



The Play What I Wrote Resource Pack
by Birmingham Rep's Creative Learning
Team

the
Rep

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An introduction to the pack

Welcome to *The Play What I Wrote* resource pack. Celebrating the twenty- year success of the production, our Artistic Director Sean Foley is bringing his masterpiece onto The Rep's House stage. Whether you are an English or Drama teacher searching for a dynamic teaching resource as part of your curriculum, a student studying the play, someone considering a career in theatre, or a theatre enthusiast interested in doing further research before or after watching the play, this pack will help you gain a better understanding of the production process, the cast and creatives involved, and explore the themes and issues explored throughout the play.

Debuting in Liverpool Playhouse Theatre in the summer of 2001, the production received rave reviews and was soon premiered in the West End at the Wyndham's Theatre in November 2001, directed by Kenneth Brannagh. It's prolonged success lead to it opening on Broadway in 2003. The production has received a Tony Award nomination for Special Theatrical Event and a Laurence Olivier award for Toby Jones for Best Supporting Actor and a Best Actor nomination for Foley and McColl.

Inspired by Morecambe and Wise and their catch phrase 'A Tight Squeeze for the Scarlet Pimple', Braben, Foley and McColl have created a 'play within a play', celebrating comedic dues of the past. Full of fast –paced jokes and slapstick humour, *The Play What I Wrote* celebrates the inanity and ridiculousness and will bring a smile to any audience member's face. Like their predecessors' show, each performance welcomes a different celebrity to the stage for each performance. Previous guest stars have included: Ralph Fiennes, Ewan McGregor, Joanna Lumley, Daniel Radcliffe, Kylie Minogue, Nigel Havers, Jerry Hall, Sir Ian McKellen, Dawn French and Sting. No two shows will be the same but laughs are guaranteed.

A history of comedy, comedy duos and Morecambe and Wise

Comedy is a genre that dates back to Ancient Greece and was often seen when two groups, ages, genres or societies were pitted against each other, with one side being driven to perform ridiculous tasks that would make the audience laugh. Aristotle taught that comedy was a positive thing for society as its stories brought forth happiness which was the ultimate goal in any activity.

As comedies evolved in Elizabethan times, they usually meant happy endings and light heartened stories, which differs substantially to the modern comedies we have come to know today. However, it was also around this time that Commedia dell'arte started to develop in Italy and become popular across Europe. Characters within these productions usually were stereotypical characters who improvised a performance based on certain scenarios. The story itself became secondary to the characters and how they were portrayed; as the stories were largely improvised it was easy for the actors to adapt their performances to local scandals, gossip and events whilst still maintaining the basic frame of a story to include old jokes and punchlines. Similarly to comedies of that era, the acts usually ended in unwed characters becoming married and there were happy endings for most of the characters.

Notably, Punch and Judy was something that developed directly from the character Pulcinella from Commedia dell'arte. His archaic nature on stage was thrilling for audiences to watch. His character was then turned into a hand puppet and the outrageous violence he displays to his wife Judy and other characters was diluted and became humorous. A slapstick (two thin slats of wood) was used to recreate the sound of someone being hit, hence the term 'slapstick comedy'.

Leading into the 19th Century, pantomime and clowning became more prevalent. Joseph Grimaldi became the first mainstream clown and comedy routines were a common feature in music hall theatre, which resembles modern day variety performances. From the music hall scene, British comedians such as Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel surfaced, developing comedy sketches that focused on slapstick comedy, used music and didn't require dialogue. It was also where the double act was born.

The double act relies on the format of a 'straight' and a 'funny' man. Though the 'straight' man is not without humour, they are more likely to be portrayed as reasonable and serious in contrast to the other's stupidity and silliness. The humour arises from the way the two personalities play off against one another, rather than as individuals.

