

## *Drama Starters for the Terrified!*

INSET SESSION Stowe School Monday January 4<sup>th</sup> 2016

Session leaders: Lucy Brassell and Nick Bayley

Dear Colleagues,

Here are some of the exercises we explored on Monday. Give them a go and feel free to adapt/ amend and alter as you see fit for the subject/ exercise you want to explore. As mentioned these are tried and tested and do work, but like any game you need to work hard on developing a structure with clear rules that the 'players' can understand and work with.  
Have fun!

### **Icebreakers**

*Good for getting a new group comfortable working with one another practically.*

- Arrange selves (non verbally) according to height, hair colour and (verbally) birthdays.  
*To adapt this for other subjects, you could give each student a card and ask them to arrange themselves to represent a formula or the chronology of particular events.*
- **Keeping the floor alive.** Ask participants to walk the space, making sure there is an even distribution of bodies (as if the floor were a boat or a seesaw). This can be an effective starting point for:
  - o Getting students into groups – call out a number
  - o Asking them to consider the physicality of characters e.g. leading with part of the body or imagining a ball of particular texture and weight in a particular part of the body
  - o Exploring tension on a scale from 1-7
  - o Breaking the ice - ask them to shake hands then share a fact about themselves or pay the other person a compliment.
  - o Create a tableau or series of individual still images as a lead in to looking at a particular text or topic.
- **Trust circle** – Students stand in a circle. One student closes their eyes and folds their arms across their chest. A second stands behind them and holds on to them, making eye contact with a third student on the opposite side of the circle, before gently pushing the the first person in that direction. The first student keeps their eyes closed and arms folded and walks across the circle to be caught and turned around by the third student. Keep going until trust is established. Make the game non-verbal so that students are focused. Add a second person to cross the circle and then a third.  
*This is great for trust and breaking down barriers in a new group. Also group communication is vital.*

- **Concentration circle variations.**
- Version 1; Begin by looking at person on your right saying your own first name- once said encourage that person to turn to the person on their right and say their name, until all names have gone round the circle. Repeat the game but this time the player replaces the names with letters from the alphabet – now repeat by sending numbers from 1-however many in the grp around the room -now send names, letters and numbers at the same time. Success of the game is to immediately switch focus to listening as soon as you have spoken- vital skill for any actor.
- Version 2; number the players in the grp. Choose one person to start. The rule is that you say someone else's number not your own. This continues until there is a cannon of people saying someone else's number in succession. – Once everyone has the hang of it, pause the game. There should now be no hesitation before saying a number. Play again and be ruthless with the rules. Once someone is 'out' so is that number, so it's vital to remember the numbers that are out of the game!
- Version 3; leader stands in the circle. Pick one person and call out a random letter. They now have to think fast and give; a person's first name; an item that they might sell; where they sell it.....all beginning with the chosen letter you decide to use..... "Betty sells Balloons in Buckingham" all players should answer immediately- no pause/ hesitations or made up names, etc. If they succeed they stay standing and you continue with any letter....."Andy sells apples in Andover.....Amy sells Artefacts in Argentina".

## **Energisers**

*Good for helping to inject a little energy into the group when focus may be dwindling – more oxygen to the brain!*

## **Whole group**

- **'Zip, Zap Boing'.**  
Essentially you are passing a clap around the circle. To pass to the person next to you say 'zip' (with tons of energy!) as you clap in their direction. To pass across the circle, say 'zap' and lunge forward with hands together and arms outstretched. To reverse the order of the current, a player can say 'Boing' with both arms up in front of them palms outwards. Players are 'out' if they hesitate or say the wrong word/do the wrong move. Try to build up the pace.  
*Good for: energising, waking students up a bit, listening and responding.*
- **Red Rover.**  
Classic school playground game – all players start on one side with one volunteer in the centre, who can only hop on one leg. Players must run from one side to the other and whoever is caught joins the player in the centre,  
*Great for teamwork, energising a group, breaking the ice.*

- **Alien at Gatwick Airport**

Every player has a chair. One participant stands up and moves to the opposite end of the room. They are the alien. Their aim is to get to a free chair but they have their legs glued together down to the knee and the rest of the group must all swap chairs continually to keep the alien from finding a chair. When the alien sits down, the last person standing is the new alien. Once any player gets up off their chair, they cannot sit back down on it again.

*Great for group cohesion, energising, teamwork, warming up.*

- **`Heads Up/Heads Down`**

How to play; grp in a circle. Call out 'heads down!' - all look to floor - decide in your head who you are going to look at when you hear the call for 'heads up'. The idea is to pick someone in the group who you believe will not be looking at you. - call 'heads up'. If two people have chosen to look at each other they let out a blood-curdling scream and fall to the floor (or over desk) Play until there is a winner. Honesty is the name of the game!

