



LOVESONG

By Abi Morgan

Direction and Choreography by Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett

A Comprehensive Guide

for students (aged 14+), teachers & arts educationalists

By Scott Graham

franticassembly

DRUM THEATRE
PLYMOUTH THEATRES



LOTTERY FUNDED

2
Dezel Bird
Mother/Tiamp
Phamz - cy
Oose

3
Splinkler
Not the face
Cream
Tzbu ♥
Pollen

4
Boxes
Skull
Don doesn't drive
Cremated
Crewdson Kitchen
Kitchen Prep

i-pod
Libzzy job
Anne Call
Lamb or Beef
Pool
His Garden

Cove/Dom
Not Tonight
Her Shoes & His Bills
Without You
Time travel
Post Its

Starlings
Go back there
Bed 4
Lanterns
Dinner prep
Our story
Dine

LOVESONG Resource Pack

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INTRODUCTION

Our resource packs are intended to offer an insight into the rehearsal room of a Frantic Assembly production. Written by one of the directors they provide unique access to how the production was made, moments of inspiration and moments of frustration. All from the horse's mouth.

We resist turning our packs into a teacher's manual and avoid all reference to Key Stage what not as we want all kinds of practitioners, students, teachers and thinkers to feel at home here. We also presume that teachers can do their job better than we can and are more than capable of finding what is applicable to the courses they teach.

We hope that this pack offers valuable insight and feedback is always welcome.

Spoiler Alert!

While *Lovesong* may not have a twist we still believe that, like most things, it is best to experience it before dissecting it.

We cannot stop you from reading this resource pack before you see the show but we can implore you! We have no shame in that matter.

Abi Morgan

In 2001 we had an incredible time working with Abi Morgan and director Vicky Featherstone on *Tiny Dynamite*. It had since been an ambition to collaborate with Abi on a Frantic Assembly project, but despite the desire to do so from both sides, Abi's hectic schedule and continued success working in television and film was proving prohibitive. We kept promising each other and saying 'wouldn't it be great if' until it became clear that we needed to bite the bullet, get together and actively talk about the project we would want to make together.

Abi is fiercely intelligent but not in an intimidating way. Her intelligence is inspirational; it is emotionally wise and is driven by an incredible instinct. In one moment you are having a laugh with someone who is just as silly as you are and the next you are in utter awe of this person.

She was good in 2001 but the 2011 version is just extraordinary!

What we love about Abi is her openness to our way of work, our images, our ideas, our physicality, but also the knowledge that she can whip our ass with that ability of hers. We believe in the world that she creates. There is a thrilling level of trust from us. She is that good.

When we first spoke to Abi about working together again we promised a creative environment where she would not have to feel solely responsible for creating the whole world of *Lovesong*, that we would help her create our universe. That could be difficult for many writers who might feel like our process was interfering with their own creative process. Thankfully not Abi, whose earlier experience of our work, long before *Tiny Dynamite*, has proved equally inspirational to her.

When we talk of what we want to produce together we keep returning to the same word. Tender. It is the quality we see and cherish in each other's work.



PRE-PRODUCTION



How we came to *Lovesong* - Buster Keaton, Guy Garvey, TS Eliot and sex in Chichester

The title might say it all actually but I should probably elucidate.

There are always moments that pass and you do not know the effect of them until you find yourself returning to them years later. Somehow the moment is trying to tell you something.

In early December 2008, there was a post-show discussion in the Minerva Theatre in Chichester, following our production of *Stockholm* by Bryony Lavery. The evening had started off strangely as, upon entering the auditorium you could not help be struck by the crowds of apparently well to do middle class and, frankly, aged audience looking confused as they spied the equally baffled crowds of teenagers taking their seats. There was a sense that one set had turned up to the wrong performance. It was clear that many had not shared an auditorium before.

The show went well and the audience responded very favourably. This was followed by an extremely well attended post-show discussion where most of the audience had remained in their seats.

I remember the first question came from an older man who asked if the playwright had to use such foul language. There seemed to be a presumption that the playwright in question was of a similar age to the performers on stage

(mid-thirties) or even younger. This question seemed depressingly predictable and even seemed to irritate the younger audience members but when I pointed out that the playwright is poetic, articulate, beautifully foul-mouthed and well into her sixties the first presumption of the evening was debunked.

Subsequent questions covered familiar ground for these situations, touching on inspiration, training and how moments were achieved. Towards the end of the allotted 45 minutes a woman in her late sixties, early seventies decided to take issue with the first question and then began to tell us a story.

She told us firstly how she thought the language was honest and full of the appropriate fire and passion. She knew this because she told us that we had just presented her life on stage.

She told us of a relationship with a man where they were drawn towards each other despite the often damaging results. They continually found ways of returning to each other and admitted that the only way they would ever escape from the passionate self destruction was if one of them died. And that is what happened when her lover passed away.

She asked herself constantly why she put herself through

this pain, why they would tolerate the suffering and find themselves going back for more. But then she always knew the answer.

'It was the sex.'

Needless to say the place erupted. Teenagers screamed and the whole audience applauded this brutal honesty.

It seems obvious now but it was clear that night that sex had been something the young wore with pride, something they had invented recently until that woman blew that misconception apart.

Even the telling of her story was laced with an ache and a passion that was undeniable.

The energy released in the room that night stayed with me. The experience must have made the young look at the older differently. And of course the old have stories just as salacious and juicy as anything the young can imagine. We are all guilty in varying degrees of forgetting this.

This experience never made us rush out and say 'we have to make *Lovesong*'. The experience sits with you a while, poking you, reminding you that it is still there until it becomes clear why it is still there. But there were other factors that led us to *Lovesong*.

We had talked about making a show with Abi for years and had finally managed to find a time to make it happen. We were to meet and talk about ideas and I wanted to bring something to the table.

I had been thinking about love songs and how we can map out our love lives with the songs that were special to us at the time, the songs that somehow expressed what only you and your partner could know or just captured a fleeting but definitive moment in time. Immediately my attention switched to the TS Eliot poem *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock* realising that here was that phrase again, 'love song', and yet I had never considered the poem to be a love song. Returning to the poem revealed a world of insecurity verging on self-loathing, a troubled pessimistic mind looking back over a love life paralysed by fear. At its core is the heart breaking question 'Do I dare?' when it can all be so easily dismissed. This legitimate fear leads to inaction, or, rather, insignificance.

So I became fascinated by the idea of someone looking back on a life and finding themselves an unreliable narrator, tainted by the experiences and incapable of objectivity.

When we met with Abi, the first thing she said was, 'No one has ever made an action movie for the stage.'

Knowing Abi's sensitive and delicate writing this comment came as a complete shock but it also served as a fresh starting point free from Prufrock. We talked about the

danger of the old black and white films of Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd, the iconic moments, the romance and the bravery.

Then we talked about love songs and Prufrock.

After a while we realised we were talking about the same thing. At the heart of both was the grand romantic gesture, the squeezing the universe into a ball or hanging from a clock face. Invariably the moments were about love. Each of these moments were at risk of the reaction Prufrock talks of receiving. *'That is not what I meant at all. That is not it at all.'*

Guy Garvey also chipped in later echoing similar sentiments. (see ***How Guy Garvey helped us make Lovesong***)

We considered a life lived where those moments accumulate. We talked about being able to revisit these moments through memory, about the older and younger self being able to inhabit the same space, aching to influence each other but possibly unable to do so. (You can see how the evening in Chichester came back to haunt us). We talked about a young couple interacting with an older couple. They would be the same couple at different ages.

We all agreed, though, that this should be a love song no matter how dark it got, no matter how troubled it became. It needed to lift the heart and celebrate the love between the couple(s).

The Image



The creation of a publicity image is always very important to us. We like to create them ourselves and usually employ the best and most appropriate photographer we can get our hands on.

That is only half the story though as we often have to put the photographer and our models through all kinds of hell to achieve the dynamism we feel is necessary. This has included getting a dancer to throw himself around on a trampoline for *pool (no water)*. After his first huge jump he veered off centre and missed the mat. Luckily I caught his head as he plummeted towards the sports hall floor. After shaking off the embarrassment he got back on and slowly built up the height.

The shoot for *Othello* required internationally famous photographer Perou to suspend himself above a pool table on a plank between two rickety ladders. Below him lay our models, ready to sacrifice their lives to break his fall. (Not strictly part of the deal).

Beautiful Burnout required actor Taqi Nazeer to empty his lungs and then sink to the bottom of a swimming pool while the photographer snapped away. This is completely against the body's natural instinct and utterly exhausting.

For *Lovesong* we knew we wanted a much more gentle feel for the image. The photo shoot should not be so harrowing for those involved. That, at least, was the plan.

We wanted a moment of ambiguous intimacy shared between an older female model and a younger male model. We liked the openness of fields and wanted the strangeness of them sitting there in the dark.

The shoot took place in a field outside Reigate on a beautiful April evening. As Perou set up we talked through potential shots and the intention for the image. It had to tread a very fine line. It needed to look relaxed and beautiful, comfortable and intimate. It must not look like a young man and his grandmother but we also had to keep

an eye on it tipping over into what we code named 'Little Britain.' This was a reference to the character that continually finds himself attracted to octogenarians.

To bring our performers together we were inspired by the play itself and referred to the sharing of the iPod at the end.