Comedy duos first rose to popularity in the days of music hall theatre, though the 'straight' man was used more to repeat the jokes of the comic as the halls were so noisy, jokes were often misheard. This later evolved into the straight man setting up the jokes for the comic's punchline instead. Double Act slapstick comedy transitioned well into the silent film era, initially for Danish duo Ole and Axel, and then later in the 1920's, Laurel and Hardy.

Double Acts in the UK were largely restricted to theatres and radio until the 1950's. It was around this time when Morecambe and Wise came to prominence and transitioned to the TV on shows such as 'Sunday Night at the London Palladium'. Once teamed up with Eddie Braben, the pair redefined the meaning of a double act, the straight man becoming a comic role in his own right and the glory days of the Eric and Ernie truly began.

Their friendship began in 1940 when they performed individually at Nottingham Empire Theatre. They became a double act after Eric's mother made a suggestion. After being separated due to war service they were reunited in 1946 and toured the variety circuit around Britain.

Their first TV performance 'Running Wild' was not well received but they went on to have success with other TV performances. It was in 1968, when they moved to the BBC and started working with writer Eddie Braben that their fame truly skyrocketed. 'The Morecambe and Wise Show' was placed 14th in a list of 100 Greatest British Television Programmes, drawn up by the British Film Institute in 2000. The show was well known for their character bits, catchphrases and visual gags, songs, dances but perhaps most notable for their mistreatment of celebrity guests. Their names would either be pronounced incorrectly or they wouldn't recognise them at all.

The duo spanned over forty years, only stopping when Eric's health meant they couldn't continue, and sadly passing away soon after. For recognition of the pair's work, they were awarded with OBEs in 1976 and posthumously honoured with BAFTA fellowship in 1999.

Synopsis of *The Play What I Wrote*

The Play What I Wrote is a tribute to Eric Morecambe and Ernie Wise who, for many, were the greatest-ever British comedy double act. However, rather than actors playing Morecambe and Wise it instead draws on their comic style through the two main characters who are themselves comics. Thom (the straight one) and Dennis (the funny one) had a tribute act to Morecambe and Wise but they haven't performed together in two years. Thom now wants to be taken seriously as a playwright by putting on a play that he has written, an epic set in the French Revolution, called *A Tight Squeeze for the Scarlet Pimple*. Dennis on the other hand, wants them to continue with their double act. Thom doesn't think that people find him funny, and Dennis believes that if they perform their tribute to Morecambe and Wise, Thom's confidence will be restored, and the double act will go on. However, Thom is adamant he wants no part in it.

Cunningly, Dennis persuades Arthur, a local electrician from down the pub, to pretend to be David Pugh, (on the understanding that once the ploy had successfully been executed, Arthur would be able to achieve his life-long dream of playing his harmonica to an audience), and to be so impressed with Thom's *A Tight Squeeze for the Scarlet Pimple* that he wants to stage it. Dennis believes that when it comes to the day of the performance and people are crying out for a Morecambe and Wise tribute act Thom will have no choice but to return to his rightful place in their double act show.

The lie is a success and lures Thom to the theatre, who is eagerly awaiting the premier of his masterpiece, but Dennis needs to persuade a guest star to appear in it. As Thom struggles to rehearse for his big opening night by himself, Dennis interrupts with gags, one-liners and general chaos takes over – just like the real thing, back in the heyday of Eric and Ernie. When the Guest Star arrives (a surprise real life star for each performance) the Thom's wish of play being performed looks like it is going to come true. However, it is not long before that too descends into chaos as Dennis continues to try to get as many laughs as possible. Eventually the Guest Star is accidentally executed, and the play can no longer continue. In the end, Dennis admits that he tricked Thom as he wanted the act to get back together, the two make up and they climb into bed together (just like Eric and Ernie famously did) with Thom saying he will start writing another play in the morning. This is followed by a classic Morecambe and Wise song and dance routine.

