Reverse chronology

Drama 2019 v1.1

Examples provided in this resource are not exhaustive. Teachers will find their own threads and links to investigate and make connections between aspects of background; meaning, context and purpose, and influences on chosen texts.

Highlight the bubbles and make the connections as you and students investigate influences and impacts.

Reverse chronology for historical understanding

Within each unit, reverse chronology is an effective approach to investigate arts practice. This approach begins with a contemporary focus and follows logical pathways backwards to learn about relevant historical, cultural and traditional styles and art forms. Reverse chronology follows a cause-and-effect pathway to understanding influences on artists, styles and practices. This differs from a customary chronological approach that would begin in the past and follow a sequential path to the present.

The benefits of a reverse-chronology approach to learning about historical traditions of the art form of drama include:

- helping an understanding of ourselves, and the decisions and choices made by artists in the present by examining and acknowledging the influences and events that affected previous generations
- fostering research skills in an inquiry learning model in which students pose questions about the causes and effects of influences and compare dramatic forms of past and present times
- ensuring enough time is dedicated to focus on relevant historical practices
- engaging students who are more interested in ideas that relate to themselves and the time they inhabit, which enables them to follow connecting pathways more effectively
- understanding how knowledge of historical forms and practices helps an understanding of those of the current day.

Unit 3: Challenge

Subject matter

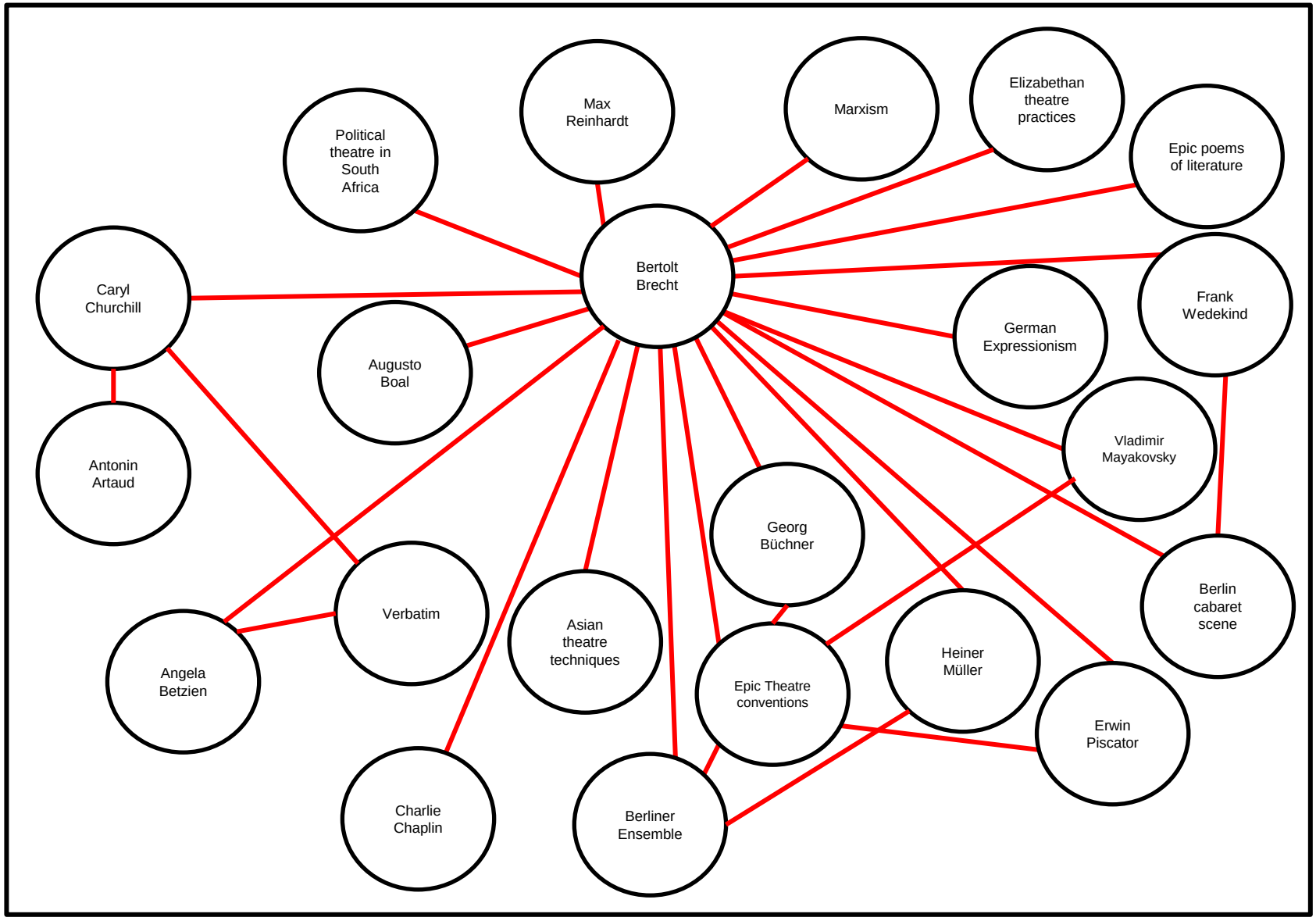
- interpret and analyse, using a reverse chronology approach, scripted drama and professional live or recorded live theatre, from contemporary practices to inherited traditions that make a social comment, to identify and evaluate meaning and purpose, applying their knowledge and understanding of the dramatic languages of selected Theatre of Social Comment styles*, considering
  - elements of drama (e.g. character, contrast, dramatic focus, language, mood, movement, place, relationship, role, situation, space, symbol, tension, time)
  - conventions of selected styles such as
    - § Epic Theatre (e.g. didacticism, alienation, narration, historification, use of song, gestus, direct address, multiple role-taking, projected image/placard) or
    - § Theatre of the Absurd (e.g. word-play, sound and noise used as spectacle, disconnected and non-communicative speech, unusual use of silence and pause, combining real and non-real techniques, dexterity and precise timing, extreme variation from serious to comic, vaudevillian) or
    - § Contemporary Political Theatre including Satire (e.g. irony, parody, exaggeration, juxtaposition, double entendre, reversal of normal order, allegory, intertextuality)

