

distance it is difficult to maintain ensemble in a musical group. In fact, beyond this distance we effectively relinquish our hold over or contact with other people in a space, and can ignore them without infringing etiquette. It is a most important distance to understand in making many behavioural settings work well.

### **Public distance**

This is our final distance, and is generally considered to run outwards from the upper reaches of social distance. We will therefore call a distance of greater than 4 metres public distance. At very close public distance we probably find the nearest thing we can to the human version of the animal flight distance we considered earlier. If we go back to the very first and rather ridiculous scenario in this chapter, a person advancing towards you in a manner that was not overtly welcoming might seriously worry you as he or she reached about here! At the very near range of public distance one can carry on a conversation with only slightly raised voices. As we move out to a distance of 8 metres, the voice must be raised to what we might think of as a theatrical level. At this larger distance we can see little clear detail on faces; hence the extravagant makeup used in the theatre. Two people within close personal distance to each other and at far public distance from you could hold a quiet conversation without you being able to understand it.

For all these reasons, public distance is normally one at which we ignore other people in space. However, certain formal settings call for this distance to be used, and these are usually performances of some kind. Examples include a business presentation to a group of customers, a lecture to students, a concert, or indeed a theatrical event. The concert and the theatre offer very clearly defined roles for the performer. In early theatre the performers even wore masks to indicate their dramatic character, but of course also to conceal their normal identity. Such events, then, call for very special behaviour. The lecture or presentation is more difficult for some people to cope with since it involves the normal personality performing in a very public way. To be at public distance from a group is to be isolated and vulnerable. Some people can be completely terrified of such a situation, while others seem naturals at it. As an academic I see this demonstrated annually as another crop of students grapples with the situation in seminars, design crits and other such presentations of work to the group.

The personality that thrives on and relishes performing at public distance is probably one that we would associate with confidence, possibly even arrogance, and probably charisma. Such a performance requires a different speaking voice to that used in normal conversation. Not only must the voice be raised, but also the tempo and phrasing