In their long-running Morecambe and Wise show in the 70s, the comedy duo would perform a sketch written by Wise, inspiring one of their catchphrases and play's title 'A Play What I Wrote'. The script is peppered the original material and some recognisable lines from Morecambe and Wise's own routines and pays homage to comedy double-acts in general.

Cast, Creative and Production Team



Dennis Hardman as Dennis



Thom Tuck as Thom



Mitesh Suni as Arthur

Creatives

Sean Foley- Director
Alice Power- Designer
Tim Mitchell – Lighting Designer
Clive Meldrum- Sound Designer
Ian West- Choreographer
Steve Parry- Musical Director
Alli Coyne- Associate Director
Alice Chambers- Assistant Director
Paul Hennessy- Production Manager
Marc Frankum- Casting Director

Stage Management

Chris Rooney- Company Stage Manager
Tanith Mackenzie- Deputy Stage Manager
Myer Daniels- Assistant Stage Manager
Imogen Hassam- Stage Manager Apprentice

TPWIW Set Designs

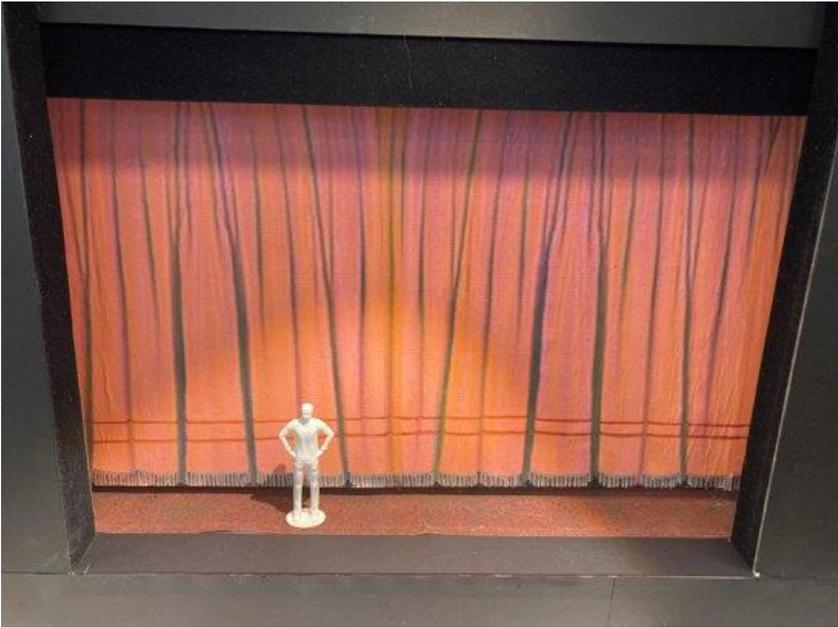
Below are a sample of designs for the set of the show. The designers have used a model box to create a to-scale version of The Rep's stage.



Act 1 scene 1. House tabs fly out to reveal empty stage with fake back wall of theatre. Hamper set on stage. Hamper pulled off in to wing by string at the end of scene.



Act 1 scene 2. Theatre wall flies out. Living room truck glides downstage through haze/smoke. Stage management stay behind truck to operate moving pictures.



Act 1 scene 4. Gold tabs kabuki in behind the actors.



Act 1 scene 5a. Moon light back drop, wall with crash mat behind. Topiary swan. The Chaise gets dragged on from SR wing.



Act 2 Scene 5b. Three dancing skeletons fly upstage of the Arch for the song. Guillotine wheeled on from SR wing.



Act 2 scene 7. Truck re-dressed as bedroom. SR door wall replaced with a window. Practical bedside lights.

Photos from the set (including some of our special guests)





An interview with Sean Foley

Sean Foley is not only the Artistic Director of The Rep, but in fact one of the writers and original stars of the play.

Born in our very own Birmingham, Sean found success starting his own comedy duo with Hamish McColl in 1988 called *The Right Size* using physical comedy, mime, slapstick and clowning with a variety of collaborators to become a successful comedic actor.