*Choice of style: Theatre of Social comment — focus on Caryl Churchill

Reverse chronology approach

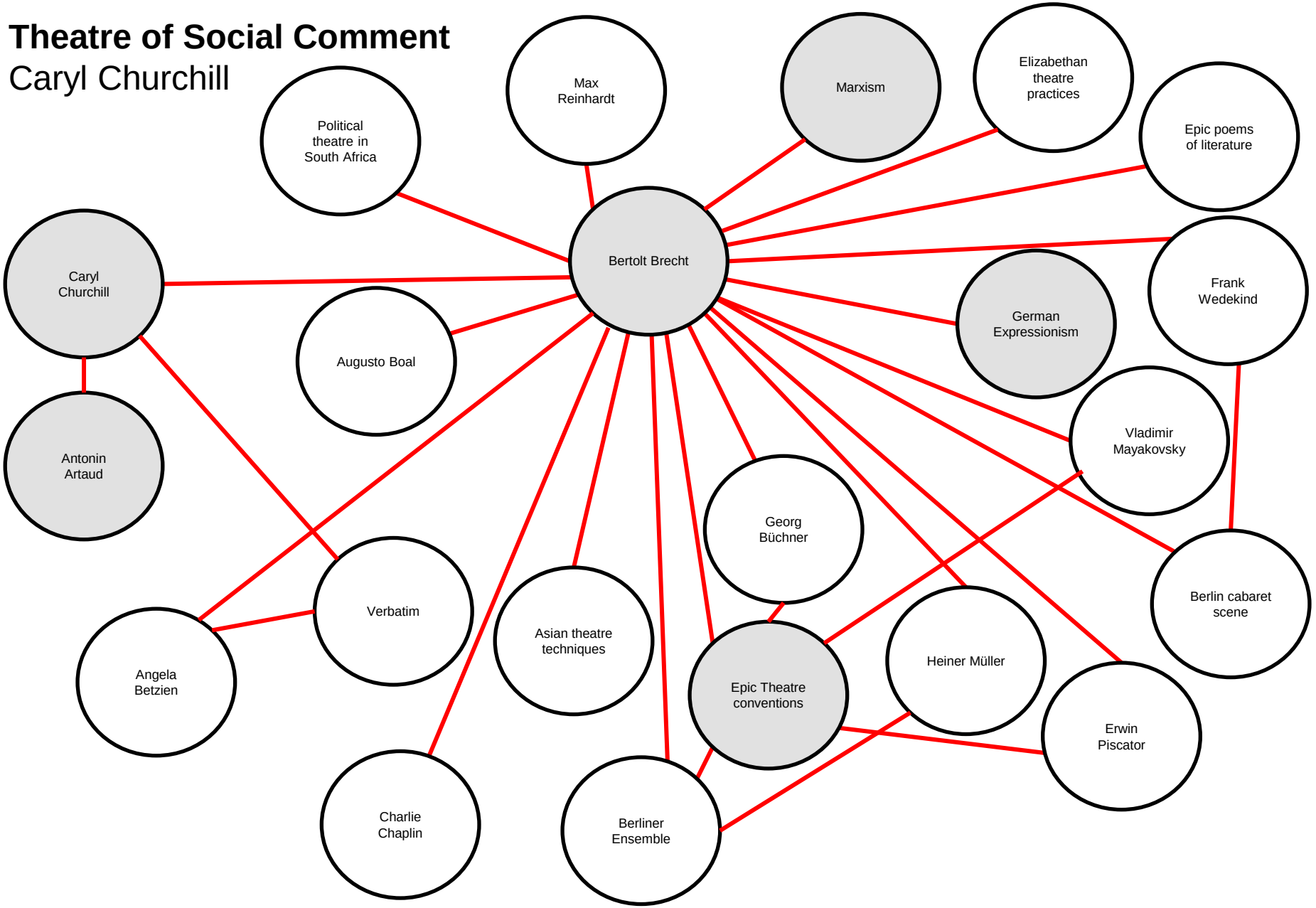
This approach enables the development of an understanding of a current playwright to consider influences and apply knowledge and understanding of the dramatic languages of a selected Theatre of Social Comment style.