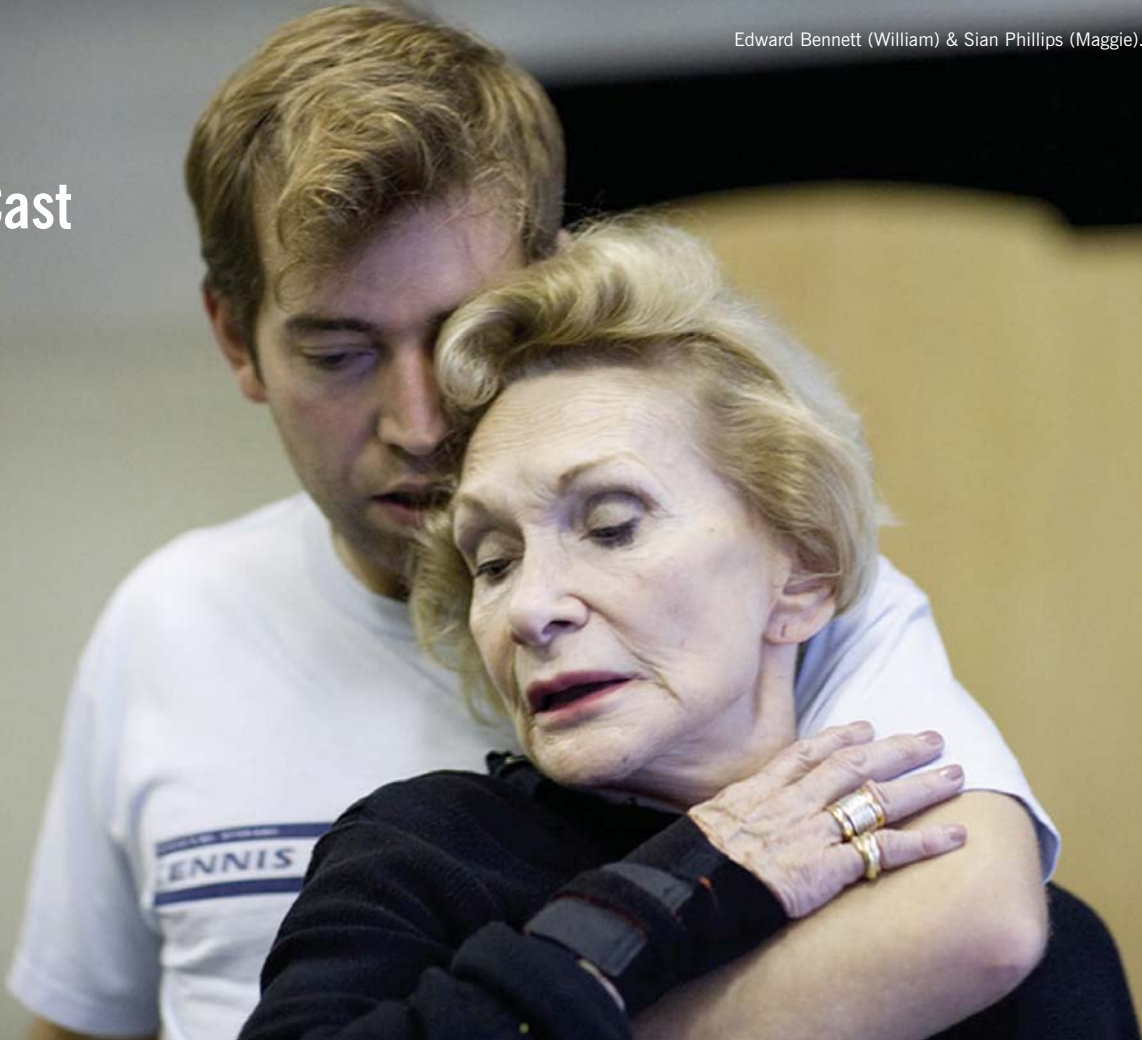
As darkness fell we encountered our first problem. We could not get Perou high enough to get a shot of them wide enough to capture the darkness around them. Then the second problem became apparent. The flash lighting was creating the illusion of daytime making the whole endeavor of an evening photo shoot pretty redundant. That was when the third problem struck.

As the sun dropped the temperature followed. A beautiful spring day became a clear evening of about seven degrees centigrade and our models began to feel it. We did our best to keep them covered and on the grass for as little time as possible between shots but soon the shivering became uncontrollable. It was one thing to give our models some bumps and bruises but I never expected to lose them to hypothermia. We quickly called a halt and prayed we had our shot.

The next day when the images came through it was clear we had something interesting and had avoided the obvious pitfalls mentioned above but the image was still lacking something. There was something just a bit too predictable about it.

While staring at it for hours I decided to turn it upside down. Immediately there was something different and alien about the photo, something slightly impossible about it. Upside down it was now presenting a couple resisting falling off the world and there was a greater equality between the male and female model. It had a shadow of the dynamism of the earlier Frantic Assembly images. It suddenly started to work.

The Cast



The prospect of this show always presented a dilemma for us. We felt that *Lovesong* should possess a dynamic physicality, not hard like *Beautiful Burnout* but a movement quality that could capture all of the pain, joy, love, frustration and anger of the play. Similarly it requires sensitive and brilliant actors to help achieve that same balance of ingredients within the performance.

And two of them had to be over sixty years old. Clearly casting was going to be problematic.

When casting any production we try to introduce the performers to the style of work they are auditioning for. It is not simply a question of seeing how well they perform. We want to see how they respond to the tasks set and let them question whether this process is really for them. The last thing we would want is to cast someone who will be unhappy during rehearsals and tour.

We are obviously looking for someone who can embrace this approach, who possesses extraordinary acting abilities and can move like silk on ice. Easy.

As it turned out *Lovesong* was possibly our easiest casting process yet.

Ed Bennett walked in and clearly did not consider himself a dancer but he simply blew us away. Leanne Rowe was feisty and dynamic and the two of them worked brilliantly together. Sam Cox, highly recommended by another director, was instantly strong, charming, complicated and fascinating. All three showed a level of skill and application in the audition that was impossible to pass up.

We saw Siân Phillips many years ago at a rehearsed reading for an Abi Morgan play called *Splendour*. We remembered being struck by her effortless honesty and sublime instinct for the rhythm of the text. We approached her for a development session as she, too, came highly recommended by another director as someone brilliant to have in the room. While we talked on the phone she explained how she saw *Tiny Dynamite* ten years ago and how much she loved the production. The idea of working with us and with Abi again thrilled her.

And she was brilliant in the room.

There still remained a doubt when it came to casting as we did not presume that enjoying a week long development session would mean that she would want to rehearse our way for five weeks and then tour the show around the UK. Despite the fact that we were desperate to have her on board we were so fearful of doing the wrong thing by her that we felt we could not offer her the role outright. We eventually asked her to come in so that we could work with her physically, to give her an intense experience of what the rehearsals might involve. We basically threw her around a rehearsal room giving her every chance to say 'No, thank you. Not for me' but she kept coming back for more. Realising that she really was up for this working process was when the casting became a no brainer.

The Set



The voyage to this set has not been a straightforward one. The root of the problem lies in the creative relationship we have with Abi.

What we love about Abi is that she writes what she sees in her mind. There is sometimes little consideration for what is possible on stage let alone in a touring production. Stage directions in *Tiny Dynamite* talked of characters being struck by lightning, climbing up electricity pylons, spontaneously glowing, of cars crossing the stage and sandwiches falling from the sky. I do not know of anyone who saw *Tiny Dynamite* who ever said it did not make sense despite having these hugely problematic moments. That is because Abi has the knack of capturing the essence of a moment. And this is why she never questioned the absence of some of these moments from the production of *Tiny Dynamite*. Because we could see through to the essence of what she was looking for and found another way of capturing it.

It seemed important to us to give Abi the freedom to write from her remarkable instinct, to write from a filmic perspective. This might create outrageously difficult moments but we knew that, by liberating her imagination from the limitations of touring theatre, her instinct would allow her to aim for the essence of any moment. We would then take responsibility for seeing through the impossible the get to the heart of the matter. The struggle is definitely worth it with Abi.

As we looked at early design ideas for *Lovesong* with Merle Hensel we were all desperate for the set not to appear to be commenting on the protagonists or making a judgment that the couple had lost something through time. This was difficult to avoid but remained an important aspiration. It is not original to suggest that they had lost that loving feeling! We were eager not to restrict the world of *Lovesong* too.

At times I think myself and Steven had attempted to crowd Merle's design with ideas of moving floors and disappearing furniture. Seeing through this Merle has delivered a beautifully elegant and minimalist set that presents several rooms and suggests many more walls of a house filled with love over many decades.

Video



Edward Bennett (William) and Leanne Rowe (Margaret). Photo Johann Persson

We had previously worked with Ian William Galloway on *Beautiful Burnout*. His thrilling and inspirational work on that show meant that we jumped at the chance of him providing the projections on *Lovesong*.

Ian filmed lots of 'moments' in front of a green screen with Leanne Rowe and Ed Bennett. He also created flocks of starlings, cave paintings and sunlit pollen.

As we sit in the tech rehearsal many adjustments are being made. It became clear to us that we wanted the video footage to be more elemental and less figurative. We didn't want to see so much of Leanne and Ed but we wanted to see what they saw. The same applied to a shot of a sprinkler watering a lawn. We wanted to get closer to get a feeling for the movement of the water and not necessarily see the sprinkler itself.

All of the shots became less obvious and less literal. This felt more in keeping with the atmosphere of *Lovesong*, presenting a more impressionistic backdrop that complimented the action in front of it. The more literal footage jarred with us. It seemed to kill the theatricality in front of it.

As I write we are still talking through changes with Ian. We have to strike the right balance between capturing the essence of a moment without becoming obscure. At times the cave paintings projected, although beautiful, only looked like cave paintings because we knew that they were. Suddenly, with an objective eye, they were too vague and were not helping us. We had gone too far in aiming for the purely elemental and had to take a tiny step back towards the literal.

It will be an ongoing balancing act but we will get there!

Another balancing act came in negotiating the demands of the projections with the aspirations of the lighting. Unlike *Beautiful Burnout*, where plasma screens created their own light and vitality, *Lovesong* presents a situation where Andy Purves' lighting could easily wash out the front projections. Each scene has to be precisely balanced as the colours of the lighting and video projection could easily clash.

Luckily we have two collaborators in Andy and Ian who can take inspiration from each other's work and adapt quickly.

A Possible Prufrock Structure

Before the script took its current form we were still batting ideas back and forward with Abi. Our main inspirations remained the *Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock* and *Starlings* by Elbow. Early inspiration came from *Essays In Love* by Alain DeBotton, particularly the structure he employed. Each chapter was broken down into small numbered sections, almost bullet points, each containing a slight shift in the story. These shifts contained tiny moments of understanding or retrospective awareness about the nature of his love affair.

The appeal of this structure waned so I decided to have a closer look at our primary inspiration to see if it betrayed a useful narrative arc.

Below is a list of 'moments' from *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*. I simply wrote down the lines that stood out and then stepped back to look and see if anything jumped out.

Let us go then, you and I

Let us go and make our visit

*In the room the women come and go, talking of
Michelangelo*

And indeed there will be time

*There will be time to prepare a face to meet the faces that
you meet*

Do I dare disturb the universe?

*In a minute there is time for decisions and revisions which
a minute will reverse*

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons

*How should I begin to spit out all the butt-end of my days
and ways?*

Is it the perfume from a dress that makes me so digress?

*I am no prophet – and here is no great matter. I have seen
the moment of my greatness flicker*

And would it have been worth it, after all

It is impossible to say just what I mean!

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be

I grow old... I grow old

Do I dare to eat a peach?

*I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each. I do not
think they will sing to me.*

*We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed in seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.*

Returning to it now it appears to me to tell the story of *Lovesong*.

The exercise confirmed the richness of the source material and suggested a structure before there was one. Not that Abi necessarily adhered to this structure or even took the inspiration I did. Never the less the exercise remains valid.



Leanne Rowe (Margaret). Photo Scott Graham

How Guy Garvey helped us make *Lovesong*

Before Maggie and Bill, before a word was written, there was *Starlings*.

During initial research and development sessions we would talk about TS Eliot and Prufrock, looking back over a life, the heroic romantic gesture and how it all needs to add up to the kind of love song that lifts your heart and makes it spin.

Believing that the Elbow track *Starlings* possessed a line that distilled this effect beautifully we played the song to the assembled actors and designers. We all marveled at the economy and truthful representation of all consuming love captured in the line

You are the only thing in any room you are ever in

Not only is this a comment on the present between two lovers, but it is also an indication of history and possibly a promise for the future. The focus on the loved one is extraordinary.