He made his directorial debut with *Pinter's People* in 2007 and went on to have West End success with plays such as *The Ladykillers* and Joe Orton's *What the Butler Saw*.

He was announced as Artistic Director of The Rep in 2019, but the pandemic has delayed his opening season to autumn of this year.

Here he talks in an interview about his revival of *Play What I Wrote* and how he feels being in the Director's chair this time around.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CslQHovq5WxQlh9Sob7nXm0fb1l2_Ah0/view?usp=sharing

Directorial Approaches - The Collaborative Approach

A director has many tools at their disposal. However, the most valuable ones have to be the people they have in their rehearsal room: their designer, their stage manager and, vitally, their cast. Here, I'll lay out a few ways focusing on how a collaborative approach to directing can result in a rich and extremely fruitful rehearsal process.

The first thing a director needs to establish is trust. A company must feel safe and comfortable with each other in order to open up and share. The best way this can be achieved is through plenty of games and improvisation exercises. These are fun, lighthearted ways in to building trust. Try games like Party Quirks or Hitchhiker as they're silly and encourage people to think creatively. It might take some company members a while to get into these games but they almost always result in the whole company laughing together and that is extremely valuable.

Another exercise you can try is moving together. Pair your company off and ask them to stare into each other's eyes. There may be some initial giggles but once they've calmed down, ask them to focus on their partner's breathing. Start to synchronise your breath. Once this has been achieved, synchronise your movements. Make it clear that there should be no leader in this exercise. The aim is to synchronise and lead and be led by each other. Start small and then get bigger and bigger. Begin to take it for a walk around the space. Play some gentle music and ask each pair to experiment with all the different ways they can move together. This exercise can be used early in your process or later on as a way to reassert trust.

Try to engage as many of your company as early as you can in rehearsals. Not just the actors but the lighting designer, the costumer and the stage manager. Each person in your company will have a specific angle they are looking at the performance from and you'd be surprised how often a problem on stage can be solved by asking one of the "backstage" team. For example, if an actor is struggling to get into character then it may be a costume choice can help solve it. Similarly, if you're having trouble establishing mood then ask the lighting designer what they think as they may have an inspired idea to resolve the issue you're having.

Of course, we can't talk about collaboration without talking about the cast. The actors in your show are one of the easiest resources a director can access and their understanding of the piece will be just as deep as the director's. Indeed, when it comes to individual character choices or motivations, the actor playing the role may have ideas that have not even occurred to the director. Be sure to mine this wealth of ideas as regularly as you can in rehearsals. Check in often with the cast and ask them how they think it's going and if they have anything they'd like to share. This goes back to building trust which I talked about at the start. The more trust you have with your cast, the more they will open up and share their ideas.

Collaboration is at the heart of all theatre. Even a one-person show has a whole team working behind the scenes. In my opinion, gone are the days where the director's say is

sacrosanct. The best directors nowadays recognise the power of the team and having lots of ideas and voices in the rehearsal room ultimately leads to a far better end production.

Directorial Approach – Using stimulus as a directing device

The play relies heavily on the comedy style of Morecambe and Wise and the students may not have seen any of their comedy sketches. Therefore, a great way to approach directing the play is by familiarising the students with Morecambe and Wise's comedy first.

Exercise 1 – Introduction to Morecambe and Wise

Show the students the following clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFgdhZGLJrY> From 35.22 – 42.15

Discuss the following:

- What did they find funny?
- What makes that funny?
- Does it remind them of any comedy that they have seen and why?

Exercise 2 – Identifying the comedy conventions Morecambe and Wise use

Go through the glossary of comedy conventions with the students.

Then show them the following clip asking them to see if they can spot any of the comedy conventions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjubnFoLlfs>

Exercise 3 – Double Act- straight man and funny man

Now the students are more familiar with the comedic style it's a great chance to get them up on their feet trying some of it out! The way a comedy duo play off each other is a simple way to start.