Current → **Past**



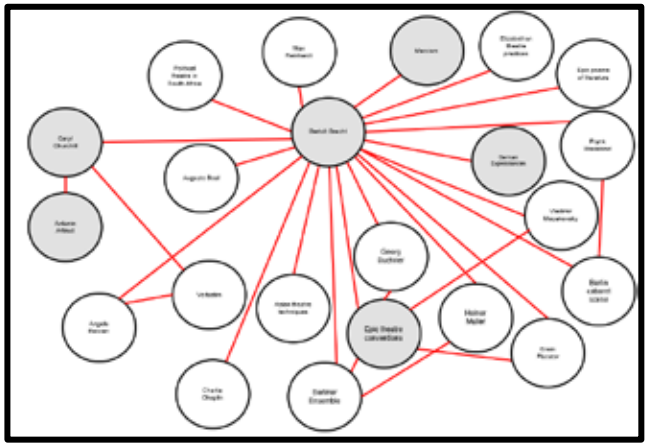
Theatre of Social Comment

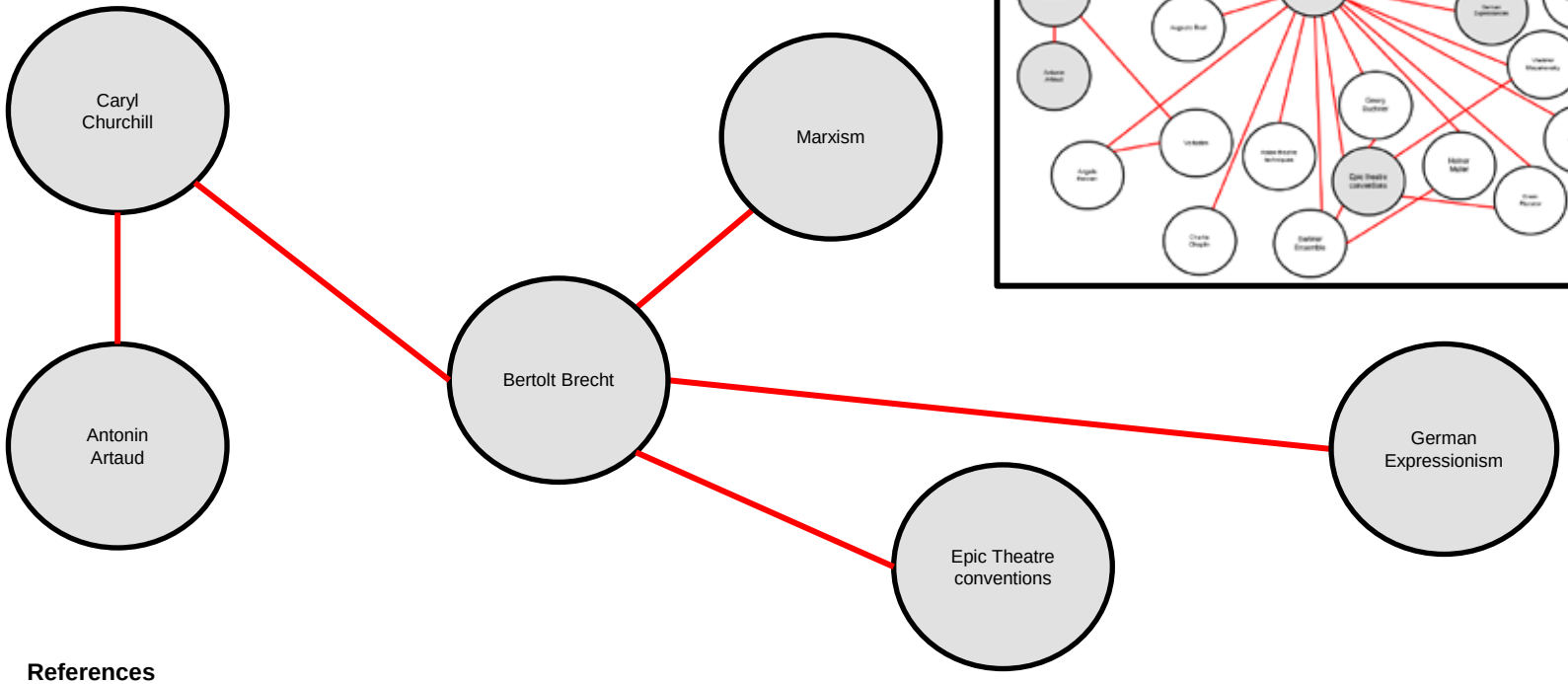
Caryl Churchill



Theatre of Social Comment — Caryl Churchill

- work has constantly evolved and shifted in style and content
- developed, especially in early work, Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre conventions (e.g. alienation) to explore issues of gender and sexuality
- experimented with forms of dance theatre, incorporating techniques from the performance style developed by Antonin Artaud with his 'Theatre of Cruelty'
- abandoned conventions of realism
- embraced surrealism and other art forms such as dance and opera





References

§ Badreddine, S 2016, 'Brecht's *Gestus* within a Churchillian Context: Top girls's 'gestic' characters', *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, vol. 2, Issue 4 (March 2016), available at *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies (IJHCS)*, www.ijhcs.com/index.php/ijhcs/article/viewFile/180/191

§ Lawson, M 2012, 'Caryl Churchill, by the people who know her best', *The Guardian*, 4 October 2012, available at *The Guardian,* https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/oct/03/caryl-churchill-collaborators-interview

§ StageMilk Team 2014, *Caryl Churchill (Playwright),* Stagemilk, 24 March 2014, available at *Stagemilk*, http://www.stagemilk.com/caryl-churchill-playwright/