We let the song play on and then were blown away by the significance of the next verse

*I sat you down and told you how
The truest love that can be found
Is for oneself*

*You pulled apart my theory with a weary and
disinterested sigh*

Edward Bennett (William) & Leanne Rowe (Margaret) (foreground) and Sam Cox (Billy) & Sian Phillips (Maggie). Photo Johann Persson



This is a perfect echo of one of the key moments we had been looking at and had been inspired by in *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*

*And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all."*

Here the romantic gesture, the miracle, the moment when the thesis is presented, gets punctured by the tiniest act of indifference. The moment is full of the need to please, the need for validation in the eyes of the loved one. Without this any act is redundant.

What *Starlings* offered us was a near contemporary equivalent of Prufrock, present echoing past.

Hearing the title of the song and listening to the skittish intro music Abi Morgan was adamant that starlings themselves could inform the play. None of us, Abi included, were quite sure how but we were certain that there was something in the beautiful way they group and dance across the sky. This instinct was fully born out when Abi researched them further and found their mimic quality. They became the perfect link across time between the two ages within the play. They contained all events of the past in their song so that all acts live on. This becomes a very important thing for one character to understand as they face a very different future alone. The song of the starling means they will never be without the other, that with the help of the birds their memory will live on long after they part.

Having worked hard to create this logic we were then reminded how Elbow had got there before us and were always pointing the way.

On the album *Build A Rocket Boys!* the song *The Birds* opens and then has a truncated reprise near the end. The first is sung by Guy Garvey and the second by a much older man. The album is about looking back over youth and the reprise presents an older man looking back, using the words we have heard a younger man use.

Even this structure would have been serendipitous

(*The Birds*, the older and younger versions) but on closer inspection the song gave us a startling validation for Abi's construction. Below is the reprise, as sung by the older man

*The birds are the keepers of our secret
As they saw us where we lay
In the deepest grass of springtime
In a reckless guilty haze*

*Did they sing a million blessings
As they watched us slowly part?
Do they keep those final kisses
In their tiny racing hearts?*

Even the full version is screaming out the world of *Lovesong*.

It has for a long time been an aspiration that the four characters within *Lovesong* would share a moment in song. We are currently getting the cast to play with singing both songs with the help of Helen Porter. If used within the production this might not literally be their love song but it should be a moment that unites all four for a moment. It might be the equivalent of the Aimee Mann song *Wise Up* in the film *Magnolia*.

It might only ever become a vocal warm up for the cast while on tour but our instinct to at least try it out within the show is down to the extraordinary and unintentional input from Elbow. How many signs were we going to ignore?

(We also turned to Elbow when looking at other types of 'love.' The song *Friend of Ours* possesses a heartbreakingly simple evocation of platonic love between friends.

*Never very good at good-byes
So gentle shoulder charge
'Love you mate'*

Having just watched a documentary about Elbow, I told the assembled creative team that this song was about a friend of the band who would always say good-bye with the above ritual. When the friend died suddenly the one piece of solace was in the knowledge that at least the final exchange would have been of this restrained masculine embrace and honesty of expression and said all that needed to be said. Hearing the song with this knowledge the team were pretty much devastated at this perfect denouement.

Thank you Guy Garvey. Thank you Elbow. Maybe another show, yeah?)

ESSAYS

And indeed there will be time

It is worth remembering that *Lovesong* is really only about two characters. We see their younger and older versions existing in the same space. As the older characters have their world squeezed to a crisis point they see their younger selves more and more.

Abi refers to Newtonian Time and how if we do not consider time to be linear then all time exists simultaneously. This illustrates the structure of the play. Even in a linear sense our memories mean that the moment 'in the past' lives on.

We had to be very careful about what the young see because, despite having a sense of they will become they could not have their lives altered by any knowledge from the future. In that sense Time remains linear. Also the gap in understanding is important. These people must look at each other and not quite recognize themselves and the things they will learn, the things they will forget.

We are making this at a time when CERN, The Large Hadron Collider has just published results of firing neutrinos at a velocity faster than the speed of light. This has massive implications for physics and (I am told without really understanding why) time travel.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-15034414>

Also during rehearsal there was the discovery of cave paintings in France (just as in *Lovesong*) that are believed to have been drawn by children.

<http://news.sky.com/home/uk-news/article/16080116>

Of course these are just coincidental but working on any production brings the world around you into focus. As we talk to people of all ages after the show we cannot help but see them differently, simultaneously, as mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, lovers and mourners.

If CERN has not changed how I think about time then *Lovesong* certainly has.



Music in *Lovesong*

As I write we are rehearsing with music from various bands and composers and are working on a section where the cast sing an Elbow track (see *The Song (What Song?)*). This is a departure for us, as we have lately been drawing on the work of one band or a composer to score our productions, and a return to the old as we used to draw on a far more eclectic mix of music for the earlier shows.

This is a deliberate choice.

Performer Sam Cox asked us why we were not using original compositions for the sound track and the song. We responded stating that, as the show was inspired, largely, by TS Eliot we have responded to his fragmentary style by similarly harnessing the music that passes through our minds on a day-to-day basis. As we struggle with the play we recall music tracks that are somehow connected to the moment we are dealing with. Sometimes things don't make sense until you put those connections together. *The Wasteland* is full of these fragments. Similarly, *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*. We felt our choices on the music should be a postmodern selection as a tribute to these two poems.

Sam looked at us deeply. 'Not really!' we said.

The choice is about trying something different. There was nothing wrong with engaging a single musical artist and working from within their body of work. It had worked very well for us but we just fancied a change.

We were sure that the soundtrack would need to be a delicate blend. It could easily have been a job for someone like Imogen Heap but we wanted to explore new bands and different sounds for a Frantic Assembly show.

We turned to Rene Aubrey initially. There is a maturity to his sound but there is also, at times, a fullness that does not always serve our needs. At times it is perfect but certainly his music does not always work as the required underscore. It is just too present.

John Hopkins is a composer familiar to us and his work might sneak in despite our initial intention of going for the new, the strange to us. Similarly, Thomas Newman looks like he might raise his head again. With the best of intentions we have tried to keep him out but he is just too good sometimes.

A breakthrough occurred when Steven found the duo A Winged Victory for the Sullen on the Erased Tapes website. It was gorgeous, spacious and gentle. It promised a world within which the words of *Lovesong* could sit without being crowded. The problem was that we had only heard 30 second sections of each track on a website and the album was not released until mid-September, which was far too



Sam Cox (Billy). Photo Helen Maybanks

late for us. In an inspired moment of bravado, chutzpa, sublime inspired arrogance, Steven emailed the record company and told them how we would love to hear the album with a view to using some of it within our show. Minutes later he had a response saying that they had wanted to contact us and that a CD would be in the post that afternoon! This was a copy of an unreleased and strictly embargoed album! Gold dust!

As it turns out the album did not answer all our prayers and nor should it. It is a beautiful piece of work and some of it will make it into the show. It has been invaluable but it has not taken over the sound of *Lovesong*. We are still experimenting and there may be obscure tracks by newly reformed Lamb. Imogen Heap might also make an appearance. Even though we have used their work before they still connect with our artistic intentions and the choice has never been easy. If Lamb, Imogen Heap, Thomas Newman or John Hopkins makes it into our show it will be because they have the right track. We continue to test tracks and try new music but there will come a point when you have to admit that these musical fragments earn their place because they feel right.

Just like the fragments of *The Wasteland*.

Place in *Lovesong*



In 2001 we co-directed and performed in the world premiere of *Tiny Dynamite* by Abi Morgan. The experience of making this show, under the directorial guidance of Vicky Featherstone, was joyous and completely educational. We traded in our thrashy physicality and fat beats for something more delicate and loved every minute.

Since then we have had many people talk to us about the impact *Tiny Dynamite* had on them. I remember the sight of my ex-girlfriend consoling my current girlfriend after they had attended a performance. You can read all sorts into that but the truth of the matter was they were complete emotional wrecks by the end of the show. Honest.

Tiny Dynamite touched them in a way that they still cannot quite explain. This was a common response. Even from within the show I felt there were some elements that did not quite have absolute clarity but Abi somehow transcended the need for this and had created a world that touched our hearts often without us knowing how. It was an almost impressionistic feat. Somehow she had got it just right.

This specific vagueness (as we shall call it, like I have coined something important) extended across the production. We talked about the setting of the play as a feeling rather than a defined place. It was somewhere warm, near a lake as a long summer was ending. We all knew instantly the colours and sounds of this world but we never gave it a name. The closest we ever came was 'a kind of New Englandy, lakey type place'. All of us nodded, knowing exactly what we meant. None of us had ever been to a lake in New England.

The sense of place being a feeling or a time dominates *Lovesong* too. Throughout rehearsals we have talked about this couple being displaced having made the leap to a new world. This brave act seemed important as it shows how dynamic they can be and the level of trust and investment they share in each other. This ability to leap together is referred to throughout their relationship. (See *Do I Dare?*).

There are many echoes with *Tiny Dynamite*. The creation of the story of our lives together at the end and the pivotal visit to the caves are almost repeats from *Tiny Dynamite*. This might have been something to completely avoid but somehow it feels right. We are following our instincts but are still guided by *Tiny Dynamite*.

Abi's earlier drafts contained many Americanisms, like 'checking account' and we have tried to find a balance for these that is suggestive of another country without requiring our performers to adopt American accents and our design to become too literally American. In rehearsals we have no doubt the couple have emigrated to America but we want that information to bubble under the surface and not suggest that the world of *Lovesong* is separated from its audience by the Atlantic Ocean. Our research into British couples moving to the US in the late 60's is solid and thorough but remains in the background.

(This British/American blend is also reflected in the life of one of the main inspirations for the show. TS Eliot was an American poet living and working in the UK, absorbing and utilising a vast culture ranging from Ancient Greek myths to Shakespeare, Baudelaire, Sanskrit, and popular song and Ragtime.)

From Order to Chaos – Billy’s need to break out

Reading Abi’s script in public has been a very embarrassing exercise. Every draft, even when I knew it was coming, has left me wiping away tears in a packed train carriage.

Lovesong was a thrilling proposition, so fragile and beautiful, it felt that it was perfect before we started work on it and any input would only ruin it. This created a very interesting relationship with the text. Normally my instinct is to keep the story guarded, to give little away to those who will come and see it. With *Lovesong* I have wanted to make loved ones sit down and read it before I get my hands on it and mess it up!

When you are actually working on a text you start to become detached. Like us, performers are initially full of praise for the text but then we all start to ask some really difficult questions and any text will shudder, wobble and maybe even collapse under such robust scrutiny. It is the natural order of things.

Lovesong is a strong piece of work and has taken a pounding from some very bright and brilliant performers and us. Abi is very much part of this. She is sometimes on hand to explain her thinking but most often on the look out for ways to make things better. She combines an impressive

Sam Cox (Billy). Photo Johan Persson



authority with an incredible openness.

