



# FRANTIC ASSEMBLY

ONLINE TEACHERS'  
CPD COURSE

FILM 1



# CONTENTS

**This Resource Will Cover**

- 1. Warming up safely and building the physical skills needed to collaboratively devise, at a distance
- 2. Safely distanced creative tasks employing the Frantic Method
- 3. Ways of selecting and exploring theatrical potential in material generated

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## WHY WARM UP?

- Building teamwork, at a distance
- Pushing physicality as much as possible, whilst being safely distanced
- Getting in to the body - mobilised, centred, physically and mentally 'switched on'
- Disarming a company - aids the creation of a rehearsal environment where actors are at ease



## IF YOUR STUDENTS ARE SHARING A SPACE TOGETHER

Lead a Tabatta warm up (20 seconds of activity followed by 10 seconds rest). Vary activities so that you work different parts of the body. We tend to have something for each of these areas:

- Cardio moves (to raise the pulse)
- Arm strength
- Leg strength
- Core

## WHY NOT LET US HELP YOU?

If you would rather not lead the warm-up yourself remember we have lots of warm-ups available online. Pop us on the screen, and you can focus on managing the class while they get warm! We have a number of good social distancing warm-ups that don't travel too much available online:

- [Beautiful Burnout](#)
- [Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time](#)
- [Students Week](#)
- [Believers](#)

Follow us on [Spotify](#) for warm-up playlists that include Tabatta tracks



## DON'T WANT TO GET HOT & SWEATY?

If you don't have good ventilation or you have health & safety concerns, or maybe you feel a high energy warm up is not conducive, you have a couple of options:

Do a slower and more controlled warm-up that focuses on:

- Precision of movement
- Focus and control
- Linking movement to breath

This warm up is excellent for building awareness and sensitivity to others. You can teach this short warm-up in the video to your students, so they can use it in their devising groups. Or look at our slow and stretchy *Lovesong* warm up [video](#) - you can play it on the interactive whiteboard/screen if you have one.

Another option is to take inspiration from this and create your own sequence that focuses on the above bullet points and works for your students.

## IF YOUR STUDENTS ARE ALL WORKING FROM HOME

Checklist for leading warm-ups online:

- Students have cleared a small but workable space
- Students have water handy, and so do you!
- You are able to share the sound from your computer so you can play music and they can hear it. Useful tip: you should be able to do this without screen sharing
- Remind students that they might need to angle the camera so it captures them whether they are on the floor or standing up





## LEAD & LISTEN

This exercise develops the skills needed in an ensemble, develops physical and spatial awareness, awareness of tension, relationships and energy between performers/characters on stage.

## BUILDING BLOCKS WE HAVE FOUND HELPFUL

In pairs, working on parallel lines of travel. Facing each other, 'A' leads 'B' and 'B' physically listens and responds, they are focusing on a fixed point on 'A' (e.g. just between the collar bones). 'B's challenge is to keep exactly the 2m distance at all times. Students can go off their parallel line but must remember to allow a safe working distance from other pairs.



- 'A' can now turn so their side is now facing 'B' (180° turn). For social distancing, 'B' doesn't orbit around 'A', instead both continue on their parallel line, with 'B' now mirroring 'A'.
- 'A' now uses a hand to 'paint' with. 'B' responds to that hand with a specific part of their body.
- Swapover, so 'B' leads and 'A' is now the listener.

### **The next Building Block plays with communication and swinging between being leader and listener:**

- 'A' may now turn their back on 'B' (180° turn). 'B' responds by copying 'A's movements from behind. If 'A' then turns back around to face 'B', 'B' can choose whether they stay facing 'A' or turn around. Either way, 'B' assumes the leader role because they have made the decision to turn or not to turn.

NB: If your back is turned you have to be the leader! No pair should have both backs turned towards each other at any point!

Teachers BEWARE: when arm movements become very large and start to float up, add another building block, such as:

- Ask students to consider quality of movement. Can they try everyday, mundane gestures? Do we now see character/narrative emerging?

## TEACHING POINTS

- Experience the focus it takes you into. Can you keep aware of others whilst following a partner?
- Reference the quality of attention needed and its value for acting in scenes and relationships on stage.
- Don't let other people pass through the space between you and your partner.
- Talk about the economy of movement and being centred and quiet as you move.
- If you wanted to work with this skill over a longer period of time (hugely beneficial to groups), you can visit some of these next layers to the exercise.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- If you have a large space, what happens if you dismantle the parallel tracks and give the listener the choice to orbit the leader when they turn, OR to stay on the parallel?
- What happens if you increase the distance between the partners and make the leader's instructions or the listener's responses smaller? How does the distance and small movement change it?
- Try 1 person leading the rest of the group.
- Developing shoals or duet material: try it moving sensitively as a group, make it smaller by using ordinary gestures.

Play with the rules: unison, leading, mirroring, copying.

# CREATIVE TASKS: WHAT THEY ARE & HOW TO USE THEM

## TASKS- WHAT ARE THEY?

A task should always be an open question. It shouldn't just prove your theory 'Yes' or 'No'. It should surprise you. It's a simple open idea that puts questions in the room, encouraging us to creatively explore.

## HOW TO CHOOSE A TASK

A task is about engaging your performers creatively. It should have simple and clear instructions that allows your performers to make work that you can then observe, adjust and shape. Think of it as something that might get you close to where you think you need to get to but not directly to it. That then allows the results of the task to surprise you. If it only confirms your thoughts then you have not really moved on much.



