



**ADELAIDE
FESTIVAL**

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Resource developed by
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Cold Blood

Michèle Anne de Mey, Jacou Van Dormael & Kiss & Cry Collective

Written by Thomas Gunzig

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Image: Julien Lambert

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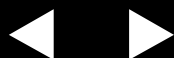
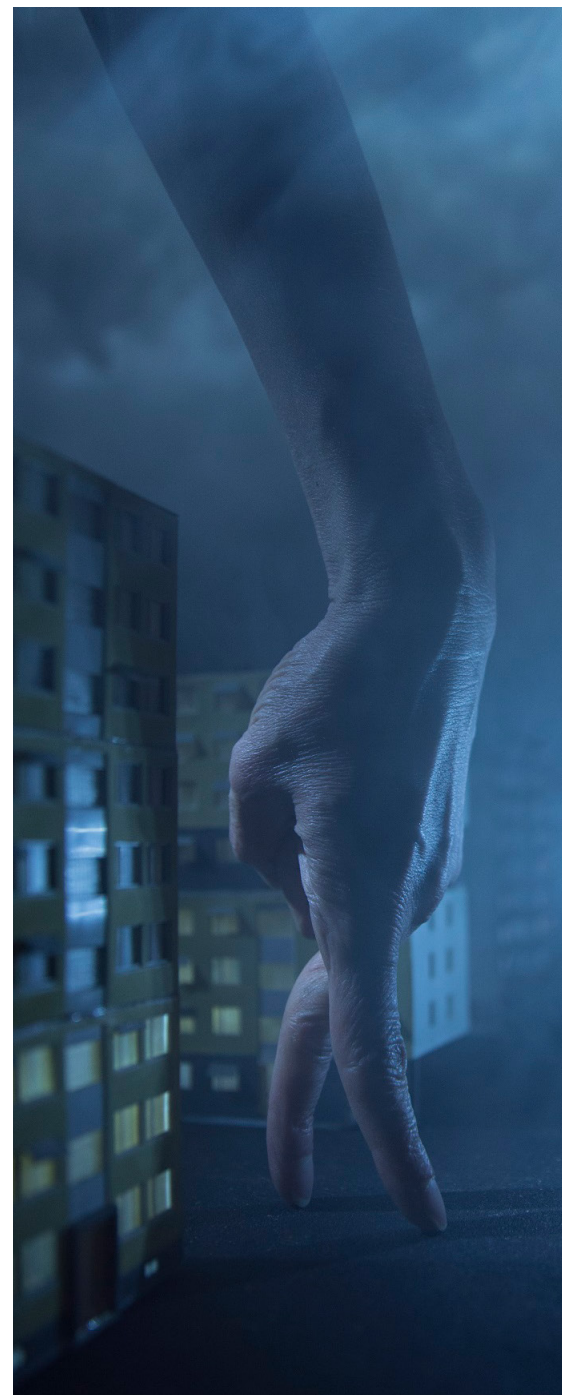
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Show rundown

Australian Premiere / Australian Exclusive

1hr 15mins, no interval

"After attending the performance of *Cold Blood*, "You may never look at your hands in the same way again." [Edinburgh Arts Festival](#)

The audience enters a world where hands are the dancers and the stories unfold on a big screen – in real time. Fingers dance in miniature settings, the cameras hover in time to the music, and a voice narrates.

Lights, camera, ACTION!

A plane journey, a forest in the fog, seven unexpected deaths

When death arrives, it is absurd, often trivial and sometimes comical.

Is there life before death? The answer lies in the hands which are dancing before you.



[Cold Blood trailer](#)

It's dark.

Your eyes are open, but you can't see anything.

You are at the theatre and yet you are already elsewhere.

You are already a little bit different.

You are going to live seven deaths.

Without fear

Every death is amazing

Every death is the first

The deaths are like lives.

No two are alike.

Presenting Partner



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Themes

The theme of *Cold Blood* is the death of a human or the death of humans and the final moments of happiness and memories.

Production

Style and Conventions

Cold Blood is a combination of cinema and dance. The husband and wife team of internationally acclaimed Belgian film director Jaco Van Dormael and choreographer Michèle Anne De Mey bring together dancers who use only their hands performing in miniaturised sets with evocative lighting. A crew of film technicians capture the choreography and project it onto a giant screen.