In pairs student A mimes out a daily routine very seriously whilst student B exaggerates it behind their back. Whenever A turns around, B must stop and look like they are doing something else.

Ask a couple of them to demonstrate what they did.

What made it funny and why?

Hopefully they will see that some of the humour comes from:

- The audience being in on a joke with B that A is not in on
- The contrast of A being very serious and B being very silly
- The physicality of B being silly

Reflection

What elements of the Double Act do Morecambe and Wise use to create comedy?

How does that link to the exercise they have just done?

Workshops

The following are workshops from different practitioners so layouts and directions might vary slightly. We encourage you to pick and choose activities to suit your actors and tailor them to meet your specific needs.

Clowning Workshop

Below are some activities that you can use when introducing clowning to a class of students. All the exercises are designed to encourage a sense of play, lightness and, above all, the idea that it is ok to get it wrong and “fail”. Failure is intrinsic to clowning and any budding clown needs to learn that sometimes the funniest, most beautiful, moments happen on stage when everything around you is going wrong.

Warm Up: “Samuel Says”

Main Benefits: Encourage a sense of play. Encourage the idea that it’s ok to be wrong.

Estimated Length: 5-10mins

Ask the students to move around the space and listen to your instructions. When you instruct them “Samuel says...” they must do as you say e.g. “Samuel says move around the space like you are a bumper car” ... “Samuel Says ride a horse around the space”.

If you instruct the group something without saying “Samuel says...” beforehand then those who carry out the instruction must be “punished”. Punishment involves some kind of silly forfeit such as a stupid dance or asking the rest of the group for “forgiveness”.

The “Bomb” Game

Main Benefits: Think about how you enter a space.

Estimated Length: 10mins

Each student is asked to enter the playing space as if a bomb were about to off in the previous room. **THIS DOES NOT MEAN THEY ACT STUPID.** Think about how you would burst into a room if you knew leaving the last room were your only chance of survival. Students will often find this hard to grasp at first but remind them that the intention of this exercise is to think about how we walk onto stage...as if our lives depended on it!

Enter / Exit

Main Benefits: Finding ways that *you* are funny. Think about how you walk onto stage / how you exit and what you do in between.

Estimated Length: 10mins

Students are asked to simply enter onto the stage in front of an audience. The aim of the game is to make the audience laugh. As long as you are getting laughs the you are prohibited to stay on the stage but the moment the laughter stops, you must exit.

Laughter is the life-blood of the clown and as long as they receive it then they must carry on doing what they are doing. The minute the laughter stops they must leave and someone else enters the stage.

The “Shoe” Game

Main Benefits: Encourage eye contact with the audience. Focus on the performance.

Estimated Length: 10-15mins

Ask for volunteers to step onto the stage and unlace one of their shoes. They exit the stage leaving their shoe and the lace.

Part 1

The student enters the stage and is instructed to simply relace the shoe and then exit the stage.

Part 2

The student (or a different student) is asked to enter the stage and relace the shoe but every time they complete an action (e.g. thread a lace through an eye etc.), make eye contact with an audience member and smile.

Part 3

The student (or, indeed, a different student) is asked to enter the stage and relace the shoe, making eye contact with an audience member whilst telling a simple story e.g. their journey to the rehearsal or a well-known fairy-tale.

The purpose of the activity is to encourage the performer to bring the audience into their activity. It not only encourages eye-contact but shows how even the most mundane of activities (relacing a shoe) can become interesting with eye contact and commitment to the performance.

Foreign Language Lip-Sync

Main Benefits: Don't think too much. Experience the performance *right now*. Experience “getting it wrong”.

Estimated Length: 20mins

Students line up and are told they are going to lip-synch to a song. Even if they don't know the words they are told to perform this song as if they are standing on the Royal Albert Hall stage. This is their “X Factor” moment and they simply must perform.