This inquisition did throw up one missing ingredient that we felt was vital to *Lovesong*. The play presented this unspoken pact, this leap into a final stage of a relationship together. What is so moving is the way they choose to support and care for each other while making the difficult choices about the future. It becomes an ending that is so beautifully planned.

But this became the problem. It was a beautiful and smooth procession to the end. There was, as we say, a 'beat' missing from this story.

I remember a traumatic dream I had as a child where my Dad, my brother and I visited my Mum in what looked like a decompression chamber. In the dream she had gone there to die and was very matter of fact about this. She just sat up in bed saying things like, 'Who would have thought it?' about the fact that her time was up. We were similarly blasé. Then the time to leave her came and we said goodbye and walked away. We then waved to her through a window.

It was then that I was struck by the madness of it all and burst into tears trying to claw my way back into the locked room.

I told the team this, about my rage at how normal it all seemed. It was the normality that made me want to smash the place up.

We all felt that Billy lacked a voice about what was happening around him and it struck me that he might feel something like the rage from my dream. He needed a wobble, an outburst, something that highlighted the absurdity of the situation. There he was assisting the person he loved more than anything in the world to end her life when his instinct would be the opposite. We felt that his outburst should not be so focused though. It should be petulant. It should reclaim the chaos from the enforced order of his life. As ever there was a lowbrow reference to illustrate the point.

We talked of the final dining room scene in *Carry On Up The Khyber*. The British headquarters is under attack but they continue with dinner, demonstrating an absurd amount of resolve and 'stiff upper lip'. As the building shakes and plaster falls into soup only Peter Butterworth can see the danger while everyone else considers it a minor inconvenience. He is apoplectic as only he can see the craziness of the situation.

Abi nodded and scribbled notes and redrafted the script. What returned, filling this missing beat, was utterly

extraordinary. Billy now delivers a blisteringly frustrated monologue full of infantile disobedience and everything that needed to be said.

BILLY: *I will live as someone who used to have a life, who used to have a life with someone but that someone isn't here anymore. I will live my life as I fucking want. Without you.*

Silence.

BILLY: *Without you.*

Silence. (P. 79)

Maggie allows this hurricane to blow itself out before delivering the lines

MAGGIE: *Might you brush your teeth?* (P. 79)

Not only does this puncture the moment but it brings a welcome humour too. Here are two people who really, really know each other. Maggie deals with his outburst expertly. This scene follows an outburst from William that Margaret, doing her best, does not deal with quite so well. It is clear that they have grown wiser over time.

This rejection of order is an honest appraisal of Billy's situation. Order is leaving his world. As petty and pointless as parting his hair behind or wearing the bottom of his trousers rolled (Prufrock) his reaction is impotent and childish but it really is all that he has left until

MAGGIE: *I invited someone* (P. 75)

This is the stroke of genius to bring a family into the house. This brings chaos to the order. This is what this house needs to bring it back to life. The children writing on the walls links beautifully to the images of cave paintings. Everything is linked in time. (See ***And Indeed There Will Be Time***).

Do I Dare?



*And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all."*

This passage from *The Lovesong of J Alfred Prufrock* has been central to our thinking for *Lovesong*.

Eliot describes how fragile the grand romantic gesture is if it is misunderstood, misheard or mistimed. The universe gets squeezed into a ball and he cheats death and comes back to life. None of it matters if the focus of the gesture remains unimpressed.

We talked about these moments recurring through a life lived together and how they can incapacitate the romantic notion. What can ensue is a romantic paralysis as one person's fear of failure makes the smallest gesture into an enormous act of bravery. Whether it is showing your love by clinging to the hands of a huge clock face or by

suggesting that you both eat outside the rejection is still devastating.

BILLY looks away. **MAGGIE** spies the skull.

MAGGIE: *Where did you get that?*

BILLY: *You gave it to me on my 28th birthday.*

MAGGIE: *Did I?*

BILLY: *Yes. We ate in the garden.*

MAGGIE looks at **BILLY**, smiles, shakes her head.

MAGGIE: *I have no recollection at all.*

BILLY: *And after we –*

MAGGIE already lost in packing up the boxes.

BILLY watches her.

Perhaps we could eat outside tonight.

MAGGIE: *Really.*

BILLY: *I'm going to find that hammock.*

MAGGIE: *No it's too cold.*

BILLY hesitates, nods – (P. 48)

The act has become smaller but no less fraught.

It struck us that a sub plot of *Lovesong* was Billy's attempt to reclaim the romantic gesture, to reclaim the connection with the younger versions of himself and Margaret. His attempts are often misjudged or mistimed but he has a beautiful redemption at the end when he finds the perfect way to defy time, aging, and make the most simple and devastating romantic gesture.

MAGGIE takes out her iPod. She fiddles with it. **BILLY** takes it off her, turns it on, gently placing one earpiece in her ear and the second in his own.

BILLY and **MAGGIE** look at one another as they lie together on the hammock. (P. 96)

The question 'Do I dare?' echoes through *The Lovesong of J Alfred Prufrock*. It culminates in the more specific 'Do I dare to eat a peach?'

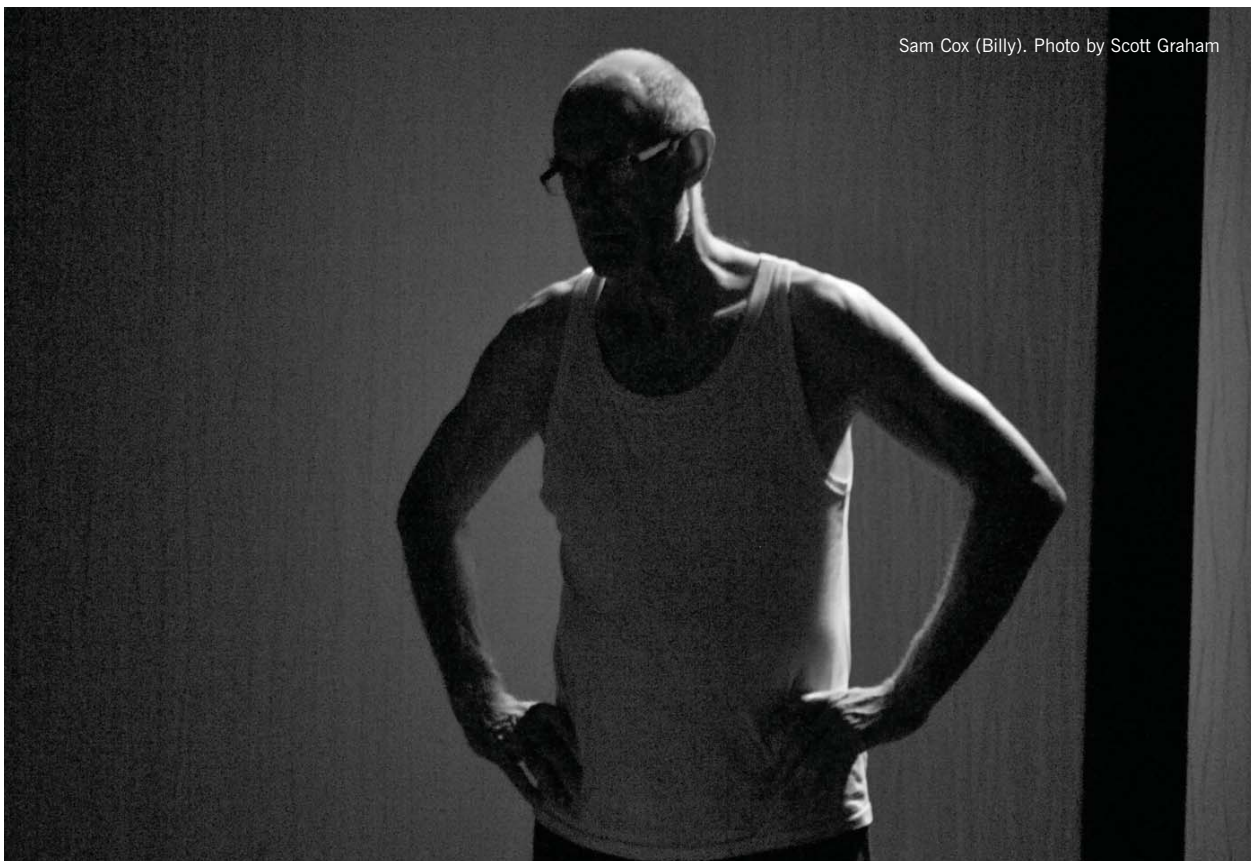
We used this strangely impotent moment to chart out the relationship of William and Margaret as we believed that of course there would have been a time when he would have. If this simple moment of giving into desire, to consume, to not worry about getting messy existed then there was also a moment when the eating of a peach became inconvenient, unacceptable, unexpected.

This gives the performers an arc, a structure to work to. The relationship gets to the point where risk is not entertained. It would have been too easy to show this as a depressing moment but we chose to show this as a moment of comfort because we felt that here was no way that they would have recognised the moment as it occurred. It must have been disguised as a warm moment, a safe moment when they did not need to show their love in such a way.

There is a moment just before the end when the younger couple are preparing for Margaret's birthday and William refuses the peach because he does not want to get sticky. This is the first time we have seen him refuse. It would be crass to play this as a significant moment for the characters without the benefit of hindsight. Luckily *Lovesong* gives us just that and at the same time, as the older version of William witnesses/remembers the event, as his time with the love of his life is coming to an end, he gatecrashes the moment and eats the peach out of the younger Margaret's hand. This is the wisdom of age. This is seizing the moment.

And would it have been worth it after all?

Definitely, yes.



INSIDE THE REHEARSAL ROOM

From Boxing to *Lovesong* - adapting the room

Lovesong is a very different beast to *Beautiful Burnout*. This leap from one kind of project to another is very deliberate. It would be very easy to apply all we learned and loved when creating *Beautiful Burnout* into our rehearsal process. The energy, the intense warm ups, the camaraderie and banter had to be put on hold as it was vitally important to find a rehearsal room that was unique to *Lovesong*.

Even then it is hard to find a process that can accommodate both an actor in her twenties and an actor in her late seventies.

Even before the set arrived for *Beautiful Burnout* there was no comfort to be found in the room. It was a place of action and invariably breaks were spent doing weights, going over choreography, skipping or doing press-ups. When the set arrived it was merely a hard edged, raised platform that was far more intimidating than inviting so the working atmosphere continued. The group dynamic meant that everyone was pushed to exhaustion; everyone would shout encouragement to help someone do one more press up than before. With this atmosphere, the weights, the pads, the skipping ropes and the punch bags the room had become much more like a boxing gym than a rehearsal room.

The set for *Lovesong* is predominantly a table and chairs and a bed. These are necessary items but it does mean that in breaks the performers sit at the table, bring cups of tea into rehearsal or lie on the bed. This makes it very hard to leave 'break' behind and start work. If we had the ability to return to this rehearsal room I would have been very interested in finding a way of losing the bed when we were not directly using it. It is a fundamental part of the set and crucial to the world of *Lovesong* but it is also an energy black hole that makes it very hard to keep the dynamism in the room.