The form of dance in *Cold Blood*'s miniaturised world has been dubbed "nano dance".

Van Dormael and De Mey explain that "There is dance, but there is also more than dance. It is like a pop up film in which the camera films things which are too small to be seen by the naked eye and the eyes sees what the camera does not capture."

The trailer from *Kiss & Cry* provides an idea of the interaction between the miniature sets, the cameras, dancers, and live screening. However, the difference between *Kiss & Cry* and *Cold Blood* is that the sets are backstage. For every new scene a new small set is brought to the stage.

NANO DANCE

The choreography of hands and fingers set inside a tiny universe of inanimate objects. The objects and hands are used to tell a story.



[Kiss & Cry trailer](#)

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Music and Sound

The soundtrack for *Cold Blood* offers an eclectic range of music; from Doris Day, Nina Simone, David Bowie, Janis Joplin to György Ligeti, Antonio Vivaldi and Franz Schubert.

Set and Costume Design

The miniature set-pieces invite the audience to suspend their beliefs and be transported to imaginary places:

- A Fred and Ginger tap routine on thimbles
- A Busby Berkeley synchronised swimming extravaganza
- A pole dancing club
- A Kubrick inspired space station sequence.

The sets construct illusions for the viewer. For example, two mirrors are placed either side of a forest to make it seem infinite and fingers drive cars on lonely foggy roads or through war-ravaged cityscapes.

Narration

The script for *Cold Blood* was written by Belgian author Thomas Gunzig. As *Cold Blood* begins the narrator describes the various ways people die and then asks the audience to close their eyes and count to ten. On opening their eyes, the audience sees planes flying through fog and clouds. One crashes.

Gunzig's script tells us that "there are mechanical deaths, organic deaths, fragrant deaths, deaths in the dead of night, deaths experienced first-hand, silent deaths. And then there are erotic deaths." Each death ends with the final image you remember before you die.



Curriculum Links & Activities

This education resource has been developed with links to the Australian Curriculum. Activities have been created to reflect each of the achievement standards, depending on the year level, including content descriptions within each learning area and the general capabilities. The resource aims to provide teachers with information to help prepare students before attending the performance, as well as structured learning activities for the classroom after viewing the performance.

SACE Stage 1 and 2 – the resources are created with links and in relation to the subject outlines.

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Theatre Etiquette

The French word etiquette, and it's second meaning, was adopted by English speakers in the middle of the 18th Century – "requirements for proper behaviour."

This can sound a bit formal but having an understanding of "theatre etiquette" helps an audience know what to expect and how to get the most out of their theatre experience.

Why does it matter?

It respects other audience members attending the performance.

It shows respect to the performers. Don't forget – you can see them, and they can see you!

It acknowledges the hard work that it takes to bring a live performance together, by everyone.

It often includes a long list of people.

What are theatre etiquette expectations?

Depending on the age of an audience the expectations can vary. Theatre designed for very young audiences, think 2 to 8 year olds, will have different expectations. Often the theatre experience for younger audiences will invite and encourage participation. However, as the content becomes more complex and audiences mature, think 9 years and older, there is an expectation that students will have developed an understanding of enthusiastic participation and deliberate disruption.

What makes going to a live performance different to going to the cinema?

Many audience members have probably been to see a movie but might not have been to a live theatre performance. The BIG difference is that the actors are live and are there with you in the moment. Don't forget to show your appreciation. If it's funny, it's okay to laugh. If the actors invite you to respond, then it's okay to respond. Sometimes it can also be sad so if you know it's going to be sad don't forget to bring a tissue or two.

What to expect:

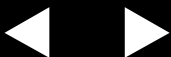
An usher will help you find your seat and you need to follow their directions. You will know the performance is about to start and that you need to settle and be quiet when the lights begin to dim or you hear a voice over or sounds.

Turn off your mobile phone. Avoid eating or rustling food packaging.

Try to cover coughs and sneezes. Go to the toilet before you go into the theatre.

Photographing and filming is not permitted and here are a couple of reasons why:

- It can disturb the actors on the stage and break their concentration
- Intellectual property is paramount. The production on stage is intellectual property of the theatre, therefore you are not allowed to take photos of it
- You will be missing out on the detail you can't see through the viewfinder



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Performance Literacy

Art is a means of expressing emotion, a way of transmitting feelings, culture, beliefs and values between the creators and performers of the work and the audience. There is some art, which is created for the explicit purpose of eliciting a strong emotional response from the audience. There are a myriad of emotions that students can experience when they are viewing live theatre from happiness to anger, surprise, annoyance, just to name a few.