Useful links

Brown, K 2006, ‘Bertolt Brecht’s influence cannot be overestimated’, *DW Akademie*, available at *DW*, www.dw.com/en/bertolt-brechts-influence-cannot-be-overestimated/a-2127719

Cash, J 2002, ‘Epic Theatre’, *Theatre Links*, available at *Theatre Links*, www.theatrelinks.com/epic-theatre/

Cash, J & Erez, E 2014, ‘Exploring the elements of Epic Theatre through ensemble performance’, 2014 Drama Victoria Conference, available at www.dramavictoria.vic.edu.au/documents/item/370

Cash, J 2018, ‘Epic Theatre conventions’, *The Drama Teacher*, available at *The Drama Teacher*, www.thedramateacher.com/epic-theatre-conventions/

Chambers, C. (ed.) 2002, ‘Epic Theatre’ (from George Brandt, *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth-Century Theatre*), *Drama Online,* London, available at *Drama Online,* www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/genres/epic-theatre-iid-2483

BBC, ‘Bitesize: Epic theatre and Brecht’, www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zwmvd2p/revision/2

Oyarzun, H 2015, ‘The 15 best movies influenced by Bertolt Brecht’s theater techniques’, *Taste of Cinema*, 15 October 2015, available at *Taste of Cinema*, www.tasteofcinema.com/2015/the-15-best-movies-influenced-by-bertolt-brechts-theater-techniques/2/