And this is not a criticism of our team. I am sure you would find the same and I urge you to think about how the set impacts upon the working needs of the rehearsal room. I think the trick is getting the balance right between a working rehearsal room and working on the set. We have always been advocates of getting the set into the room as soon as you can and that being as close to the beginning of rehearsals as is possible. I guess the minefield is when your set is from the world of anti work. A bed. A sofa. A hammock.

Lovesong is a much gentler play than *Beautiful Burnout*. The adrenaline fuelled rehearsal of *Beautiful Burnout* both served the play and was inspired by its subject matter.

Lovesong could be a depressing process if you are spending every moment in the rehearsal room with the ending in mind. You must avoid this as the process and the result will become stodgy. Luckily our rehearsal room is full of laughter and we are continually reminding ourselves to find the love and the laughter in the characters' lives. There is nothing reverential about the subject matter. There is respect but there is humour. Every moment has to be lived in the moment. The end has not happened yet. This is why it is so important to keep our actors out of that bed!

(I once worked on a show as a fight director where a decision had been made, because of a scene requiring extended nudity, to black out the windows in the rehearsal room. The play was about bitterness and self loathing and just dropping into the room late into rehearsals you could tell that life had imitated art. The play was dark and without the balance of a window to the outside world the room had become oppressive and toxic. It served as a reminder for us to create a working environment that is focused and inspirational yet allows for moments of escape.

That may not have happened so much with *Beautiful Burnout* but the world around the subject matter was light with laughter and banter and the physical exertion was inspirational and addictive. It turned the company into a team that sweated and burned together. It was emotional and incredibly intense. If you don't believe me it is because you weren't there, man!)



Sam Cox (Billy) and Leanne Rowe (Margaret). Photo Helen Maybanks

An Introduction to Choreographic Tasks and Terminology. (No, really!)



Steven Hoggett, Sam Cox (Billy) & Leanne Rowe (Margaret). Photo Helen Maybanks

On our first day of movement we, rather grandly, gave our performers an introduction to choreographic tasks and terminology! Obviously we never phrased it like this with them but we recognised the fact that they were completely new to our way of working and this was something that we had never faced before. We have always had a company that included at least one member who had worked with us before, someone who could advocate for us when doubt might creep into the room, whom we could turn to for help explaining a task or process. We realised that there was no short hand that could exist between the cast and us. They were from a very experienced acting background and despite the auditions giving them a good idea of what might be heading their way they had never gone through a Frantic Assembly devising process.

We decided a crash course would be extremely useful as an introduction for them and as a way for us to quickly find their strengths and weaknesses. It was also a way for us to find a way to communicate with them. We are not big on technical terminology but it is amazing how much of the language you use on a daily basis you completely take for granted, yet can seem utterly impenetrable to someone outside that day to day experience.

The cast was taught a series of eight moves. (This was despite us categorically stating the day before that we do not stand at the front and teach shapes. Day 2 and one Golden Rule broken already!).

Once they had learned this string we put them into pairs. It was already apparent that they would learn movement at very different rates. In fact it was equally clear that they all processed the information being thrown at them in vastly different ways. They were not the same computer running faster or slower. They were completely different machines.

This was good to know. On another production with a different cast we might have spent more time getting them all on the same page but with this cast it became clear that we should look for the differences and embrace them, find the unique way each performer moves and work from there.

Once all four had learned the simple string we introduced them to the notions of canon and retrograde getting them to work off unison and to break up the string by reversing little moments within it. This leads to a much more complex choreography but more importantly illustrates to the cast that learning or even creating a string of material is not the end of the choreographic task. It is pretty much the beginning. There is still a lot of discovery to be made. The initial string may be seen only to be a series of musical notes ready to be played in any order, capable of being transformed into rhythm and motif. (*Choreographer Javier DeFrutos demonstrated this approach to us in an extremely open and generous workshop demonstration. It was a wonderfully inspiring way of demystifying the creative process*).

To be fair, canon and retrograde, motif and élan are not words we use much without laughing. That is not to say we do not use those concepts constantly when creating choreography and directing movement. The pompous introductory session was not designed to illustrate the gap of knowledge between the company and its directors. It was an introduction to the types of tasks that *might* be set, the types of phrases that *might* be used and the need for clarity in the setting of those tasks as we could not presume that anyone would know what the hell we were talking about if we were to suddenly drop choreographic terminology into the room.



Scott Graham, Leanne Rowe (Margaret) & Edward Bennett (William). Photo Helen Maybanks

6 minutes 19 seconds



Leanne Rowe (Margaret) & Edward Bennett (William). Photo Helen Maybanks

The title alludes to the length of the music track used in an improvisation. The title of the track is, unbelievably...

'We Played Some Open Chords And Rejoiced, For The Sun Had Circled The Sun Another Year' by A Winged Victory of the Sullen.

You can see why we might want to avoid naming this section after the song title but as beautiful, open and evocative the song might be it was the length of it that was significant.

We have always been very wary of expansive improvisations. We like to keep them short, have a quick confab and then try again with some variations with the aim of getting different results.

6 minutes and 19 seconds struck us as perfectly long enough for the cast to get into what could be a difficult improvisation without tipping into boredom or repetition.

We asked the performers to merely inhabit a small space together, to not want to stay, to not want to leave, to play that tension. It sounds horribly vague but there is enough emotional weight around *Lovesong* to stop the actors feeling lost or feel the need to draw on actual scenes from the play.

This was all about finding moments of intention, the need to say something, the need to hear something, to touch, to connect, to strike out, to hug, to run away. The task was all about seeing these desperate needs but for us never to see them resolved.

The cast presented some extraordinary moments, all in silence. We scribbled away the words that these moments seemed to be screaming out to us. They included

*I never thought this would happen
I don't know what to say (to you)
I still love you
I am waiting. And I will keep waiting.
I know you
You are smothering me
I can't do this
Let's get on with this
Thank you
I know you mean well
I can't
You are still alive
I need to show you
You can't deny me
This is hard
What are we going to do?*

Other moments included the tiniest intention to touch the other, to hold their sleeve in a way that would say 'I love you' in the most delicate way, yet for that beautiful intention to be dashed by the other person to move away, oblivious to the beauty of the moment that almost happened but instead shattered (see *Do I Dare?*).

One sublime moment occurred when Sam just held out both hands cupped and Siân looked at him for a few seconds and then simply placed her head in them. This inspired moment screamed, 'I know you. You know me. You know what you have to do. Do it. You know it will make everything ok'.

It was a moment of silence that screamed out history, humour and intimacy.

We asked the performers if they recognised the moments as we read out the list of what we had written down while they were improvising they said they could recognise about 50% of them. This stood as a perfect example of why this slightly vague improvisation was of so much use to us as directors. It had stripped the performers of responsibility and was all about what an observer projects onto a situation that is all about body language. It can be complex and eloquent and open all kinds of options for character, relationships and history.

We ran both couples improvising at the same time so that they did not feel self-conscious or that they were on show or ever felt the need to perform. They merely had to keep it real as we observed. We also had our assistant director Geordie Brookman film it so that we could return to the footage to see if it told a different but potentially equally inspiring story.

Having done this, the room was heavy with meaning. It really is quite emotional watching these little moments of interaction and near misses. People were genuinely upset and shaken. To combat this and to remind us that this production is a love song we finished off the day with another very simple improvisation task.

We worked with one couple at a time. We talked about those moments when you are with someone and you lose control with laughter and just the sight of the other could set you off again. We said you should not be laughing, you should be trying to control it but in addition you should be trying to catch the eye of the other person to set them off laughing.

The result was shaking shoulders, tears and howls of laughter from those watching. The sheer effort they were making not to laugh and the obvious shifts in power as one would feel that they could set the other off was hilarious to watch. It was also refreshing and endearing. We loved this couple that were clearly in love.

Afterwards we said how it would be great to capture a moment like this within the production but even if we could not it would serve as an invaluable playing note for the actors who must believe that the characters they play are capable of such moments no matter how dark their world gets. Dark places inspire dark humour and moments like this provide balance to the production. They also remind actors to play the moment and not play the ending.

(This can be a problem where productions become heavy because they are heading to a potentially sad ending. It is important to remind ourselves that even if this is the future the present could be laughter and release).

Fears



Sian Phillips (Maggie). Photo Helen Maybanks

As a first foray into character work, the cast was set a simple homework task. They were asked to explore and list the fears that their characters are dealing with throughout the play.

It may have been more interesting to look at the younger couple and ask them to be specific to particular times and list those fears as their story extends over 10, maybe 15 years, but these were early days in the rehearsals and we did not want to go into too much detail and make too many decisions so early. The task remained general and elicited quick responses but they still proved illuminating and interesting.

Older Maggie (Siân) fears...

Having to discuss things further with Bill and not being able to deal with him in a satisfactory manner

That talking about it will make the issue 'too present'

That this will ultimately mean that she may be unable to take things into her own hands and take her life

Older Bill (Sam) fears...

Forgetting what she looks like when she has gone

Growing old alone

That she will not succeed leading to pain and coma

That he will never talk to anyone again

Younger Maggie (Leanne) fears...

The question 'have we done the right thing?'

Not having money

Being lonely (individually and as a couple)

That life will be 'just us'

That we will become unhappy

Younger Bill (Ed) fears...

Boredom

The predictability of 'chronological bullet points our future together'

Talent/effort not being recognised

Becoming intellectually stuck because of the pressures of home life

Becoming dependent on drink as a release, as relief from boredom

His temper

Not fitting in in this new environment, finding new friends

Not being at home

Not making Maggie as happy as she deserves to be

We are always wary of too much back-story and certainly wary of committing to it so soon. These lists are interesting in themselves, but when you consider that both Sam and Ed and Siân and Leanne are actually playing the same character then they could find the lists pretty illuminating and influential as they develop their own take on the character. Ultimately we need to find a consensus. That is why exercises like these should never present back story as fact. They are possibilities and present actors with options they maybe had not thought about.

Some aspects of the list were extremely useful for us as directors too. For example:

'Becoming intellectually stuck because of the pressures of home life'

This comment has implications. When we feel pressured by a situation where we can usually identify the blame and that, rightly or wrongly, seldom lies at our own feet. In this instance the pressures of home life implicate the partner and the expectations they may place on you. If this is the case and one feels that their intellectual trajectory is being stifled by the situation created/enforced/exacerbated by their partner to the point where one feels like the expectations and ambitions for the future are being eroded, then this is a pretty corrosive situation. What might first appear as a scene of non-event stasis between the two partners is actually bubbling with resentment. The image of the perfect future is being destroyed more and more with each second that passes.

Cream / Ties



Sam Cox (Billy). Photo Scott Graham

Cream

Maggie talks of the ritual of applying face cream most of her life. If this is so then there is probably a defined pattern, a sequence of events that she habitually returns to. We set Siân and Leanne the task of setting this pattern as a choreographed sequence that they could perform in unison.

