

Chapter 1 : Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre

Written by artistic directors Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett, The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre is the first book to reflect on the history and practice of this remarkable company, and includes.

This physical world holds meaning and narrative, it is as much a story telling tool as the written word. The script will almost arise in my mouth as the lights go up " like a piece of jazz. Read on for devising games and exercises, videos and book reviews. Getting Started Devising a piece of theatre can be a stimulating and exciting journey towards the development of a performance which is a fusion of the unique talents and creativity of the group. It is not a direct journey, but one in which you will encounter well-trodden paths, blind alleys and sudden surprises. In order to prepare, the group needs to have a good grasp of improvisatory skills.

Pair Story-making Divide into pairs. As soon as confidence develops, you can add in actions. Use the space as much as possible. Yes, and the wind is blowing us into the air A: We are flying over the sea B: Yes, and we have landed on an island! And so on. So they understand the concept: Once the class have become familiar with improvisation techniques, they can begin devising short scenes.

Random Sound Story Work in small groups of 4 " 6. The groups are asked to invent a selection of random sounds " with each group member making one vocalised sound. Next, the group decides on a sequence in which these sounds are made and practices it. Each group performs its sound sequence in turn to the whole class. Now the groups are asked to make up and rehearse a story in which these sounds occur " in the sequence already decided upon. The story could be narrated or acted, or a combination of both. Any devising process will benefit from a playful approach. Allow time to experiment with ideas first, rather than being in a hurry to fix scenes and storylines. Encourage improvisation rather than discussion. There is only one way to find out " by getting up on your feet. Once the students feel more confident in improvisation they can move on to creating longer pieces with a more specific objective, for example an issue-based theatre in education piece aimed at a particular age-group. This could be performed to lower years or at the local primary school. A structure for the piece could be provided by taking an existing story or fable and giving it a contemporary twist. Other ways in could be interpretations of visual art works, photographs, music, song lyrics or poetry. How might I take this further? Encourage the students to move away from pure naturalism and to think about creating strong visual images through physical theatre.

Random Images Students begin by standing in a space on their own. Each person makes three random poses " one high up, one medium and one low down, using a different spot in the room for each pose. Now they should find a way of moving between the shapes. Practice until the students know the positions and movements off by heart. In small groups, the students should show each other their shapes and then devise a story or situation where some or all of those movements and shapes might fit. They can interpret the shapes and movements literally or abstractly, adding sounds or words if they wish. The exercise can be used on its own or applied as a technique for approaching a story or theme that the group is working on. In devising, students should be encouraged to explore all the elements of theatre including mime, movement, stillness, sound, music and lighting. Experiment with staging, including theatre in the round, traverse and thrust as well as the use of different levels. For devising longer pieces, it can be helpful to use a tape-recorder, video or stills camera to record an archive " you never know when a particular scene, character or idea might be useful. However do be aware that watching video footage of improvisations can be soul-destroying for the performers and so should perhaps be left to the director! Below is a video about a one-day course on devising theatre with David Farmer in

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The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre is a uniquely personal account of the history and practice of this remarkable company, and includes: Â· practical exercises Â· essays on devising, writing and choreography Â· suggestions for scene development Â· a page colour section, and illustrations throughout Â· a companion website featuring.