Unit 4: Transform

Subject matter

- interpret and analyse, using a reverse chronology approach, scripted drama, and professional live or recorded theatre, from contemporary practices to inherited traditions, to
  - identify and evaluate meaning and relevance to a 21st century audience, by applying their knowledge and understanding of the dramatic languages of selected styles, considering
    - § elements of drama (such as character, contrast, dramatic focus, language, mood, movement, place, relationship, role, situation, space, symbol, tension, time)
    - § conventions of selected styles:
      - Greek theatre (such as chorus, heightened emotion and action, mask, presentational acting); or
      - Elizabethan theatre (such as heightened emotion and action, iambic pentameter, soliloquy, direct address, aside, poetic image, presentational acting); or
      - Neoclassicism (such as heightened emotion and action; language as lyrical, formal, rhythmic and rich with imagery; elevated movement, drawing on presentational use of gesture, including techniques of commedia dell'arte)
- conventions of Contemporary performance (such as fragmentation, hybridity and openness of form, intertextuality, hypertextuality, appropriation, site-specific performance and mediatised performance, incorporating the use of performance technologies)

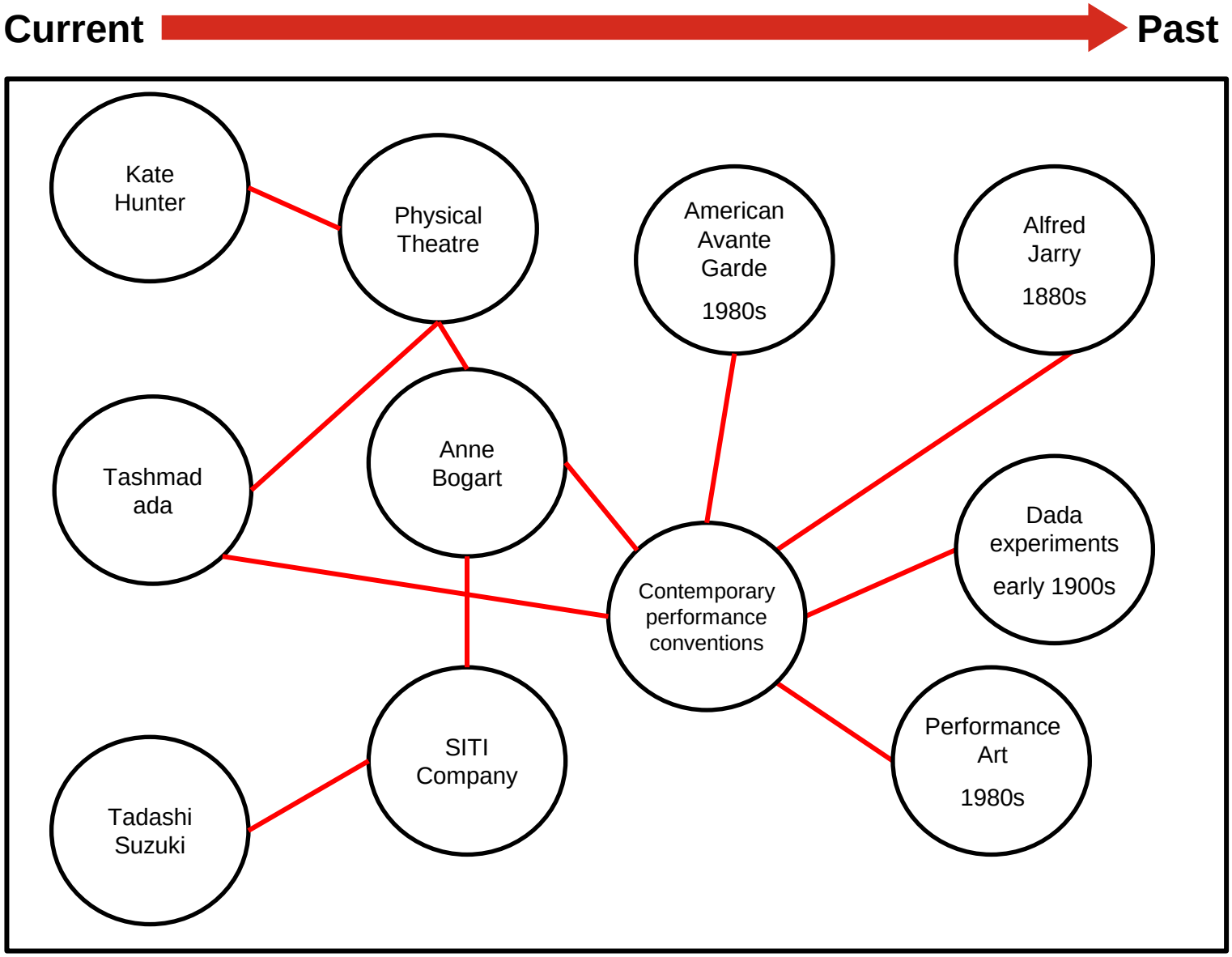
*Choice of form/style: Contemporary performance — focus on Kate Hunter

