

I hope you enjoyed the workshop session – I did! If you want more activities like these please visit www.dramaresource.com or check out my books on Amazon: <https://geni.us/david-farmer-books>

David Farmer, March 2020.

WARM UPS

Synchro-Clap

In a circle. One person makes eye contact with someone across the circle. They clap their hands at the same time. The second person makes eye-contact with another person and they clap together.

Add in other waves of clapping and see how many you end up with!

Triplets

One person goes into the circle and makes an offer physically and verbally, for example 'I am a lamppost.' A second person steps in and makes a complementary offer e.g. 'I am a bench'. A third person does the same, e.g. 'I am a dog.' The first two players leave and the third repeats what they are: 'I am a dog.' Someone else adds themselves in e.g. 'I am a cat' and a new triplet begins. Aim to keep it moving.

Imaginarium

Everybody stand in a circle. This game is called 'Imaginarium'. I'm going to call out a theme and I want you to think of an object or person related to that theme. When you've got an idea, I want you to put up your hand. I'll pick you out and then I want you to step forward into the space and make the shape of that person, animal or object. When you make your shape, can you say who or what you are by saying 'I am a...'

Okay, the first theme is the beach. You can be anyone or anything that might be found on the beach.

So the first person puts up her hand and steps forward: 'I am a starfish.' She makes the shape.

Stay in position because we're going to build up a picture of the beach. Who's coming next?

The next student steps forward: 'I am a bucket.'

Good, let's have some more. Maybe you can link to other objects on the beach or you can just be separate. And if you want to step in with someone else to make an object you can do.

'I am a spade (to go with the bucket), an ice-cream, a towel, a sunbather, the sun, a wave, a shark, a lifeguard...'

And so the list goes on as more and more students step in. When everybody who wants to play has stepped forward, you can use your secret weapon. Remember it?

Now I'm going to say a magic word and when you hear it I want you to return to your place in the circle...
Whoosh!

Main Activities

The following two activities are from '*101 More Drama Games and Activities*' by David Farmer (CreateSpace, 2012) available on Amazon: <https://geni.us/101-more-drama>

Moving Images

An instant way of creating a piece of free-form dance, even with 'non-dancers'.

Demonstrate the technique with the whole group: stand in a circle and ask one person to enter the space and freeze in a random position, making an abstract still image. Now ask a second person to add himself in as part of this tableau. The idea is not to plan, but to 'think with your body'. Do the same with another two participants so that an abstract shape is created by the four players. As each person enters they should relate to the other people's shapes. You may need to remind participants about exploring different levels and body shapes.

Now ask the first person to unfreeze and move to a new position in the tableau. After a moment, ask the others to do likewise, in the same order that they entered the image. (You can count "One, two, three, four" to let each person know when to move.) Repeat this until a movement sequence has been devised in which everybody has three different positions. Now they should practise moving smoothly from position one to two to three and back to one.

Surprise them by playing some music while they are still moving. You will find that their movements become more dance-like as they respond to the beat and atmosphere of the music. Electronic dance music or lively orchestral music works well. Now ask the participants to start inventing a new position and shape each time they move. As they do this it is likely that their movements will become even more dance-like.

The next step is to encourage the players to keep moving so that a piece of continuous movement is created. At this point they do not have to keep to the original order. Anybody can move at any time. Those watching – and the group themselves – may be surprised at how easily they have created this movement piece.

After this you can break into smaller groups (four is a good number) so that everyone can try out the approach. Each group can devise a short piece to perform to the others.

Physical Text

A physical way of exploring a text or poetry.

Working from text to create a piece of movement or physical theatre can often lead to over-literal illustrations of words and phrases. This extended activity enables groups to use randomly-created physical movement phrases as a basis for exploring a text – leading to creative and original interpretations of written work.

Ask groups of 4 – 6 to devise a sequence of moves using *Moving Images*. When they have rehearsed the movement phrases it is useful for groups to share their work at this point. Now give them a piece of text to work on. You can use an extract from a poem or a scene from a play – ideally one without stage directions. One option is to type up an extract from a play, removing the character names and stage directions so that you are just left with the words. It works well to give each group a different extract from the same piece.

Explain that the groups are going to create a piece of movement/physical theatre based on the words. They should read through the extract together and discuss whether there are sections of the text that would work well with some of their rehearsed movement phrases. While the task may initially seem daunting, groups will soon start to make links between the random movements they have created and the words on the page. Encourage them to try out ideas fairly quickly so that they are ‘thinking with their bodies’. It can help if they identify a short section of the extract to work on.

Groups can change the order of the movements they have created, repeat some and find new ways of linking them. What they should end up with is a piece of abstract movement during which they may speak some of the words from their text.

This activity also works well as a directing exercise – assign a director to each group at the start. While the groups are developing their movement phrases, explain the task to the directors and give them the script extracts.

Once the groups have practised and shown their initial series of phrases, the directors can get to work with them. The directors can read the script aloud as the actors find movements to suit – and then select the parts which work best.

TEXT EXTRACTS

The following extracts were given out to groups for the final activity. I didn't attribute them beforehand as I didn't want to influence people's interpretations. So here are the sources.

- 1: Women Centre Stage – Eight Short Plays By and About Women (Nick Hern Books, 2018)
- 2: What Are You looking At by Will Gompertz (Penguin, 2012)
- 3: Women Centre Stage – Eight Short Plays By and About Women (Nick Hern Books, 2018)
- 4: Improv Beyond Rules – A Practical Guide to Narrative Improvisation by Adam Meggido (Nick Hern Books, 2019)
- 5 & 6: Pool No Water by Mark Ravenhill (Methuen Drama, 2006)
- 7: A Story Like The Wind by Gill Lewis (Oxford University Press, 2017)
- 8: David Bowie – The Last Interview (Melville House, 2016)

1

This is what a feminist looks like
This is what a feminist looks like.
No. This is what a feminist looks like.