*Promotes concentration, group awareness and focus.*

- **`10 seconds to make`**

How to play; allocate players in grps of 4/5 and inform them that they have ten seconds to make....whatever you think of. Toaster, piano, Eiffel tower, cooked breakfast. Ideal for grps to work in short action - packed creative bursts. You can add a competitive edge if you want. Inspect the final results and announce a winner. Add variations by suggesting more complex moving and sound enhanced creations!

*Good for: physical warming up, fun, group cohesion and creativity.*

- **`Machines`**

How to play; instruct the group to form an audience. Ask for a volunteer to enter the playing space and perform a repetitious movement with sound. Once created tell the group that this is the basis of the grp machine. Ask another volunteer to enter the playing space and become the second cog in the machine. Continue until all the group has joined in. More than likely the first couple of attempts will be a collection of individuals doing their own thing, rather than `working` together. The `ideal machine` should have parts that are interlinked, aware of other moving parts, sounds, levels, volume, etc. You can then begin to speed up the machine to full working levels, turn it off for the end of the day, etc, etc

*Visually demonstrates the importance of working as a cohesive company.*

- **`Film Trailers`**

*Good for: grp energy, vocal, phyz attack, imagination.*

How to play; divide grp into 4/5/6. What are the defining features of a film trailer? Dramatic section of scenes, exciting dialogue, o.t.t v/over. Bearing this in mind, instruct each group to create a film trailer for the latest big screen blockbuster. They can prepare their own titles or you

prepare for them. Give time to create a one minute trailer that contains the best/most dramatic moments from the film.

*\*\* this can be adapted for a novel that is being studied or a play or a series of historical events perhaps?*

- **`Stand/ Bend/ Sit/ Lie`**

*Fun, physical and excellent for considering the visual impact of the work produced.*

How to play; allocate grp into 4's. Prepare a scene where at any point in the action each actor should be either standing or bending over or sitting down or lying down. If one actor changes position then the others need to respond accordingly and alter/ swap positions in order to maintain the status quo.

- **`The Moral of the Story`**

*Excellent for clarity of focus/purpose.*

How to play; allocate grp into 4/5's. either prepare or ask them to think of a well known saying/ proverb.

\* All that glitters is not gold

\* Every cloud has a silver lining

\* Don't judge a book by it's cover

Instruct each grp to create a piece that is driven by their chosen proverb/saying. Give a set time limit. Watch and discuss.... what was the saying? How well was it communicated?

- **`The Gallery`**

*Team exercise that encourages players to work together and accept the ideas/direction of others.*

How to play; allocate grp into 4/5/6. Choose one person to be the Artist. Chosen Artist remains standing as the rest of grp sit. Explain that this is a gallery and in a minute or two or five (depending) you will be visiting the gallery to see the new exhibition of work for the 2016 Turner Prize. The Artist has to now mould his/her fellow grp members into the finished work of Art. You could give titles that you want to see- Into the light; Descent into Madness; Light and Dark` - give time to create, being careful about framing, depth of field, focus. `In role` you now visit the gallery and view each piece. Interview the Artist and delve for inspiration.

- **`Group Walk`**

*Excellent for encouraging focus and grp awareness.*

How to play; All players find a space and sit down. Absolutely no talking in this game. Explain to the grp that they are going to;

1. Stand up as one
2. Walk as one
3. Enter a light jog as one
4. Slow down as one
5. Stop as one
6. And finally .....sit as one.

\* They do not have to go back to the original places but this could be developed!

**Pair work** – *promotes focus, concentration, breaks down social barriers.*

- Counting 1,2,3 taking it in turns. Add more complexity e.g. replace 1 with a clap, 2 with a jump and 3 with a duck.
- One finger fencing. Try to touch the small of your opponent's back.
- Fishing line – reel your partner in by one body part.

## **Focus**

*After energizing it is always important to focus back in again...*

- **Circles of attention.**  
Sit or lie down. Ask the group to close their eyes and focus on the sounds outside the building. Then ask them to block those out and focus on the sounds inside the building, sounds in room, sounds in own body.  
*Great for helping a group calm down, block out any negative influences, focus on the self.*
- **Counting from 1-20 as a group.**  
Only one player may speak at a time. If two players say a number at the same time, the whole group must start from one again.  
*Great for establishing group identity, focus, calming effect.*
- **One minute focus**  
How to play; find space; lie down, close eyes. Explain you are going to start a stopwatch and let it run for one minute. The players must try to count out the sixty seconds in their head. When they think that the time is up they should raise their hand.  
*Great for bringing order/focus back.*