The moves remained naturalistic. The only aspect that was heightened was that there were two people going through the exact same sequence. We felt that it might be good to have little moments like this in the bank so that there is a shared physicality across the two performers.

To help remember the extended sequence we encouraged them to name groups of events, giving them strange names that somehow made sense of the moves, and list them. This means that instead of trying to remember 25 moves you are actually only trying to remember a list of 7 words.

Ties

While the application of face cream is in the script there is not an obvious male equivalent. While considering this and the probable need for one I remembered how differently Steven and I tie our shoelaces. The act of tying your laces is actually a very complex piece of choreography that you have been taught and have made your own. Next time you do it imagine it slowed down. Look at the dexterity and the minor adjusts, throws, and loops. We take this skill for granted but it is extraordinary and, as I remembered when I thought of the difference in technique between Steven and I, quite possibly unique.

It made us realise that such an act performed by both younger and older man should be identical.

Tying shoe laces might have worked beautifully on film but is fairly useless on stage so we gave Sam and Ed a shirt and tie and asked each to put the tie on. We watched each one and filmed it and there it was, just like Steven and I, the technique was totally different when you look at it in detail.

We had to choose one technique and plumped for Ed's as it was simpler and cleaner. We asked Ed to teach Sam how he puts a tie on.

Once Sam had adopted Ed's technique they both presented a sterile master class in how to put a tie on. This was nothing like Ed's original version of putting the tie on. It had none of the natural grace and comfort of when he simply put the tie on without the responsibility of teaching someone else how to do it.

This was totally expected though. This was why we had filmed them originally. We then gave them the camera and set them both the task of capturing Ed's original movements. Every adjustment and flourish was there on film to be recreated in a string of unison.

This is hard work and it can make the act seem really alien, even to Ed, whose moves we are meticulously trying to copy. They had to rehearse it many times to get close to a natural delivery. The tendency is to be over deliberate with the moves. This looks like physical shouting and has none of the rhythms of our natural physicality.

Eventually they relaxed and they started to share a believable physicality. The result was a strangely moving sequence where we actually did see a physical ritual repeated and repeated through time.

Development

We wanted to explore another way of them creating choreography. We returned to an old process we have called *On Blindness Hands*, named after, and used in a previous co-production.

This process introduces participants to sign language as a starting point. They will make a short string of movements based entirely in the hands. The performers were taught approximately eight signs for random words like Christmas, Turtle, Again, Sad, Old, Nervous, Hedgehog, Why, New, etc. They are random so that no one can create a story out of them. The point here is not to think literally about the words. We are using them just to give us a movement vocabulary that we might not have possessed otherwise.

The performers are asked to look at the dynamic of the move and feel free to exaggerate that, to link moves, to repeat and reverse them and to think of totally new ones. The original moves are merely the starting point to finding ourselves doing something we might not have thought about if we had not been taught them.

The cast picked this up very quickly and produced beautiful work. We workshoped some of these strings, placing people together as they moved and asking others to speak as they moved. It is very hard to keep both the moves and the words natural but that is the aim.

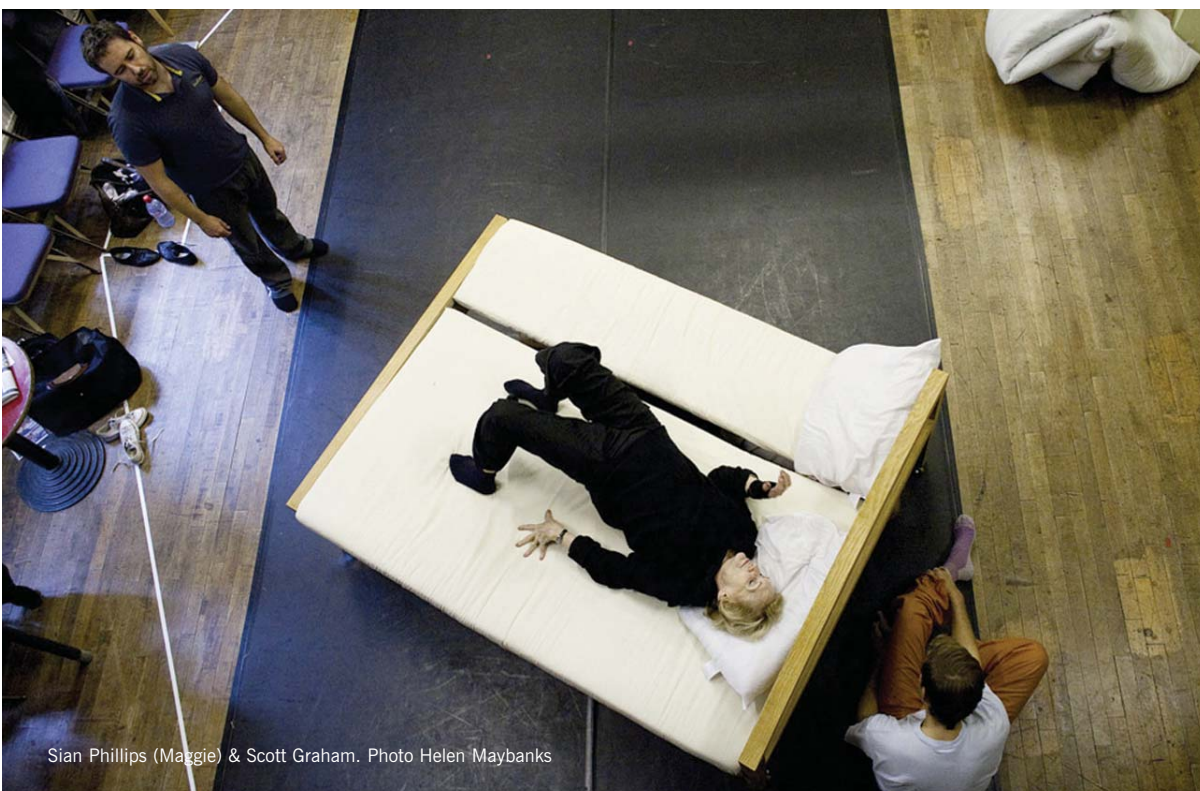
Again the cast did very well.

But this was not the end of the exercise.

We put them into two teams of male and female. The men were to return to their Ties material and explode it, using it as a starting point for an *On Blindness Hands* type string of unison. The women were to return to Cream and give that the *On Blindness* treatment.

Again both teams fared well. We pushed things on by getting the women to reverse their new string, effectively running it backwards. To help them we filmed it in its normal forward version and then presented the footage reversed and running slowly. They referred to this to capture the minute dynamic moments unique to backwards flowing movement.

We asked the men to soften their material slightly. We then asked them to try walking forward as they performed the moves with their arms. Finally we looked at them individually and asked them to perform the moves thinking about the beauty of Maggie in the blue dress. This possesses a different emotional bomb for each character. For the younger this moment is about vitality and sex. For the older it is the same but laced with the frustrations and cruelty of disease and the aging process. It is a complex mixture of warmth, vitriol, passion and pain (among others) and the choreography becomes much more emotionally interesting.



Sian Phillips (Maggie) & Scott Graham. Photo Helen Maybanks

Picking Oose



Sian Phillips (Maggie) and Sam Cox (Billy). Photo Johan Persson

If you are not aware of the term 'oose' then you are not Scottish and have not had the pleasure of having a relative pick fluff, thread or anything else from your clothing that should not be there. The act, and the item removed, is usually explained by the relative with the simple word 'oose.'

But it is the act itself that fascinates. It goes beyond the removal of 'oose' and can be seen on any train, pub, shopping centre, basically anywhere you might find a couple that are obviously very comfortable with each other's touch. It is the casual rearrangement of a collar on a partner's shirt, the dusting of a flake of skin from their shoulders and the removal of a rogue eyelash from their cheek. The act betrays a comfort and intimacy that is earned over years (unless performed by an over familiar and overbearing Scottish relative. That just betrays a psychotic Scottish relative).

'Picking Oose' was about letting our performers explore these casual moments with each other. It was in moments like this that we find our partner prefers our glasses worn slightly further up the nose, our hair behind our ears, that we are slightly sloppy eaters, that our eyebrows are becoming bushy and unruly.

We placed the younger couple together and the older couple together. We sat them opposite each other. Each were told to find four of these 'Picking Oose' moments where they would adjust, touch and wipe their partner. When they had their four each we had a look at them as a sequence.

So person A does 1-4 then person B does 1-4

Then we played with the sequence. Person A does one then Person B does one. Then Person A does their second move and Person B follows with their second move, then they do their third and then fourth.

Then we get them to play with the sequence again and find a new structure that might be...

Person A – 1
Person A – 2
Person B – 1
Person A – 3
Person B – 2
Person B – 3
Person B – 4
Person A – 4



This is a very simple sequence of eight events. It is easy to remember. As with all of our tasks it is important to start simple and then build up, to add more moves once the performers are comfortable and are sure they have the first section remembered.

Once our performers had had some time to create another four more moves each, we then looked at breaking up the predictable rhythm established and made some moves happen at the same time.

We then asked the performers to be thinking about the move they were about to do on their partner while the partner was doing a move on them. This helped keep it alive and stop the performers from becoming detached, passive or even robotic when being acted upon.

The initial experiments with this presented an extremely simple technique that could be mesmerising and incredibly intimate, successfully betraying a shared history between the couples. Considering this was the first day of movement for the company this was heartening indeed!

Returning to the process several days later the cast was asked to pick up the speed so that the moves have a

heightened quality. They were to remain true to the original moves and not shorten them.

To help this, we picked up the BPM of the ambient music in the room and then performed them to old favourite *Mic Check* by Imogen Heap. The skittish rhythms of her a capella helped push the performers on to a cracking speed while keeping hold of the original precision.

How tasks get applied

We set many tasks in the rehearsal room. There were also far more ideas worked upon than will ever appear in *Lovesong*. It is important not to cling to exciting ideas that may not really belong in the play. Sometimes that choreographic gem can just be a spanner in the works, killing the flow of the piece.

With this open mind comes the lack of presumption about where any successful ideas might be applied. There have been beautiful moments in rehearsal where a movement has been stunningly successful but we just put it on a back burner and try something else.

This means that performers might find themselves using movement they helped create in a completely different context.

For example **Picking Oose** became the base choreography for a duet between Ed and Leanne as they burst out of the wardrobe and move through the kitchen in a flirtatious, sexy moment indicating the unscripted passage of time between leaving for the party and returning from it in a rage. The movement trails across the stage and is full of intimacy, pride and love, yet it was created sitting opposite each other as a picky, slightly annoying moment between people who were overstepping the line with each other. The same moves have changed from being barbed and negative to frisky and sexually charged. We did not know this when we created the original choreography. We just knew that by making it that it might be of use somewhere and could be called upon quickly.

As I write we are still working with Siân on a choreographed sequence set in her bed. She writhes, aches, longs, and searches across the sheets. The choreography is actually from a string of material I created for them during a warm up. This was performed standing up and moving around. It was meant as an exercise where the performer becomes aware of controlling and varying the dynamic of their body and how that in itself tells a story and instructs an audience where to look. Performed in her bed with the duvet kicked off it is now a tortured yet, at times, blissful dream. Again we did not know this until we tried it.