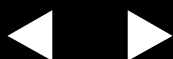
Students might ask - but how is live theatre different from watching films in a cinema?

The difference is that actors are real people telling stories on stage, the audience is with the actor in the moment. [Recent research from the University of Arkansas](#), published in Educational Researcher, which spanned two years and followed school groups who attended live theatre performance or a movie version of the same story revealed significant differences. Students attending live performances experienced an increase in tolerance as well as a greater understanding of the plot and vocabulary of stories.

[Live Theatre Improves Learning and Tolerance](#)

As students engage with and watch live theatre they develop a deeper understanding of the language of the theatre. They develop literacies allowing them to 'read' the gestures and movements of a performer, develop an understanding of the intention of the set, costume, or lighting designer, or reflect on what the playwright or directors intended meaning of a setting or character could be. The [Before the Show](#) activities, for the Adelaide Festival show you are attending, are designed to support students to develop these literacy skills, knowledge and understanding.

The [After the Show](#) activities are designed to provide students with the opportunity to discuss, analyse and comprehend their responses to the show. Having a strong knowledge and understanding of theatre terminology will support students.



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The Art of Making Memories

Apparently, your life really does flash before your eyes before you die and the last things you think of are the stand out moments in your life – your memories. A study, published in the journal of Consciousness and Cognition, suggests the parts of the brain that store memories are the last to be affected as other functions fail.

The human memory is creative it can add to or suppress memories depending on the feelings involved. Often it is not the day's we remember but the moments.

What makes memories? People we meet. Things we do. Wanting to love and be loved. Our anxiety about life and living. Places we go. Things we see. Smells. Taste.

Jaco Van Dormael and Michèle Anne De Mey:

"... manage to handle the scales of both art and life wisely and skilfully by realising that people's lives and personal stories are nothing more than numerous, fragile toys in a huge children's room. In other words, our life or personal story is a performance that will eventually end, or a dream we'll simply wake up from at that very moment..."

"We do not remember days, we remember moments. The richness of life lies in memories we have forgotten"

— Cesare Pavese,
This Business of Living;
Diaries, 1935-1950

Cold Blood – the deaths. Sudden, premature, slow, instantaneous and even stupid.



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Before the Show

Individually students:

Students list memorable moments.

Memorable moments in life come from the spontaneous, unexpected and emotional events. It could be:

- The first day at a new school
- Your first kiss – hmmm well maybe not your first kiss
- Eating your favourite meal
- Winning a prize
- Or something random and weird like - getting sprayed by the lion at the zoo

Pair share:

- Students share their list of memorable moments with a partner
- Select one moment from each list and together devise movements to communicate the two memorable moments

With their partner:

1. Identify the movements and create a short movement sequence for each memorable moment.
2. Sequence and rehearse movements as a continuous piece of dance work with no stopping between the two ideas.
3. Identify music or sound effects to accompany their memorable moments.

As a whole class:

Each pair performs their memorable moment.

Choreography is the art of making dances, the gathering and organization of movement into order and pattern.

Australian Curriculum

Year 7 – 8

Year 9 – 10

The Arts – Dance

Combine elements of dance and improvise by making literal movements into abstract movements.

Improvise to find new movement possibilities and explore personal style combining elements of dance.

Manipulate combinations of the elements of dance and choreographic devices to communicate their choreographic intent.

Structure dances using movement motifs, choreographic devices and form.

Evaluate their own choreography and performance, and that of other to inform and refine future work.

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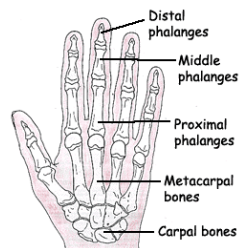
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All about your hands

Most people don't notice their hands until they fail them. For the majority of us our hands are there to perform for us: dressing you, scratching, brushing your teeth, feeding you – whatever the task they are there to serve you.



However, there was a time when it wasn't like that. Not that you probably remember but there was a time when those pudgy little hands didn't seem to have much control at all. By about 10 to 15 years old you have worked out most of the things your hands can do for you.