Anyone or anything can be a feminist.
A she, a he, a they —
This chair, for example, could be a feminist.
This chair has feminist qualities.
It's a strong chair.
A good role model for other chairs.
This Chair Can.
It is what it is.
An inanimate object.
This chair has been built by a person.
Or assembled in a factory.
Painted by a person.
Or sprayed by some sort of machine.
Someone, somewhere, designed this chair.
A she, a he, a they —

2

Frida Kahlo refuted the suggestion — made by André Breton — that she was a Surrealist, saying once, 'I have never painted my dreams, I painted my own reality.'

In *The Dream* (1940) (see Plate 21), we see Kahlo sleeping peacefully in bed with the leaves of a bush growing around her like ivy up a tree. The branches of the bush that winds itself along her body are covered in thorns, referencing the near-constant pain she suffered throughout her life after the crash. The other figure she has painted makes that image of pain more explicit. A skeleton-like apparition sleeps above her as if on a bunk bed, clutching a bunch of flowers — possibly from its own early grave. Dynamite is strapped to its legs and body. The bed on which they both rest floats in the sky: death is in the air.

3

My name's Helen Taylor. I live on Avalon Boulevard with my husband, Carlton. He's a real-estate investment property manager. We have two dogs. Bush and Clinton. Bush has a urinary tract infection. The vet thinks we might have to put him down, which is just tragic. We have one daughter. Jessica. She's twenty-five. She doesn't live with us any more. I want to tell you it was different but it was pretty much identical to the movies. 'Mom, Dad... sit down. There's something I need to tell you.' And then no one sits down, because — well, you know how there's some news that's better received on your feet so you can sit down, and some news that's better received sitting down so you can jump up? Her exact words were: 'I hate you. I don't want anything to do with you ever again. Don't try to find me.'

There was more, but those are the lines that... stick.

4

What is expected of the audience; what are they going to have to do?

This is one people normally don't think of. After all, it seems self-evident that the audience is there to listen. Maybe, but even if they are a captive audience you shouldn't assume they are willing to listen. That is their choice.

In fact, there is normally something more you want an audience to do. You might want them to listen in a particular way or listen out for certain things. You might want them to answer some questions, or come up with questions for you, or give you feedback, or report back to someone else, or take part in an exercise, or participate in a reflective conversation afterwards. Whatever it is, let them know upfront. If you don't, they will be busy wondering what it is they are meant to be doing, instead of listening to you.

5

A pool, she had a pool.

Of all of us the most – at least in the eyes of this so-called world – the most successful of us.

So – a pool.

Did she mean to impress? Was it for show?

No, I can't think. No. Because she's...

She's good. She's nice. She has integrity. Her roots.

And she has a pool now – it's fantastic fantastic fantastic fantastic.

But she hasn't forgotten us. Visits to rehab. Visits to hospices. Visits to Aids wards. She's made them.

And she comes to our exhibitions. Cramped little exhibitions in lofts in the bohemian quarter. Our photos, our *objets trouvés*, she comes, she sees, she sometimes buys. And she'll help our fund-raising drives.

She's tireless in her help for our fund-raising drives.

6

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She's tireless in her help for our fund-raising drives.

We adore her. We adore her. We all absolutely adore her.

Years ago when she was in – when she was in the Group. Life and soul. And she'd always be ripping her clothes off, just ripping them off, and we'd all rip them off too – we'd follow her – and then we'd all make performance pieces or arthouse shorts or we's just go skinny-dipping for the sheer naked fun of it.

But nowadays she's ... absent.

Exactly. She's ... absent. It's that quality in her work that sells. The pieces that first began when we lost Ray to the whole Aids thing. And she used Ray's blood and bandages and catheter and condoms. Pieces that sold to every major collector in the world.

Aha.

Absent. And yet somehow – recognised by the world.

Aha.

And now she has: the pool. The pooooooooooooool.

7

The crowd watched as the Dark Lord picked himself up from the ground and brushed the dirt from his cloak. He walked slowly to Suke and the white stallion, his face as dark as gathering storm clouds.

'Because of you, my finest horse is dead,' he said.

The white stallion tossed his head and flattened his ears.

The Dark Lord narrowed his eyes and stared at Suke.

'You will give me your horse in repayment for the death of mine. '

'No,' said Suke, daring to speak against the Lord. 'He won the race. '

Suke could hear murmurs of agreement in the crowd behind him.

The Dark Lord spun around, and as he turned the crowd fell silent and people turned their eyes to the ground. None dared look at him.

'If you do not give me your horse, ' roared the Dark Lord, 'I will double everyone's taxes in my kingdom. If you do not give me your horse, I will order my guards to burn your home and move you from the valleys into the mountains.'

8

We talked about it, and, well the two things that I remember very strongly about it—well firstly, John was an extraordinary raconteur. I mean he could tell story after story. But he was quite adroit at keeping things short and simple and cutting right through bullshit and coming straight to the point with great one-liners. I mean he was a one-liner king. He had some wonderful one-liners. But the two major things that I remember he said about songwriting—when I first met him in the early '70s I said, "Well, what do you think about what I do?" I said, "Do you like all this glam rock stuff?" You know? And he said, "Yeah it's great. Well, it's just rock-n-roll with lipstick on, isn't it?" Which was so right—in one way. And then later on we were talking about songs and he said, you know, basically, what you need to do with a song is say what you mean, put a rhythm to it, and put a back beat to it. And that's it, and it really is as simple as that.