Contemporary performance (definition from Glossary — Drama 2019 v1.1)

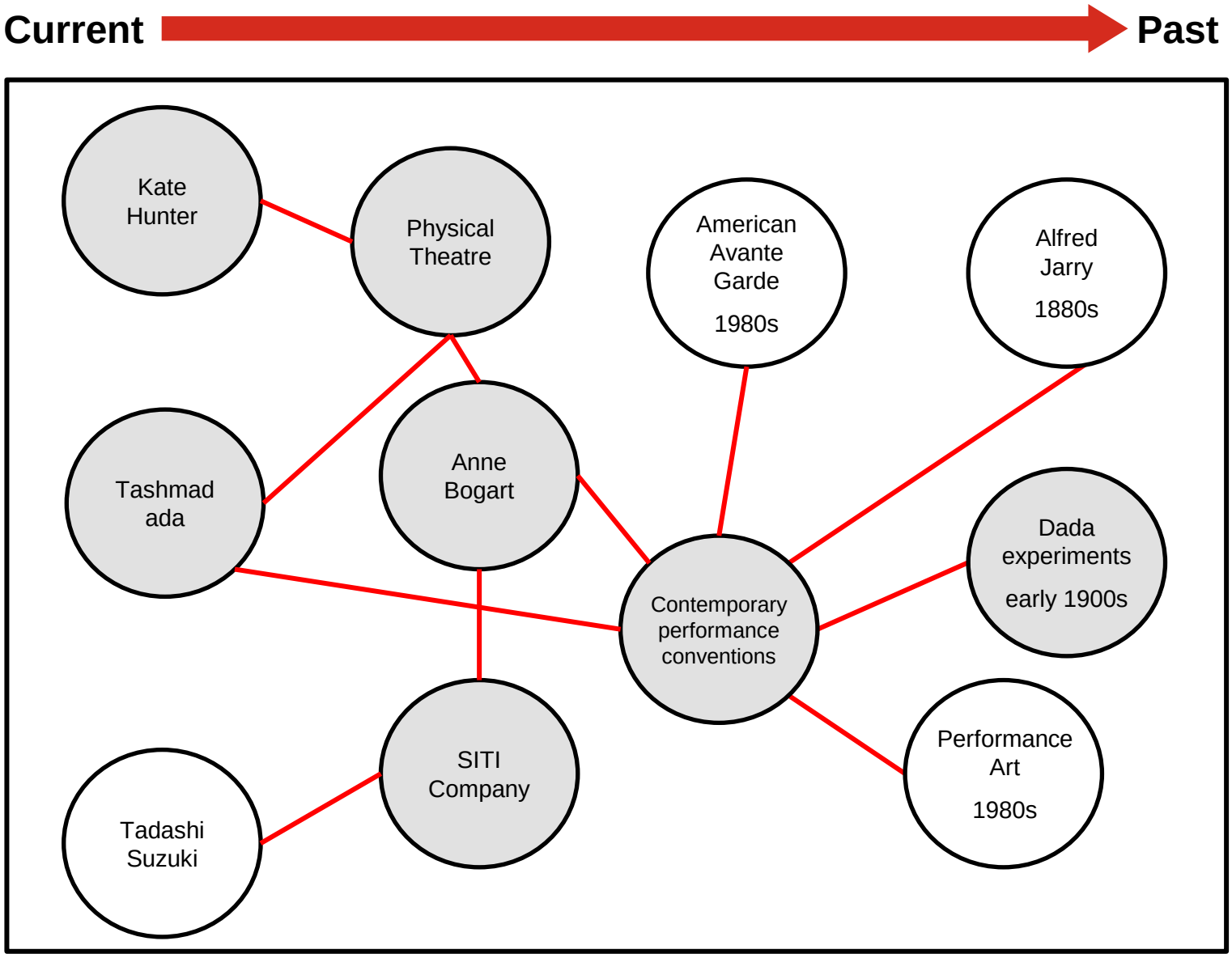
- a body of work that builds on an aesthetic history beginning in the 1880s with Alfred Jarry and early Dada experiments; it has developed through the avant-garde and Performance art of the 1980s and continues into our postmodern contemporary condition.
- Contemporary performance is often non-narrative, technically rigorous and characterised by openness of form; it unsettles perception, demands critical engagement from audiences, addresses conceptual debates within aesthetics and draws on a diverse range of cultural interests.
- conventions of Contemporary performance include intertextuality, hypertextuality, hybridity and openness of form, fragmentation, appropriation, integration of live, site-specific and mediatised performance.
- Contemporary performance is hybrid work that integrates text, physical theatre / dance, visual theatre, non-linear form, objects, music, costumes, lighting, image, sound, sets, and vocal expression into complex interactive systems.