Interesting facts about your hands

- The hand has 27 bones
- There are 8 bones in the wrist
- There are 5 bones in the palm which link to fingers and thumb
- There are 2 main sets of muscles and tendons
- Flexor muscles (fastened to the underside of the forearm) bend the fingers and thumb, and extensors (connected to the top of the forearm) straighten them out again

Students – observe how their hands work by closing and opening their fingers.

Why are hands special?

Hands not only do tasks for us but they help us to communicate with others.

- A hand can show we care
- A hand can gesture hello, goodbye, stop, come here, I'm hot
- Hands can speak!

SACE – Stage 1

Creating Dance CD2

Communication of choreographic intent to an audience through composition or performance.

Responding to Dance RD2

Investigation into different cultures, historical periods or dance traditions.

SACE – Stage 2

Understanding Dance UD2

Creating Dance CD2

Communication of choreographic intent to an audience through composition or performance.

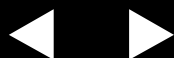
Responding to Dance RD1

Critique and evaluation of a dance presentation, performance, or choreographic piece.

The importance of hands in Asian dance

The use of hands to initiate movement is a feature of many Asian dance styles.

Dancers use their hands in gestures that add significant meaning to the body in motion. Hands are never relaxed or forgotten.



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Just Your Hands

With the same partner:

Students explore how they can communicate the same memorable moment they have choreographed – BUT – this time only using their hands and forearms.

Students will need time to think how their movements can be translated into their hands movements:

- They can describe literally and metaphorically with their hands. Literally – drawing a circle with a hand motion. Metaphorically – a circular motion can gesture to communicate I'm including everyone
- The symbolic use of hands can provide clues about an emotional state; happiness, sadness, surprise, anger
- The use of gesture can emphasise and add structure to a statement. "I'm going to count to five and then I'm leaving!"

In small groups:

Students discuss what was easy or difficult when they worked on translating their Memorable Moments choreographed piece into a piece for hands only.



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After the show

WHAT DID YOU THINK?

Students individually:

- Write down their initial thoughts after seeing *Cold Blood*
- Write down any questions they might have for the film director Jaco Van Dormael or choreographer Michèle Anne De Mey

Questions to ponder

- How did the performance of *Cold Blood* make you feel?
- Can you identify where in the performance you had that feeling OR feelings?

BACK TO THE MEMORABLE MOMENTS

Working in their original pairs students discuss what changes they might make to the piece they choreographed with their partner before seeing *Cold Blood*.

- What would they change – in regards to their movements, set design and sound?
- Students further develop their choreographed hand piece performance of their Memorable Moments, with their partner
- Perform their choreographed pieces to an audience or film and show



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[The Guide for Writing a Dance Critique](#) will support students to plan and write their critique of the performance of Cold Blood.

Tips and hints for students when writing their critique:

- Don't forget when you are expressing an opinion you have to back it up. You can't just say it was awesome! Discuss the execution of the moves, the relationship between the dancers and the miniature sets and the filming
- Describe don't tell
- Reread, edit and have someone else read your critique before you print

Links to previous reviews

[Fest Mag - Review – Cold Blood by Kiss & Cry collective](#)

[The Scotsman – Dance review: Cold Blood, King's Theatre](#)

[The Star – Cold Blood is full of marvellous Ingenuity - Review](#)

[The Stage - Cold Blood at King's Theatre, Edinburgh – 'Exquisitely clever show with dancing fingers'](#)

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Astragales is a contemporary dance company led by Belgian choreographer Michèle Anne De Mey. First set up in 1989, Astragales has an international reputation.

Michèle Anne De Mey

Born in Bruxelles in 1959, Michèle Anne De Mey studied in Mudra, Maurice Béjart's dance school from 1976 to 1979. She gave a new orientation to contemporary dance with her early pieces.

In 1989, Michèle founded the company, *Astragale*, to be able to create, produce and distribute choreographic works around the world. In 1990, she created *Sinfonia Eroica*, a major piece in her career that received numerous awards and gained international success. *Astragale* has generated more than 30 original works since 2005 in a studio in Brussels where several young artists have had the opportunity to think, share and work.

Over 15 years, Michèle has developed a polymorphic dance universe taking its roots in the special space between the dancer and the audience. Intimacy, storytelling, emotion and deconstruction are at the basis of the choreographer's research. The strong and unbreakable link between music and body pushed Michèle to look for strong collaborations with music composers (Thierry De Mey, Robert Wyatt and Jonathan Harvey).