Play a song in a foreign language that the student doesn't speak (French, Spanish, Chinese etc.) and ask the student to lip-synch along (think *RuPaul Drag Race*). This can be quite hard for the students to grasp but they must perform to the song regardless of whether they know the lyrics or not.

The essence of the clown is carrying on, even when everything is going wrong. Just because you don't know the words doesn't mean the audience has to know. Do your best and make the best of a bad situation...in that moment, true comedy lies.

Workshop using an extract from the Text

The Play What I Wrote draws on the way Morecambe and Wise would regularly have a Guest Star and the comedy that they would create based on this.

Each night there is a different Guest Star in the play and the script allows for jokes appropriate for each guest star to be included. Therefore, exploring how the script can be tailored to create specific humour for each guest is a useful and fun approach to directing an extract of the play with them.

Exercise 1 – An example

Firstly, show the students this video of Morecambe and Wise and Judi Dench.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFgdhZGLJrY> (section 35.22 – 42.15)

Ask the students to identify any comedy elements that Morecambe and Wise use to play off Judi Dench – they could refer to the Glossary of Comedy terms.

Exercise 2 – The chosen extract

Introduce the context of the extract:

Arthur is pretending to be a famous Guest Star as Dennis is trying to trick Thom into believing that the real Guest Star is there.

Read through the extract and discuss it.

What types of humour from the Glossary of Comedy Terms could be used to create comedy specific to a Guest Star? Ask them to think back to the scene with Judi Dench.

Exercise 3 – Staging the scene

In groups of 4 ask students to choose a famous person they all know that could be the Guest Star.

Where it says 'lines appropriate for Guest Star' ask students to create some suggestions referring back to the Glossary of Comedy.

Then ask them to get it up on its feet paying particular attention to the stage directions and considering how these contribute to the comedy.

How else could they consider the placing of the actors on stage and their interactions to increase the comedy effect?

Exercise 4 – Sharing and feedback

Share some of these and ask the students to give each other feedback on what worked and why as well as what could have improved their interpretation.

Extract from The Play What I Wrote p56- 57

ARTHUR enters stage left dressed in a terrible approximation of GUEST STAR.

DENNIS : [LINE TYPICAL TO GUEST STAR]

THOM: Who the hell is that?

ARTHUR : [LINE TYPICAL TO GUEST STAR]

THOM : That is not GUEST STAR!

DENNIS: It is! You are GUEST STAR aren't you, Arthur?

ARTHUR : [LINE TYPICAL TO GUEST STAR]

THOM : You tricked me! I should have known! Why did I ever believe that I would get to meet the real GUEST STAR?

From stage right, the real GUEST STAR walks onstage. He wears a long blue dressing gown and a yellow cravate. Huge applause from the audience.

DENNIS: Ben, don't panic, but there is a drunk up on the stage. I shall handle this.

He goes over to the GUEST STAR and tries to nudge him off the stage.

DENNIS : Excuse me, madam. Only professionals allowed up here on stage, please. Back to your seat please, love.

GUEST STAR : I am [NAME OF GUEST STAR].

DENNIS : They all say that, son.

GUEST STAR: It's true.

DENNIS : Push off, or I'll smash your face in.

GUEST STAR : Let me past!

DENNIS: Hey, hey! You don't want to get on the wrong side of me. I had beans for breakfast.

GUEST STAR tries to get past JOE. They end up facing off.

GUEST STAR : I'm here to see Ben Keaton.

DENNIS: I must warn you, madam, I am a black belt in Nintendo.

THOM: Sir GUEST STAR! I'm delighted you could come.

He theatrically air kisses GUEST STAR who does not respond.

THOM: Lovely.

GUEST STAR: Thom, I read your play, and I'd like to do it. I've never done comedy before.

DENNIS : Neither have we, it's just a lucky night.

THOM: Dennis, my play is not a comedy, it's a tragedy.