Reverse chronology approach

This approach enables the development of an understanding of a current artist to consider influences and apply knowledge and understanding of the dramatic languages of a selected Contemporary performance style.


Current
Past
Kate Hunter
Physical Theatre
American Avante Garde
1980s
Alfred Jarry
1880s
Tashmad ada
Anne Bogart
Contemporary performance conventions
Dada experiments
early 1900s
SITI Company
Performance Art
1980s
Tadashi Suzuki

An example of possible reverse chronology threads to develop an understanding of influences on Contemporary performance artist Kate Hunter



Kate Hunter

- actor, performance-maker and researcher who makes cross-disciplinary and immersive work
- work juxtaposes digital and analog technology, storytelling and the live body, and employs innovative use of verbatim recordings
- draws on physical theatre training and improvisation
- trained with director Anne Bogart and the SITI Company in Melbourne and New York
- influenced by:
    - directors — Anne Bogart, Jacques Tati, Laurie Anderson
    - solo performers — Marie Brassard
    - cognitive psychologist — Susan Engel
    - neuroscientist — Antonio Damasio
    - video artist — Bill Viola
    - writings — Umberto Eco
    - linguistics expert — George Lakoff

References

Kate Hunter Theatre, 'Kate Hunter performance-maker', www.katehuntertheatre.com/about/

Walker, S 2014, 'An interview with Jesse Cox (Wael Zuaiter: Unknown) and Kate Hunter (Memorandum)', *Theatre Works* (blog), 2 May 2014, available at *Theatre Works*, https://theatreworksblog.wordpress.com/2014/05/02/an-interview-with-jesse-cox-wael-zuaiter-unknown-and-kate-hunter-memorandum/

Arts Review, 'On the Couch with Kate Hunter', http://artsreview.com.au/on-the-couch-with-kate-hunter/

Theatreworks, 'Meet our 2016 Artists: Kate Hunter Earshot', (blog), https://theatreworksblog.wordpress.com/2016/02/29/meet-our-2016-artists-kate-hunter-earshot/

Other useful links

- *Contemporary Performance*, ‘Artists’, https://contemporaryperformance.com/artists/
- *Tashmadada*, www.tashmadada.com/
- Gattenhof, S 2006, ‘Traces: Viewing and responding to contemporary performance’, In *Proceedings Drama Australia National Conference — Turning the Tides*, Sydney, available at http://eprints.qut.edu.au/7046/1/7046.pdf
- Coleman, S 2007, ‘Post-Modern theatre/contemporary performance’, *Prezi,* available at https://prezi.com/zlft4g7sl_pf/post-modern-theatre-contemporary-performance/

Useful reverse chronology resources

Tew, D 2014, ‘Pedagogy of teaching history: Comparing the chronological and thematic approaches’, available at *West Oregon University Digital Commons,* http://digitalcommons.wou.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=honors_theses

Hartman, J 2015, ‘Teaching the history of rock music using reverse chronology’, available at *iAchieveLearning,* https://iachievelearning.com/2015/12/teaching-the-history-of-rock-music-using-reverse-chronology/

Himes, G 2015, ‘Why we should teach music history backwards’, available at *Smithsonian.com*, www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/why-we-should-teach-music-history-backwards-180955053/

Steal like an artist: Austin Kleon at TEDxKC, www.youtube.com/watch?v=oww7oB9rjgw