As a teacher, she never stops to find new ways to build bridges with the upcoming generation. In Brussels, Angers, Amsterdam, she developed workshops and teaching courses that shaped her students as much as her personal journey as an artist.

In 2011, with her life partner and filmmaker Jaco Van Dormael, she started working on a collective piece: *Kiss & Cry*. Between dance, theater, cinema and artistry, the show was a huge success and has toured since then on all continents in nine different languages. The story of *Kiss & Cry* and its collective of creators kept on going in 2015 where a second opus was born: *Cold Blood*. With the same science of balance between genre and disciplines, Michèle and her collaborators succeed to tell a new story that touched the audience profoundly.

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Jaco Van Dormael

After his studies in Paris and Brussels, Jaco Van Dormael began his career in the early eighties with short movies and documentaries. Among them, *E Pericoloso Sporgersi* was well received and won the "Grand Prix" at the Movie Festival of Clermont Ferrand.

Jaco shot his first full length film, *Toto le Héros* in 1991. This film won the "Camera d'Or" at *Cannes Festival* and the award of "Best Foreign Movie" at the *French Oscar Gathering: the Ceremony of Césars*.

Six years later, Jaco presented his new piece in Cannes: *The Eight Day*. The movie is a touching story of friendship between two men, one living with Down syndrome. The two leading roles won Best Actors in Cannes and the film met a huge and popular success in Europe.

The director began to work right away on the ambitious *Mr Nobody*. The pharaonic project was a co-production between Canada, USA, Belgium and France and approaches the filmmaker's favorite themes: childhood, innocence, destiny and science-fiction. The film starred Jared Leto and Diane Kruger and was released in cinemas during 2010 – a year after being presented at the *Festival of Venice* competition in 2009.

The following years Jaco came back to his first love: the stage. In 2011, with his life partner and dancer Michèle Anne De Mey, he started *Kiss & Cry*. A collective adventure where 10 creators from the light to the sound worked on an unidentified show between dance, theater and cinema. The show was a great success and has toured in nine different languages all around the world.

In 2015, Jaco came back to working on screens as a director to a new full length fiction, *The Brand New Testament*. This film presents itself as a tale, featuring actor Benoit Poelvoorde who interprets God and lives in Brussels. The casting starred the best of Belgian actors but also the French iconic Catherine Deneuve. The movie met a great success and was presented in Cannes during the "Quinzaine des réalisateurs". He won also 4 Magrittes (Belgian Academy Awards) including Best Movie and Best Director.

Cold Blood premiered in December 2015 and has toured ever since, touching audiences with vivid and powerful emotions – as did *Kiss & Cry* in 2011. In 2017, Jaco and Michèle presented a new and original collaboration, *Amor*, a solo piece for National Theater of Belgium on love and death.

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An auteur - an artist who applies a highly centralised and subjective control to many aspects of a collaborative creative work; in other words, a person equivalent to an author of a novel or a play.

Thomas Gunzig – Auteur of *Cold Blood*

In 1993, Thomas published his first collection of short stories, *Unstable Situation Leaning Around August*.

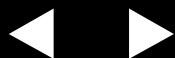
Thomas' fiction is marked by its dark humor, as in the collection, *The Smallest Zoo in the World*, where each story depicts a sympathetic and familiar animal which knows a fatal fate.

He writes occasionally for the theatre and for the cinema: he notably co-signed the script for the film *Le Tout Nouveau Testament* with director Jaco Van Dormael. The film was selected in the parallel section of the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes Film Festival 2015 and won the Best Screenplay award at the Dublin International Film Festival in addition was nominated for the Golden Globe for best foreign language film at the 73rd Golden Globes ceremony and for *Cesar* for best foreign film at the 41st ceremony Caesar.

Sylvie Olivé – Set Designer

Sylvie Olivé is a French production designer of film and television. She is a member of the Association des Décorateurs de Cinéma. She is most notable for her work in *Mr. Nobody* for which she won the Golden Osella for Outstanding Technical Contribution at the 66th Venice International Film Festival.