Steal Say Remember, the purpose is not to tell a story containing these words in sign language. The signs are merely new shapes for the hands. It is a new vocabulary. How does the hand move? Where does it start? Does it swoop or chop through the air? How can the gestures link together? How can one dive and emerge as a version of another? Can participants find new shapes, moves, and signs to help create a string of material? Working together, each group now creates a unison hand dance. It is important to insist upon unison. Unison is a great way to make work, even if it is not always a great way to present it more on this below! Each group may want to create the work while facing and mirroring each other. This is OK to a point, but allows people to copy the leader of the group and not take responsibility for actually learning the material. Encourage them to face out in a line as soon as they can, running their material that way, as this is how you will want to see it presented. It is very important to remind, encourage, or even demand that participants break free from the original meaning of the signs, aiming to create a short string of fluid hand gestures that explore varying dynamics. When each group has created their string, get them to loop it so that it is continuous. Once up to the required standard, you can start to play with it and test its theatricality. Place a group on three chairs facing the rest of the room. Get them to run through their loop in unison while keeping their focus out into the room. Try it to a piece of music. Get them to do it faster while retaining the unison. Encourage them as they run it, pushing the speed. They might resist, but keep pushing. Hopefully they can achieve a speed they did not think possible. There is an interesting problem with this kind of presentation that you should highlight to the rest of the group “ whenever an audience is asked to watch unison, you are actually inviting them to look for mistakes, as these are the only things they will see. Get a group to sit on the chairs and close their eyes. Try another piece of music and instruct the group that any one of them can start when they want, breaking free of unison. All three of them go through the actions in their own worlds. What do we see from the outside? Three individuals, but then, unexpectedly, moments of unison. Fleeting moments of connection between these people in their own worlds. Suddenly the choreography is complex and clever. The choreographic lesson is not necessarily to allow chaos on stage in the hope that such moments appear. Remind participants that they are still in the rehearsal room and everything is up for grabs. We can still adjust the choreography with the performers eyes open to capture these moments again. By filming it you can then cherry-pick the key happy accidents. There are further things to explore. If the group of three are running their material with their eyes closed, you could sneakily tap one of them on the shoulder and get them to silently leave and watch from the front. Repeat, leaving one performer, oblivious to the fact that they are on their own. Let them continue for a while before gently stopping them. The purpose of this is not to humiliate the remaining performer “ it is important now to stress what you have achieved. Ask the group how their feelings for the performers changed through that run and you might find that they really felt for the person left behind. That they were fragile. Or maybe that they gained a resilience and strength. If so, then the group are beginning to talk about the performers as characters. This is important because an emotional story is emerging, prompting an emotional engagement. The audience are showing empathy and sympathy inspired by choreography and context, not just the plight of their fellow performer. It is important to ask the audience how their feelings changed from the beginning, with three performers, to the end, with one. This change would not have occurred had we initially presented just one person. The change in context someone not aware that they are alone but carrying on regardless has redefined the perception of the choreography. This is a very important lesson to learn. Try getting a group to present their sequence of movement on the chairs with their eyes open. Ask them to make all the moves smaller, existing in a small square in front of them. Ask them to focus their eyes on these gestures and to slow them down. They can appear fascinated by their hands and the positions they achieve.

This can change the way we watch it. It is a much more introspective performance. Play with your choice of music to accompany it. Your watching participants will have lots of comments on what music works, why it works, and how it makes them feel. All of this is crucial education.

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Frantic Assembly run workshops on their style and approach and many of the exercises from those sessions can be found in this book. This book is a must for anyone devising work with professional actors, dancers or young people.

Another was the demand of events that take place in the novel, such as a storm in a dormitory, an extended nightmare sequence, and a fire in a theatre. It was this last challenge that informed the following exercise. For us, the end result was to portray the public panic of bodies in space. As an exercise, *Villette Floor* is a layered, sequential progression that might be adapted to suit a number of theatrical requirements or scenes. It encourages participants to orchestrate spatial dynamics, creating fast patterns of energy and physical movement that switch between control and abandonment. Although the exercise promotes unison work, this notion of unison is more about a unified sense of energy and effect than detailed, physical precision. Every stage is incremental and requires each new detail to be fulfilled before moving on to the next. The ultimate effect is reached only when the group are extremely confident of the space in which they are moving. The room itself should be fairly large for this to work effectively. The *Process Split* the performers into four groups of equal size and place one in each corner of the room. From here, each group creates a pedestrian floor pattern. After a certain amount of time the group should come to a standstill. This location is their point A. From here they set off walking in the space, coming to settle at another point " B. The route of this should not be something known, but discovered by the group with no one particular person leading. Once at home, each group should repeat their floor pattern a couple of times but now at a slightly-faster-than-pedestrian speed. If the room is small you might ask the groups to work two at a time in order to allow them to make good use of the space. Watching the groups executing this very simple task you will probably note that most members of the group are looking at the floor in order to establish their route around the room. Point this out and then ask the groups to walk their route using only the perimeters of the room and its details as their markers for when to come to a stop at each point. For each person these markers should be different. For example, one might use the light switch to their left and its proximity as their reference for when to stop at point A, a fire alarm switch on the wall straight ahead as their reference to point B, and so on. Ask each person to become aware of how the walls of the space are moving both away and towards them as they move around the room. They should very soon be comfortable using a relaxed combination of both prime focus and periphery vision in order to map out their location within the room at any one time. This part of the exercise is a basic step in spatial awareness, but should not be passed over. It is surprising how this exercise can fall apart without this. For the next stage, the group should consider the locations at which they turn from point A and head towards point B. At the moment this change in direction is totally without cause. From point A, ask the group to choose a specific part of the body e. Imagining taking an impact in this specific spot, each person plays with the capacity to isolate that body part, twisting it in the direction away from the point of impact, and only moving the rest of the body in accordance with this event when they absolutely have to. In the instance of an impact to the front of the shoulder, this would mean twisting the shoulder to its full extent before bringing in any subsequent movement in the arm, ribs, hip, head, and finally feet. For this reason, this part of the exercise should be undertaken slowly in order to discover the logic and precision of the impact and its effect on the rest of the body. The impact should also be such that its direction will send the group to their point B in the room. Once at point B the group chooses a second impact point and does likewise. This is the most detailed part of the exercise and time should be given over to it in order to fully discover the logical physical progression involved in such an event. In choosing body parts such as the centre of the chest, as points of impact, it is important to discover just how much mobility exists in the upper middle section of the vertebrae in order to truly communicate this information to us as observers. Any movement in the shoulders should be as full as possible before any engagement with the arms and the finally the hands. It is important to figure out in this instance whether the hips might start to move forward with the shoulders or whether there may be some delay between the two events. Impact points like the fronts of the knees and the backs of the elbows are impossible to use unless you are teaching a class of chickens , but any

