OTHERS AS WE ARE OURSELVES”
(LECOQ 45).

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A photograph of three dancers in a studio. The dancers are wearing dark, long-sleeved shirts and dark pants. They are in dynamic, suspended poses. The background is a dark studio with some equipment visible. The lighting is warm and focused on the dancers.

Thank You for Listening!

Any Questions?

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