DENNIS : It's a diabolical liberty! Ben, don't be fooled by this imposter! The real GUEST STAR is over here.

ARTHUR : [LINE APPROPRIATE TO GUEST STAR]

THOM : This is the real GUEST STAR. Don't you recognise him?

DENNIS : It can't be him!

THOM : Why not?

DENNIS : Well...

DENNIS/ARTHUR : Where's his [LINE APPROPRIATE TO GUEST STAR]

Glossary of Comedy Terms

Call-back

A call-back is when a comedy writer refers back to an earlier joke to get a second or even third laugh from the same joke.

Caricature

This is a character that uses a distorted or exaggerated version of a person's features or personality to create a comic effect.

Deadpan

A type of comic delivery with all the usual emotion taken out. Usually a deadpan comic will also keep their facial expressions to a minimum.

A double act (also known as a comedy duo)

Humor often results from the uneven relationship between two partners. One member of the duo—the "straight man" is often portrayed as reasonable and serious, while the other one—the "funny man" is portrayed as funny or silly. The term "feed" comes from the way a straight man sets up jokes and then "feeds" them to his partner. Most often the humor in a double act comes from the way the two personalities play off each other. In many successful acts the roles are interchangeable.

Escalation

The process of turning a small joke into a bigger and funnier story, usually with an exaggerated and over-the-top conclusion.

Farce

A fast-paced piece of set comedy that involves a lot of slapstick and usually contains people entering and exiting quickly or mistaking character identities.

Homophone

Words which may have the same pronunciation but different meanings, often used to make a pun or misdirect someone in a joke.

One-liner

A joke which is a single sentence but packs the punchline in straightaway: "Hedgehogs – why can't they just share with everyone else?"

Pace

The speed at which a scene or routine is run. Controlling the pace means controlling when the audience laughs.

Pun

A homophone that “sounds like” another to try and make a cheesy joke: ‘Making this omelette is really EGG-citing!’

Punchline

The end line or final joke in a funny story or sketch. Sometimes referred to as the ‘big laugh’.

Satire

A type of comedy that pokes fun at a serious issue or tries to undermine people in authority, like the government.

Simile

When a comparison is made for comic effect: “Your feet smell worse than a skunk’s underpants!”

Stereotype

An instantly recognisable ‘type’ of person which isn’t always based in reality. For example, a doctor is posh and wears a white coat; a school caretaker will be grumpy and jangle keys.

Suspension of disbelief

The idea that an audience will always believe in your story, despite it normally being unbelievable.

Wit

The idea that words can be played around with verbally to get a funnier meaning. Wit can use twisted logic, puns or double meanings to make things funny.

A Physical Theatre Workshop

One of the key elements to creating to comedic performances is often physical theatre. Creating a comfortable space where actors are at ease with one another means they do not feel as much pressure to be 'funny' and are more willing to experiment. This workshop could be used in the initial stages of a production process, aimed more so at KS3 upwards.

Activity 1: Get the beanbag

Split the group into two teams and give each person in the team a number, so there are two number 1s, two number 2s etc. Each team makes a line opposite ends of the room. An object such as a bean bag or a soft toy is placed in the middle of the room. You call out a number and those corresponding students have to come forward and get the beanbag back to their team. They cannot throw or kick the bean bag but they can pick the bean bag up, nudge it with their foot and they can run with it. If they get the bean bag back to their team they win a point. However, if the other person from the other team tags the person whilst they holding the bean bag the other team get the point.

Once the teams become comfortable you can start calling multiple numbers so you have two or three members of each team trying to get the bean bag back home.

This game ends up revealing the competitive streak in people as well as being a good team building exercise.

Activity 2: Mirroring and Shoaling

Have the students in pairs facing each other, labelled A and B. A acts as B's reflection and the pair can experiment with movement. "To Build a home" by The Cinematic Orchestra is a useful song to help with concentration and focus. Have the pair swap and let B imitate A. The aim is try to make it seem the pair are moving are it's impossible to tell who is copying who.