folds in the body elbows, hips, knees, necks are useful places to start. There should be encouragement for more ambitious choices, as long as they follow the logic of receiving a physical impact at that point. With all four impact points established, ask the groups to run them in combination with the floor pattern. From the outside you will now notice how the pedestrian speed is at odds with the impact points, which will look like sudden moments of slow motion. The next stage of the exercise is for each group to increase the speed of these impact points to match the walking speed. There is also the possibility that groups are coming to a standstill and pausing before the impact. Development An advanced layer which might be added is to introduce a moment of propulsion. It is likely that all the impact points operate on a horizontal level. That is, the incoming object is travelling in a straight line, horizontal to the floor, and at a constant level from it. Each group now chooses one of their four impact points and imagines that the object is travelling up out of the ground towards the point on the body. With this change in direction, the group still reacts in the same way, except that they now play with the idea that the impact lifts them momentarily off their feet. Within any string of material there will be body points that are more useful to use in this way. In being knocked off their feet in this way, it is useful not to involve both feet landing at the same time, but landing one at a time in order to allow easy movement towards the next point in the room. From here, in each journey round, the groups should increase the speed with which they move in the space. In keeping with the last stage of the exercise, this also means that the speed of the impact points should increase. In becoming more and more violent, these sudden physical explosions should be moments of controlled abandonment, with the limbs full of weight, and the propulsion moment if used meaning that the group leap higher and higher into the air. At faster speeds we finally see the impact points as being the only reason why the bodies change direction in the space as they are now finally and truly being knocked off course. Even at increased speed, the group should be encouraged to remain together and unify the moment at which they are all simultaneously impacted upon. So far, it is safer to have each group demonstrating their sequence in the space one at a time. An advancement of this exercise is to see what happens when individuals from each group are selected and run their own sequences in the space at the same time as one another. This makes tough demands on spatial awareness if using full speed, and especially if using the propulsion version of the exercise.

Chapter 4 : The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre by Scott Graham

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Chapter 5 : Frantic Assembly | Energetic and Uncompromising Physical Theatre - Frantic Assembly

Written by artistic directors Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett, The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre is the first book to reflect on the history and practice of this remarkable company, and includes: practical exercises essays on film, music and physical theatre inspiration for devising, writing and choreographing performance.

Chapter 6 : Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre - Extras

The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre is a uniquely personal account of the history and practice of this remarkable company, and includes.

Chapter 7 : The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre

Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre - Hide and Seek.

Chapter 8 : Frantic Assembly

As Frantic Assembly move into their twentieth year of producing innovative and adventurous theatre, this new edition of their well-loved book demystifies the process of devising theatre in an unusually candid way.

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The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre 'This is a close companion to Frantic Assembly's practice and one that is written with an open and engaging, even disarming, tone .