



# FRANTIC ASSEMBLY

ONLINE TEACHERS'  
CPD COURSE

FILM 3



This Resource Will Cover

- 1.You as director: Critical Observation and modelling good practice and teaching your students how to do the same.
- 2.Practical ways to start interrogating the material you have generated in a meaningful way.
- 3.Approaching and combining physical and text-based material from the previous videos

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## FINDING MEANING THROUGH WORKSHOPPING AND OBSERVATION

The dream is to have a rehearsal room where everyone feels empowered to offer ideas. In our workshops we ask that everyone in the room observe what is being created and make offers on these observations. 'If you see something, say it!' How can you as an observer test and shake-up what you've just watched? How can you open up new possibilities from what has been generated? This collaborative approach unburdens the performer to tell a story and puts the responsibility on the observer.



It's difficult to avoid feeling pressured by time. When the pressure of time kicks in, it can often result in pushing to make everything that is being created fit to your stimulus too early on in the process. Fight to stay open to possibility. This is key when workshoping the material you have created. It may or may not seem to be related to your stimulus or theme at this point but playing with **The Presumptions** may well open up some surprising outcomes that you would never have thought of.

Finding meaning in the material being created, at a time when we are working at a social distance from one another, may require a more nuanced approach. Although your students will not make physical contact in performance, we can still play with intimacy and connection through characters, space and movement.

## A NOTE ON CRITICAL OBSERVATION

*Guiding your students to become Critical Observers.*

The value of observing and commenting on what you see is where the real devising and thinking happens. It unencumbers the performers from having to tell a particular story too early on in the process, which means that the possibilities of what has been created stay open and flexible.

Use **The Presumptions** to explore potential and find new perspectives.

What are **The Presumptions**? They are the things that we take for granted about what we are watching. Check out this [video](#) that goes into lots more detail on this.



## SOME PRESUMPTIONS

- That we play music when we run movement
- That the people performing the material have to be the ones that perform it
- That they are speaking / not speaking as they have been
- That the choreography always happens
- That the movement sequence you have made can't be edited
- That things always happen in the same order
- That the people on stage actually know the order that things go in
- That we 'dance' the moves
- That it's 'normal' or 'OK' to move in this way
- That the scene starts when the text or movement you are using starts
- That you both know what will happen next in the choreography or text
- That the performer/character is unaware of the audience
- That it's OK for the audience to watch
- That the rules of gravity apply
- That we watch the material from this perspective
- That there isn't any furniture / is furniture
- That the duet you made should be a duet
- That the unison you made should be in unison
- That the text is meant to be spoken out loud on stage
- That the context of the scene is what we've currently landed on
- That the amount of space we are using is the amount of space that it takes up



## IF YOU ARE STUCK

**A few common elements to a performance that can be challenged and adjusted might be:**

- Focus
- Pace
- Scale
- Perspective
- People in the performance space
- Quality of movement - resistance
- Context
- Subtext
- Actions
- Intentions



**Presumptions** can also be applied to the first look at a stimulus. Try challenging your students to note down all the presumptions they are making about any given stimulus.

## **Practical ways to start interrogating the material you have generated in a meaningful way**

Training ourselves to be present - to truly watch and listen is something hugely valuable when devising new work. When watching work it might be useful to ask: How are you looking at the material? What is your agenda? Do you need to be liberated from the agenda for a moment? Are you applying a lens to what you are watching e.g. knowing you are making Romeo and Juliet so focusing on how the material might feed into this?

*It's not that having an agenda is always unhelpful, it's just that it's important to be aware of when it's happening.*

Know when to make more specific attempts at ideas that feel fruitful. This is starting to articulate and hone ideas that could be put into a final piece. We use a video camera a great deal in the rehearsal room. Encourage your students to video each attempt and label them with what observers saw or found in that work. The great thing about Building Blocks is you can do this, bank the good ideas for keeping, and then come back a few layers and try something new.

## A-TEXT/B-TEXT AND THE BUILDING BLOCKS



### How we aim to give notes to our actors.

After watching work and using The Presumptions to interrogate it, it's important to then process your observations, and use them to effectively note others to try the next idea. This can be done with Building Blocks and the use of 'A-Text and B-Text'.