Dreamscape – a dreamlike usually surrealistic scene also: a painting of a dreamscape.
A landscape or scene with the strangeness or mystery characteristic of dreams.
'surrealism's popular manifestations were the dreamscapes of Salvador Dali'



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Additional resources

[Dance – review – *Cold Blood*](#)

[Review – *Cold Blood* at the Kings Theatre - Scotland](#)

[Broadway Baby – review *Cold Blood*](#)

The audience's attention is divided between the cinema screen and the performers, cameramen, lighting technicians and object manipulators scurrying about in a creative flurry on the stage. This piece is a poetic exploration of the miniature, where tiny stage sets appear enormous when projected onto the screen.

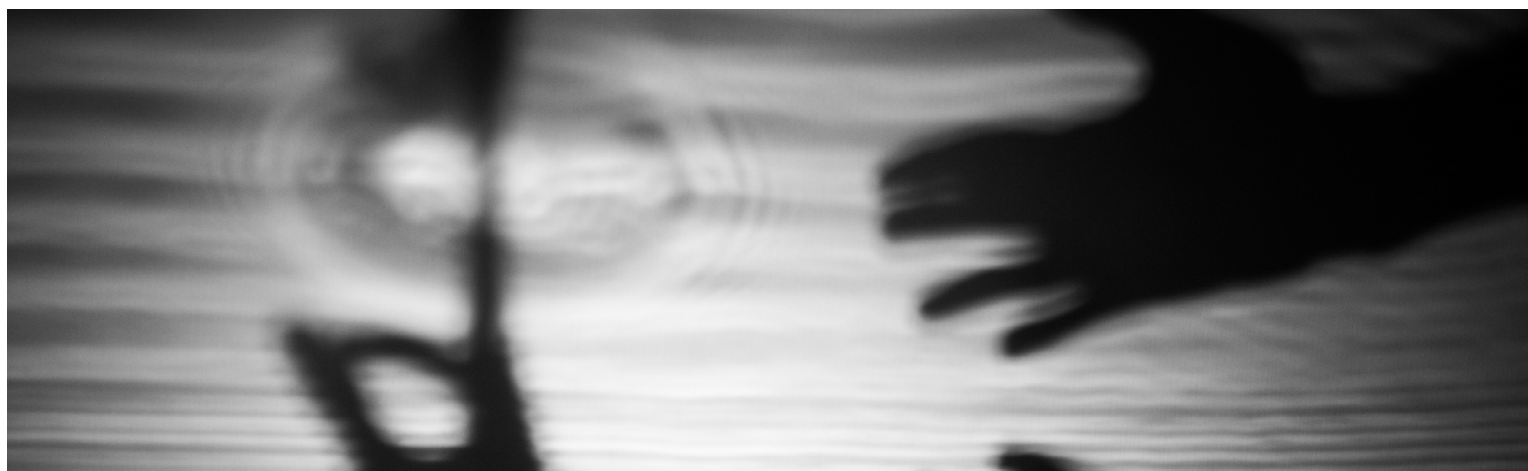
[Fest Mag – Review of *Cold Blood* by Kiss & Cry crew at the Edinburgh festival](#)

[The Globe and Mail review - *Cold Blood* 'nano-dance' show is something you have to see for yourself](#)

[Telegraph – *Cold Blood*, Kiss & Cry Collective, King's Theatre, Edinburgh review – A big hand to this intricate piece.](#)

[The Star review – *Cold Blood* is full of marvellous ingenuity](#)

[Athens review](#)



Guide for Writing a Critical Response

Opening Paragraph

When	
What	
Where	
Plot Overview of the production and the intent of the playwright... The artistic contributors – director, set designer, lighting, costume	

Language Features:

- Usually in past tense
- Uses subject-specific language
- Descriptive language
- Third person voice
- Analytical language
- Modality (how certain we are about something)
- Cast and crew referred to by their full names or last name
- In text references (quotes or specific moments)

1st Paragraph - Who

How theatrical elements are communicated through the actors...	
Actor's name	
Character they played	
Discuss how they engage the audience - movement, voice	
Give examples	

2nd Paragraph - What else

Describe a key moment or scene from the production	
How were the theatrical elements combined to communicate meaning to the audience?	

3rd Paragraph - Technical aspects

Describe a key moment or scene from the production.	
How were sets, lights, props and costumes used to communicate meaning to the audience?	

Concluding Paragraph - Summarises the viewers opinion

Your overall thoughts about the production. Note: This is not a rating of the production.	
What made it stand out?	
What did it make you think?	