## BUILDING BLOCKS RATHER THAN A LADDER

The task and the building blocks that are created around that seedling of an idea help you to explore how it might grow into something that you may never have considered. A ladder will take you straight 'there' - to where you had imagined the stage image to be. Building blocks will help you explore different directions and find unexpected moments you might never have imagined. Building blocks also allow you to adapt and change, to be responsive to what is actually happening.

**Watch and listen!**

## TOP TIPS FOR LEADING A CREATIVE TASK

- We know that time is short, but try to avoid 'end-gaming' It may feel like you are saving time, but in fact you will have a hard time justifying the movement you've created. Often, it will appear an addition to the text rather than an integral part of the devising process.
- Ask yourself and your students: do you have an image in your head of what it looks like, or are you genuinely responding to the task and the instructions?
- Ladder vs Building Blocks: a ladder is a direct line to the end-goal. Building blocks can get to an end point in many different ways and could have multiple end points.
- The building blocks we use in our tasks are loosely planned out before we execute the task, but it's also about watching and responding to what is happening in the room and being open to surprises.
- Set a basic plan for generating, adding complexity and developing the material based on a loose idea or direction that you are aiming towards.
- Let the nuances and metaphors emerge from observation - don't go in with them at the start of generating.
- Watch the results at each stage and adapt the next steps based on what you observe.



## CHOOSING CREATIVE TASKS

Examples of how we might choose our tasks when planning for rehearsals and productions:

- You might be inspired by specific observations from research. For instance, movement from observed behaviours - e.g. 'Head Smacks' in *Beautiful Burnout* came from watching how boxers moved. Their footwork and legs were closely observed during the research and development phase of the production.
- It might be based on a gut feeling, that something feels like it might offer interesting aesthetics to support the show. E.g. 'Big Coats' for *Fatherland*.
- Categories: solo/gestures/ways of getting a group to move together.  
**REMEMBER**, what is a duet could also end up being a group piece or separate pieces of work - don't try to solve the staging when initiating a task.
- A task you choose or create has potential to allow you to later explore. It's not a final product.



## SWIPE DUETS

Something we have been doing increasingly more during lockdown is 'swiping' on our devices. We wondered whether there was any potential to using this idea as a physical task. No 'end-gaming', just about swiping - and ironically, the act of touch.

## RECAP: HOW TO RUN THIS TASK

### Building Blocks

- Create a solo of 7-9 moves focused on 'swiping' with the hands, on an invisible screen. This could also be swipes in a cube in front of you (from your hip to your head) to help the gestures become more 3-dimensional than on a flat screen.
- In partners, 1 of you leads with your swipe gestures and the other responds to them from the chest. Challenge the responder to be really accurate with their responses.

### Teaching Points

- Focus on the detail of the instruction
- Repeat until you have learnt it
- Be specific about exactly which body part is responding to the 'swipes', e.g. which part of the shoulder
- Ensure each move can flow into the next
- If you feel that your students are 'dancing' their responses, give them a prop to engage with while they do it, e.g. a book, a phone, a bottle of water.

## What material have we got to play with?

- 'Swipe' gestural choreography. This should be shared and learned by a group making a longer sequence for unison gestural choreography.
- Response Choreography, which uses the whole body

## What's Next?

Observe what has been made and look for 'happy accidents' when you watch different choreographies together in the space. Happy accidents are when the separate strings of material seem to connect or comment on each other. It is initially random but if it works, you claim it!



## WORKSHOPPING MATERIAL TO FIND MEANING

This is a form of editing the idea. Critically observing what has been created and finding some meaning. This is about playing with the variables. What have you got? How can you change it (1 variable at a time)? Where does that take you?

**There is much more available on this in the third video of the series.**

## FRANTIC TASKS THAT CAN BE DONE FROM A SOCIAL DISTANCE

Below is a list of tasks that Frantic Assembly have used in the past. Some of these tasks are described in the *Frantic Book of Devising Theatre*, so do take a look through it to refresh your memory.

We have grouped them into categories as a guide. Remember though, what starts as 'moving as a group' could end up being something very different depending on where you take it.



## GESTURAL

- Sign and Describe
- Select Delete
- Phone Numbers
- Getting Ready
- On Blindness Hands - take a look at this [video](#).

## MOVING AS A GROUP, LISTENING & RESPONDING

- Lead and Listen
- Othello Follow



## MOVEMENT FROM OBSERVED BEHAVIOUR

- Fluff
- Head Smacks
- Scribble

## WHOLE BODY

- Connect Affect Disconnect (solo version) - check out this [creative task](#).
- Round/ By/ Through (solo version could be in relation to a prop). You could change the words to something more appropriate (e.g. if you're using a pad of paper and a pen, it may be difficult to interpret the word 'through', so it could be replaced with 'myself', where you make a physical connection with yourself).

Although you can explore and adapt any of the above tasks, how about creating your own task and using the method of Building Blocks to explore your stimulus.

**We hope this resource has been helpful and that you feel better equipped to support your students.**

You will have learnt how to use the Frantic Method to create compelling theatre, whilst working within a socially distanced framework.

The examples and explanations shared in this resource will hopefully give you the confidence to use the Frantic Method and to begin choosing your own tasks to explore a range of stimuli with your students.