- What are you saying and what you are trying to achieve as a director? We refer to this as 'A Text and B text'.
- What you divulge to the students or actors and when?

This might be as simple as asking your students to move slower (**A Text**), you may have some idea of what effect this could result in (**B Text**), but **by not telling your students your B Text**, the instruction or building block you have given them is accessible on a practical level and avoids a clichéd interpretation of an idea. Instead, it allows the performer to be in the moment with the Building Block rather than acting out their idea of 'what they think you want to see'.

### Withholding your B Text liberates your performers and yourself

Liberating performers from the need to communicate a particular emotion or feeling, for instance, allows for the possibility of a more authentic moment that explores movement and action simultaneously rather than seeming like two separate entities. It also liberates you as the director because you might be surprised by what your A-Text instruction results in.

### What you could try in your Drama Studio

Try a lesson in withholding your B text and instead give a simple building block of actionable instructions. Ask your students to be critical observers and state what they see each time a new instruction is given.

How about passing the baton on to the students so they become equipped to do the same when working in their devising groups?



## COMBINING MATERIAL TO START BUILDING STORY

**Some approaches to playing with material and integrating text, music, movement and design.**

When it comes to **text and movement**, we try not to think of them as separate. Instead, in each moment, we explore which performance language best tells and progresses the story. It is important to play when exploring the combination of text and movement. But we need to learn something from that play.

### **How to explore this with your students**

Here is a basic way of starting to explore and experiment with combining text and movement. You could turn these working-points into a small pack of cards, ask your students to pick a card and demonstrate that example. See it in action and then try another one. Which one best tells the story in this moment and does it help to move that story forward?

It only  
needs  
text

It only  
needs  
action

Speak  
then  
move

Move  
then  
speak

You  
speak,  
others  
move

You  
move,  
others  
speak

Move and  
speak at  
the same  
time

Recorded  
live  
speech or  
movement

Text is used  
but not heard  
by audience  
or characters,  
play with it

Movement is used  
but not seen  
entirely. Is the  
character  
thinking about  
it? Wanting to  
move? Or not  
wanting to?

You could add to these cards to include **music and design** too. For Instance:

- Movement with music
- Speech with an underscore
- Music, no movement
- Music louder than speech
- Add a prop to the text. Is the person saying the text also holding the prop? Is there a spot lighting the prop? Play with the possibilities.
- Add a prop to movement
- Only the set is visible (no characters on stage) - hear the text spoken/recorded



# COMBINING TEXT AND MOVEMENT

## Possible Building Blocks for When You Think You Have a Scene that is Movement Based

- Start with the choreography
- Think of this as an experiment
- Run something you find valuable and then start to add layers to it and observe - use all the skills above
- Add text and see what it does to it (adds context / questions relationship to the movement)
- Respond to what we see - and hone it towards a scene through the lens of your stimulus



Play with it and observe what emerges

## Possible Building Blocks for When You Think You Have a Scene that is Text Based

- How can movement inform and change it (before, during, after, whether we see the speaker or don't see them).
- Movement can deepen subtext, shift the metaphor and reframe our perspective
- Think 'visual storytelling' - not movement.
- If you are seeing the physical story and hearing words that essentially tell the same story you probably don't need both - which one tells the story best?

### Ask:

- What is the subtext? How can you make this 'louder'?
- What is the context? How can you make this 'louder'?
- Is the scene still text based? It might be that this has become a visual part of performance, but has been fully informed by the text.

**BE PREPARED TO LOSE SOME BEAUTIFUL MOVEMENT OR TEXT FOR THE SAKE OF TELLING THE STORY IN THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE.**

Be inspired by the current parameters of social distancing: how we keep our distance from one another to inspire ideas around need, connection, and dramatic tension between characters.

**We hope this resource has been helpful in unpicking how we approach devising new work.**

Our aim is that by sharing some of the practical tools that we use in the rehearsal room, this will help you to unpick the potential in material created and support you through combining text and movement, while working within a socially distanced framework.