Sam Cox (Billy) and Leanne Rowe (Margaret). Photo Johan Persson

Freaky Friday



Ok, so we never quite got there but we did have the best of intentions. Freaky Friday was supposed to be the day when we get the younger performers to learn a scene from the older character's perspective and vice versa. We would run the scene with the others watching looking to pick up mannerisms and quirks.

What is interesting about this is each actor gets to see their younger/older self in the situations they are going to be acting in. They should be looking for mannerisms that can be shared and echoed. They are looking for meaning to be reinvented. There are a couple of ways we could have played this. For example, either the older performers play old and just adopt the words and situation of the new scene or they play it as younger versions.

The performers have to reassess the scene and ask themselves how much knowledge and self-awareness they bring into any situation. Seeing your older self react to a situation might make you think you have not learned that way of responding or thinking yet or it might equally make you aim for continuity in action. You have to ask what have I gained by this point? What have I lost?

Either way gives the performers the opportunity to have their minds opened up by another person's take on the scenes they were working on.

Or rather it would have, had we not run out of time. Ah well. You can use it for your rehearsals of *Lovesong*.

It is the structure of *Lovesong* that makes this an interesting, valid and safe exercise. It would not be so useful for cast dynamic to just try this with any play. You do not want to offend anyone by opening up the can of worms with the label 'I would have done it this way' on it. Within *Lovesong* the performers have so much to learn and gain from each other that they have to take on the thoughts of each other. The creation of a character becomes a joint exercise, but this is best achieved through freedom and observation rather than sitting down together and deciding that this shared character does not like Marmite. The whole point of the age gap is so that one can look at the other and say 'was I ever that person?' and the other can look and say 'I will never become you.'

Bed

One of the first ideas that came to mind in the initial development sessions was of a scene where the bed they have shared over 40 years gets to tell its story.

We wanted characters to transform from young to old, old to young and embrace indiscriminately. This scene should be passionate, emotional, sexual, comforting. Everything captured by the bed itself.

To make the scene we broke the tasks down into several distinct sections. At times we worked on the bed, at times on the floor, getting individuals and groups to start making strings of material. We kept these tasks purely choreographic, never allowing the cast to think about the weight of the scene. If they had they may have subconsciously plumped for a sexual or emotional palette and it was important to keep minds open as we wanted our Bed scene to move through all the possibilities.

Having created the separate sections we then moved everybody onto the bed. We worked on the practicalities of

slipping through the gap in the bed and the quality we wanted to achieve. We knew this scene might end up looking like a swan on a lake, gliding above the surface but all busy underneath. A lot of time was taken with how to move people and keep them safe underneath the bed.

It always takes a while for these scenes to come together and they always take work to keep them together. Everybody moves through precise gaps to exact counts and most of the time the hatch under the mattress is open meaning that one foot out of place could spell disaster/humiliation/injury.

The Bed scene is probably the most signature Frantic Assembly moment in the whole show and comes less than ten minutes before the end. Just as the show is moving towards its conclusion it is a timely reminder of all the vitality this relationship has possessed and of the love that still burns.



The Events



Sian Phillips (Margaret). Photo Johan Persson

Looking at the script we quickly realised the need for what we called Events to help make the production flow. Abi had written many scenes that ended with blackouts and then started a new scene with the same characters in very different situations. We have an aversion to the blackout and wanted to find a way around this without dismantling Abi's structure. The Events were little moments that happened between the scenes that opened a window upon a character's feelings or situation. They were mostly private and although initially necessitated by the need to get others offstage and changed they became crucial parts of the story.

At times they capture the flirty vitality of the younger couple. This is something that could easily be overlooked as we mostly see them lurch from mini crisis to mini crisis.

At other times the Events give us an insight into the strange highs and lows of this final week together for the older couple. The heightened euphoria of a happy moment, a sleepless night trying on wedding shoes you can no longer

walk in, the loneliness of trying to make ends meet.

All of these Events became an integral part of our storytelling but you will not find most of them in the script. One day another company with a bigger budget and no fear of blackouts will come along and make a very different version of *Lovesong*.

The Song (What Song?)



In an early research and development session we played the song *Starlings* by Elbow as we felt that it possessed a beautifully eloquent evocation of love. (See **How Guy Garvey helped us make Lovesong**).

You are the only thing in any room you're ever in

Just beautiful. And musically I have written about how it evoked the said starlings clustering and dancing. The song seemed so integral to our aspirations for *Lovesong*. On the train on the way to work one morning I remembered a friend asking me what I thought of the latest Elbow album, *Build a Rocket Boys!*. Specifically he was talking about the first song *The Birds* and its strange reprise towards the end of the album. Remembering this I realised I had not heard the reprise so quickly stopped working and gave it a listen. It instantly struck me we were learning the wrong song and that *The Birds* (reprise) was the one we should be wrestling with. I rushed into rehearsal and asked Steven to listen and after a while considering both we were both in agreement. It was *The Birds* (reprise)

*The birds are the keepers of our secret
As they saw us where we lay
In the deepest grass of springtime
In a reckless guilty haze*

*Did they sing a million blessings
As they watched us slowly part?
Do they keep those final kisses
In their tiny racing hearts?*

We have been working with Helen Porter who has arranged the voices and drilled the performers in learning and singing the song. She has done an incredible job and is a quite inspirational teacher. The arrangement is so delicate yet it soars when it needs to. It is quite beautiful.

'So where is it then?' I hear you ask.

We have struggled to find its place in the show and have come to the conclusion that we are not going to include it. These decisions are always heartbreaking, as you are not going to use something that is glorious but it is always a very adult moment. You feel very grown up doing the right thing. You can't throw wonderful things into the show just because they are wonderful. The rhythm of the show is paramount and we could just not make it work with the song.

If theatre shows had 'extras' like a DVD you would find the song there along with a fantastic moment where Leanne comes out of the wardrobe horizontally and into Sam's arms only to be sucked back in. Ah well.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

Note to self; this is a love song



I know what will happen when we run this show for the first time. It might happen in the rehearsal room, in a dress run, or even on a preview. It will feel like trudging through treacle.

As we are rehearsing I can feel that we are playing every moment and the natural instinct is to give them full weight. This will make the play lurch from one emotional bomb to another. Any audience would rightly give up and save themselves from this perpetual emotional wringer.

Once we run the show we have to reassess its rhythm and find the lightness in the lives of the characters and encourage the performers to trust that the information within the scenes will still come across even if their characters are trying to hide it. By that I mean, if at the heart of a scene is the sadness of not being able to conceive children, then let us see the characters trying to rise above this, to laugh it off, to remain positive. As long as it does not tip over into flippant then you present

something much more complex. It is a scene where the characters are saying 'we are ok' but the audience are looking at it and thinking 'I don't think you are.'

This is much more rewarding for an audience. They have something to conclude from the sum of a scene rather than being told what is at the heart of the scene in big bold letters. This should create a more engaged audience.

There is a simple rule behind this and it is best summed up by the example of the drunk on stage. It is always more interesting to watch someone drunk trying not to be drunk rather than someone projecting 'look how drunk I am!'

We will identify the scenes we need to skip rather than plod. It is like wanting a stone to skip across water rather than make a splash and sink. The challenge here is to lift our audience's hearts and make them leave a little bit more in love. It is, after all, a love song.

Geordie's Rehearsal Diary



Steven Hoggett, Edward Bennett & Sian Phillips. Photo Helen Maybanks

During the rehearsals we have been assisted and observed by Geordie Brookman. We met Geordie many years ago and he is a very exciting Australian director. He is also the first person to direct *Tiny Dynamite* in Australia so is intimate with Abi's work.

Below is his rehearsal diary. It offers an objective insight into the working process and for which we are eternally grateful as that is a perspective Steven and I have, obviously, never been afforded.

Prologue:

I first became aware of Steven and Scott's work through Abi Morgan's earlier play, *Tiny Dynamite*. After sitting in on a morning rehearsal session for Mark Ravenhill's *pool (no water)* in 2005 I was determined to come back for a longer stay to learn more about the Frantic Assembly method. It only me took six years...

Week One: Beginnings

Arriving at People Show Studios in Bethnal Green I was greeted by Company Stage Manager Joni Carter and Steven. Despite having read the Frantic devising book and following as much of their work through the web as

possible, I still wasn't sure what to expect. But no matter what the production, company or working style first days always seem to be much the same. People drifted in bit by bit, actors Edward Bennett, Sam Cox, Siân Phillips and Leanne Rowe, director Scott Graham, Frantic Executive Producer Lisa Maguire and playwright Abi Morgan. Introductions over, we settled in for a first read.

Much of the first week has focused on the script with most of Monday, Wednesday and Friday spent reading, discussing, analysing and giving Abi the necessary feedback to complete a new draft. This was delivered on Friday hot off the presses, just in time for a read through for the production's various producers and backers. A number of leaps were made over the course of the week. The couple at the centre of *Lovesong*, William and Margaret (Siân and Sam play them in the present day, Ed and Leanne some forty years prior) at the start of the week lived in an undefined country and by the end were British émigrés living in America. William's opening monologue, in a key structural move, was more clearly defined as existing after Margaret's death, effectively turning the piece into a 'memory play'. Plot elements were tightened up and motivations strengthened.

On Tuesday and Thursday we got a taste of the side of the work that Frantic is famous for as the company started building the choreographic material for the production. Every day began with a specially designed warm up led by either Scott or Steven that focused on a different element of strength or flexibility training. Some basic choreographic tasks followed the end of the warm up. Most were focused on interacting with another performer or moving across the space. These tasks would produce choreographic 'strings', small sequences of movement that could then be developed into something larger. Little were we to know much of the material generated in these early days would return in other guises later on.

Week Two: Throwing shapes and triple threats

The second week settled into a pattern of physical and choreographic work ('throwing shapes' as Scott calls it) in the morning followed by scene rehearsals in the afternoon. The textual and physical elements were kept relatively separate throughout the week. The choreography that was being developed was kept unrelated to any specific moment in the text, though it was occasionally informed by a practical demand of the play. While Abi had suggested a few physical moments in her stage directions predominantly they were generated according to Scott and Steven's master plan.

Music and song have a constant presence in the Frantic rehearsal room. While Elbow's music was a major thematic jumping off point for Steven, Scott and Abi, the music almost constantly playing in the room was incredibly eclectic. Steven and Scott start underscoring scenes and choreographic fragments from the very beginning, using tracks to encourage a particular mood or pace. As rehearsals progress certain tracks start to come back again and again before eventually forming part of the production's soundtrack. Video documentation is also a constant and necessary part of rehearsals, helping to track the development of choreographic 'strings' and larger sequences.