Ask the class to split into groups of four or five. Have one person lead and encourage movement around the space. As the group change direction, a new leader will start to decide the movement of the group. Try using a variety of different music to encourage different kinds of movements.

Activity 3: Pirate ship

A chair is placed at one end of the room. The group collects as many random objects as they can collect such as keys, paper etc and place them around the chair. One person sits in the chair and is the pirate. They are blindfolded and they use their arms as shot guns. They can 'shoot' in any direction that they hear a sound but they have to remember to reload their guns by bringing their arms back up to their chest. The groups aim is to silently collect all the buried treasure and bring it back to their ship. If they are 'shot' by the pirate they have to

return to the ship and start again, if they are holding anything they have to return it to the pirate. The game finishes when all the treasure has been collected.

This works well when played for a second time and you encourage the group to think of way for the team to work together to retrieve the treasure more quickly.

Activity 4: 10 second objects

A firm favourite for all ages. Ask students to create groups of five or six. Call out random objects such as a washing machine, a fruit bowl, a river, a clock tower, a motorbike, a vacuum cleaner, and give students 10 seconds to create those objects. This is a fast paced activity which encourages physicality without much opportunity to talk. You can then ask the students to add movement and sound to their objects.

Activity 5: Random Adverts

A lead on from 10 second objects. You have random objects written on slips of paper in one hat, and descriptions written on slips in another eg. Transporting, colour changing, talking, zip lining, shrinking. The groups select a slip of paper from each hat. Give them a few minutes to work together to create an advert to sell the object they have chosen eg. Flying toilet. Encourage the group to be as physical as they can but most importantly, they have fun and enjoy being silly. Show back the adverts to the rest of the group.

Activity 6: 7 levels of tension

Jaques Lecoq developed an approach to acting using the 7 levels of tension. Each person finds a space in the room and moves in accordance with the level of tension. Spend time in each state so the group becomes comfortable with them and become confident in exploring how to use them within a scene.

1. Exhausted or catatonic. **The Jellyfish. There is no tension in the body at all. Begin in a complete state of relaxation. If you have to move or speak, it is a real effort. See what happens when you try to speak.**
2. Laid back – the “Californian” (soap opera). **Many people live at this level of tension. Everything you say is cool, relaxed, probably lacking in credibility. The casual throw-away line – “I think I’ll go to bed now”.**
3. Neutral or the “Economic” (contemporary dance). **It is what it is. There is nothing more, nothing less. The right amount. No past or future. You are totally present and aware. It is the state of tension before something happens. Think of a cat sitting comfortably on a wall, ready to leap up if a bird comes near. You move with no story behind your movement.**

4. Alert or Curious (farce). **Look at things. Sit down. Stand up. Indecision. Think M. Hulot (Jacques Tati) or Mr Bean. Levels 1 – 4 are our everyday states.**
5. Suspense or the Reactive (19th century melodrama). **Is there a bomb in the room? The crisis is about to happen. All the tension is in the body, concentrated between the eyes. An inbreath. There's a delay to your reaction. The body reacts. John Cleese.**
6. Passionate (opera). **There is a bomb in the room. The tension has exploded out of the body. Anger, fear, hilarity, despair. It's difficult to control. You walk into a room and there is a lion sitting there. There is a snake in the shower.**
7. Tragic (end of King Lear when Lear is holding Cordelia in his arms). **The bomb is about to go off! Body can't move. Petrified. The body is solid tension.**

Activity 7: The clown scene

Ask the group to get into pairs. Ask them to think of a typical clown scene they may have seen in real life, on tv or film. Then ask them to make their own short clown scenes, using the 7 levels of tension for inspiration. The Clowns should have different levels of tension to one another to help development the comedic element for their scene.

Show back after a few minutes if the members are feeling confident.