Week two also saw voice coach Helen Porter join rehearsals to work up a capella scores for two Elbow songs, *Starlings* and *The Birds*. Over the course of a series of sessions Helen coaxed and cajoled the performers into an emotive quartet of voices. Helen warns the actors that 'gravity will always happen with the voice, think bright' and encourages them to approach vocal work with as much physical discipline as choreography.

As the week wore on I also started to understand both the benefit and challenge involved with creating movement theatre with actors who don't necessarily have a dance background. The individuality of the four performers bodies



Georgie Brookman. Photo Alex Turner

is astounding as is the way they throw themselves into choreography. They also lack the 'sharp' finishing that dancers usually bring to movement and it's a good thing, the choreography feels truer as a result. However, sequences take longer to be retained and more physical conditioning is required to get the performers up to speed. It's a challenge and makes for a packed rehearsal schedule.

Week Three: The directorial mind meld and an open room.

What became clear by week three was the almost spooky ability that Scott and Steven have to interchange when directing both scenes and choreography. In total I witnessed maybe three differences of opinion between Frantic's two leaders over the entire rehearsal process. The benefit to the room and the process is phenomenal. Along with obvious advantages like the ability to maintain an unflagging energy and momentum (which a single director would be hard pressed to constantly keep up), their ability to interchange meant that every performer always had immediate access to feedback. Subtle differences exist in their approaches to both text and choreography but these compliment rather than hinder each other and they always manage to work towards the same end. It's a true collaboration in the deepest sense.

The constant forward momentum created by Scott and Steven's collaboration makes it easy to miss one of the central skills that both of them possess, physical editing. Their ability to pick and choose scraps of movement from masses of performer generated material and then build sequences is impressive and echoes the sharp eye of other choreographers like Kate Champion, Garry Stewart and Lloyd Newson.

Some choreographic sequences are already beginning to be refined towards their eventual performance shape while

scenes are still being given a first pass on the floor in the afternoons. Voice work continues apace with another visit from Helen and a decision is made to pursue just one Elbow song, *The Birds*, instead of two.

As rehearsals progressed I began to realise that a Frantic rehearsal room is slightly different to most. Some companies treat the rehearsal room as 'sacred space', inaccessible to all except those directly involved with the production. On *Lovesong* it's been much more open with Associate Artists from the company, visiting directors and friends of the company floating through at different points. It's proved a huge positive with the rehearsal room remaining open and buoyant and full of ideas from many sources. It may seem a small thing but it has certainly contributed to an enduring feeling of freshness and energy.

Week Four: Worlds collide and text and the devising company

In week four we all started to realise just how deep Steven and Scott's preparation was. Almost all of the movement sequences ('events' in Frantic-speak) that have been developed are revealed to have a highly specific predetermined place in the play's structure. 'Strings' developed as part of warm up exercises on day two emerge in week four as key elements of pivotal events. Over the course of the week these events were steadily blended in with the text, helping to support subtext and assist dramatic momentum. By allowing the performers to develop the 'strings' as pure movement, unencumbered by emotional content or context, Scott and Steven tap into the actors' pure instinct.

Week four also marked our first stumble run through. A messy, overly long but ultimately encouraging event!

The week has also seen a much greater presence from the other creatives including Sound Designer Carolyn Downing, Lighting Designer Andy Purves, Designer Merle Hensel and Video Designer Ian William Galloway. It's easy to lose track of these other layers of production when inside the rehearsal process but we're all looking forward to seeing how all the other production elements integrate into the piece.

One of the interesting elements to observe, as a director from a predominantly text based background, has been the way in which Scott and Steven develop a new text. To put it bluntly, there is less reverence, more interrogation and a sense that the text and playwright sit on an even playing field with the other parts of the production. While this requires a collaborative playwright, like Abi, it also requires a brave and flexible group of performers and confident directors. Despite being in third draft form at the start of rehearsals the text has continued to develop apace during

rehearsals to the point that a new version was edited and distributed at the end of week four.

Week Five: The sum of the parts and some hard decisions

As we arrived on Monday morning I think we all knew week five would be a big one. The week began with a morning of costume fittings and the afternoon was spent on the critical 'bed sequence' and with catching Leanne up (due to prior commitments she was absent from rehearsals for the final two days of week four) with developments from the end of week four. While the actors all arrive a little bit sore each morning you can tell they are much stronger and their ability to pick up, adjust and develop choreography has improved out of sight.

On Tuesday, after scene work in the morning, we threw ourselves into our second 'stumble through'. We stopped short of a full run as the final two scenes of the play needed a little more work but the progress from the last stumble run was marked. Scenes are starting to develop at pace now the actors are beginning to get a sense of the play's arc.

As the end of rehearsals approached the pace increased, with both Tuesday and Wednesday being long days, stretching from 10am to 8pm. Even at this late point tiny changes are being made to the text. Words adjusted, occasional lines cut. More than ever before Scott and Steven are working in tandem, with one directing one scene while one the other side of the room the other is reworking an event. On Thursday, after spending most of the day working on the final scenes of the play, a hard decision was made. Despite the work put in the a capella song, *The Birds*, was cut from the final moments of the play. These sorts of decisions often define a production and must be approached ruthlessly. It was sad to see the song go but there is no doubt that, in Steven's words, 'it hadn't found its place'.

Endings and Beginnings

I write this at lunchtime on Friday at the end of the final week of rehearsal. The company travels to Plymouth over the weekend to put the show into the theatre next week, our final rehearsal room run awaits this afternoon. It's been a rollercoaster process, but a strangely calm one (if you can have a calm rollercoaster). It's as if two plays have been developed and slowly been combined into a single whole. Combined to such a degree that you can't see how they would have existed separately in the first place. I'm sure many more changes and developments await during tech week but even at this point, a beautiful, gentle and poignant piece of theatre is alive and breathing.

Nearly There

We are at the final stages before the world premiere at the Drum Theatre, Plymouth. Below is a short diary written over the final sessions that will either chart our smooth ride into a beautiful new Frantic Assembly show or chart a sharp descent into despair and madness.

Thursday 29th September 2011

We have one more session of technical rehearsals to go and we have a dress run tonight. Before we start work we have a detailed line run in the female dressing room. As the performers go through the lines, detailing exits and quick changes, we sit with the script and make sure that they have not got into bad habits with garbled lines or paraphrasing. Occasionally we have to remind them of a line they have been saying incorrectly for the past few weeks.

There is calmness about this production. There is a lot of work to do and there is still a chance that the first few shows will be a mess but there is a confidence on our part that it just feels right. We trust that all the details will settle with our actors despite the fact they are always scribbling down fretful notes about exits through the many shafts formed by the back walls.

Friday 30th September 2011

It is the morning after the first dress run and it was... ok. Actually it was better than ok. Actually it was probably very good and many sections soared but there were moments we have to work intensely on before the second dress today.

Hopefully the dress run was a consolidating experience for the performers as most of them came on for most of their scenes! A minor triumph!

Backstage is still hectic with really difficult changes and the dress run did have some dips where we were waiting for changes to be completed but these were caused by earlier missed cues. It was both frightening and heartening to see that so many scenes could unravel with one mistimed cue. It meant the stakes were high for a particular moment but also that what looked like several errors were actually the knock on effect of a single mistake that would be easy to rectify.

It is now 17.30 and we have finished a very pleasing dress run and had tech notes. We have also had a chat with Abi Morgan who watched the run. There is a very good chance that we cut a whole scene on her suggestion. It is brave and bold but very exciting too. It was clearly the scene that was not working but it will take quite a bit of work to make the show flow around the gap it will create.

More on this later...

Well, as predicted the first show in front of an audience was a bit of a walk through treacle. It had lost a lot of its snap and its vitality. Everyone was heavy and playing the pauses for all they were worth. As frustrating as this was it was no bad thing. It means that we can give very clear notes tomorrow and now know exactly what the pitfalls are and how we can make this show really come alive.

And we are going to cut the Starlings speech. Beautiful as it is, it is not earning its place in the show. Thematically it is beautiful and in another production could work wonderfully just before the end but the physical construction of our production will not allow it. It would destroy the rhythm of the ending.

Saturday 1st October 2011

After a brilliantly focused session reworking things and looking at notes with the actors and technical team the show truly delivered tonight. It was such a shame Abi had to return to London but we are all very happy and proud tonight.

Wednesday 5th October 2011

Very happy. Very proud. Every night so far has had a standing ovation. Last night in the bar we were talking to a group of people in their twenties and people in their sixties who had had a Frantic Assembly workshop in the afternoon and had just watched the show together. They talked about what the show meant to them, how it touched them in different and in similar ways.

Lovesong is doing everything we ever hoped it would and more.

Bibliography

There is nothing pure or academic about our bibliography of inspiration. It is just honest. Below is a list of some of the books, films, songs and moments referenced as we worked on *Lovesong*. As we have said before inspiration can come from anywhere and there is no shame in finding it in a *Carry On* film just as there is no prize for finding it in a film by Jean Luc Godard.

Some inspirations are repeat offenders like Gregory Crewdson, showing how close to our hearts we hold his work. Others find themselves in the list for the first time, surprising us, and, no doubt, them, if they ever knew.

The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock	TS Eliot	Poem
The Wasteland	TS Eliot	Poem
John Donne's love poetry		Poetry
Essays In Love	Alain De Botton	Novel
A Lover's Discourse	Roland Barthes	Novel
The Time Traveller's Wife	Audrey Niffenegger	Novel
The Dead	James Joyce	Short Story
Tiny Dynamite	Abi Morgan	Play
Abi's brilliant but unplaced Tennessee Williams reference about knickers in a pocket		
Starlings	Elbow	Song
www.justsomyrics.com/2013552/Elbow-Starlings-Lyrics		
Friend Of Ours	Elbow	Song
www.songmeanings.net/songs/view/3530822107858708247		
The Birds	Elbow	Song
www.elyrics.net/read/e/elbow-lyrics/the-birds-lyrics.html		
A Winged Victory For the Sullen		Album
Erased Tapes	erasedtapes.com	Music website
Paradise Circus	Massive Attack	Music video (sexually explicit content)
The petal effect on Yeah Yeah Yeah's performance of 'Maps' -MTV awards		Music performance
www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOj6hm09rOo		
Rene Aubry		Composer
UP	dir. Pete Docter	Film
The Gruffalo	BBC	Film
Numero 2	dir. Jean Luc Godard	Film
Carry On Up The Khyber	dir. Gerald Thomas	Film
Magnolia	dir. PT Anderson	Film
Legend	dir. Ridley Scott	Film
Freaky Friday (1976)	dir. Gary Nelson	Film
One Foot In The Grave	BBC	TV series
Terry Pratchett: Choosing to Die	BBC	Documentary
TV ad for Gucci	Chris Cunningham	TV advert
The work of artist Claire Morgan		Visual Art
www.claire-morgan.co.uk/		
'Beneath The Roses' series	Gregory Crewdson	Visual Art
A Couple Drinking Tea On Plymouth Hoe	Joni Carter	Visual Art
Is a Dignified Death Too Much to Ask?	The Guardian	Newspaper article
www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2011/jul/09/nell-dunn-partner-home-death		