



FRANTIC ASSEMBLY

ONLINE TEACHERS'
CPD COURSE

FILM 4

This Resource Will Cover

- 1.Collaborating with Cameras
- 2.Practical examples of how to stage work at a distance without sacrificing intimacy
- 3.Continuing creativity

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HOW THE LENS OF A CAMERA CAN INSPIRE THEATRE-MAKING

Collaborating with the Camera: the camera is an eye

Many of you have found yourselves teaching through a camera lens and we are sure many of you are looking forward to returning to teaching face-to-face. The camera can feel so static and distancing but if we consider its application in art rather than as a communication device then there is lots we can learn about the potential presentation of our work.

Every shot within a film is carefully considered and crafted to have a particular effect on the viewer. Is this true of every moment we present on stage? Below is a link to a website and film that breaks down many of the camera angles that we refer to in the film and explains how they guide the experience and understanding of the viewer.

[Blog - The Ultimate Guide to Camera Shots, Studio Binder](#)

[Video - The Ultimate Guide to Camera Shots, Studio Binder](#)



The potential of film in Theatre making

As we say in the video, this is not a film course. We are merely exploring how filmic techniques might reinvigorate our drama studios and inspire greater theatre making.

The key here is NOT to take the camera shot techniques literally and apply them to theatre. Consider the ambition and effectiveness of each shot and then apply that to your theatre making. The camera becomes the eye of the viewer. It can soar about mountains and follow a bead of sweat form on our heroine's brow. In our theatre making do we want to take our viewers to these places? If so, how can we replicate the effect and experience without having the technical support film has?

Remember, film and theatre are both storytelling. When you tell your story do you want your audience sitting forward in their seats trying to work out what the protagonist is hiding behind their eyes? Or should they be blown back by the energy of it all?

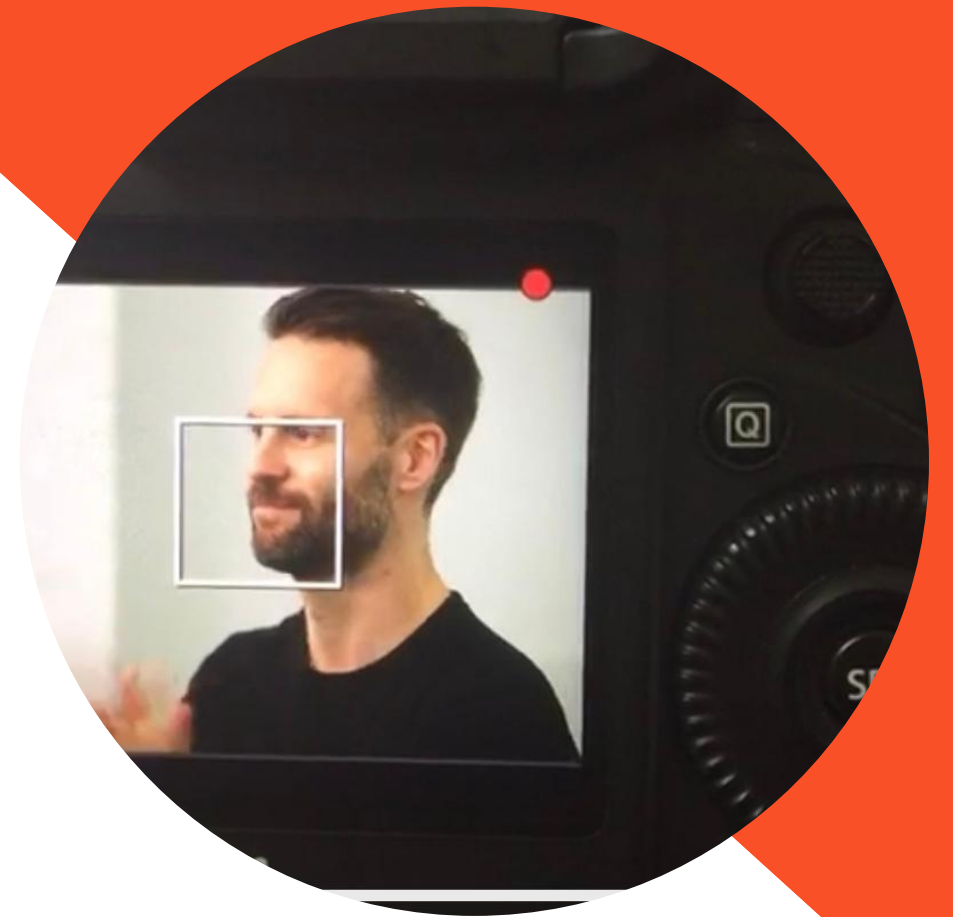
Watching theatre is a physical experience for an audience. Film understands this and exploits it in every shot. Our challenge here is to **learn, adapt** and **apply**.

The key word to consider is focus. That is where we want our audience to look. What is the most important part of the scene. We can ask ourselves 'what do we want our audience to know?' but that is only half the story. If we remember that watching theatre is a physical experience, then we must ask 'how do we want our audience to feel?' The camera can make us focus wherever it wants and its range is phenomenal.

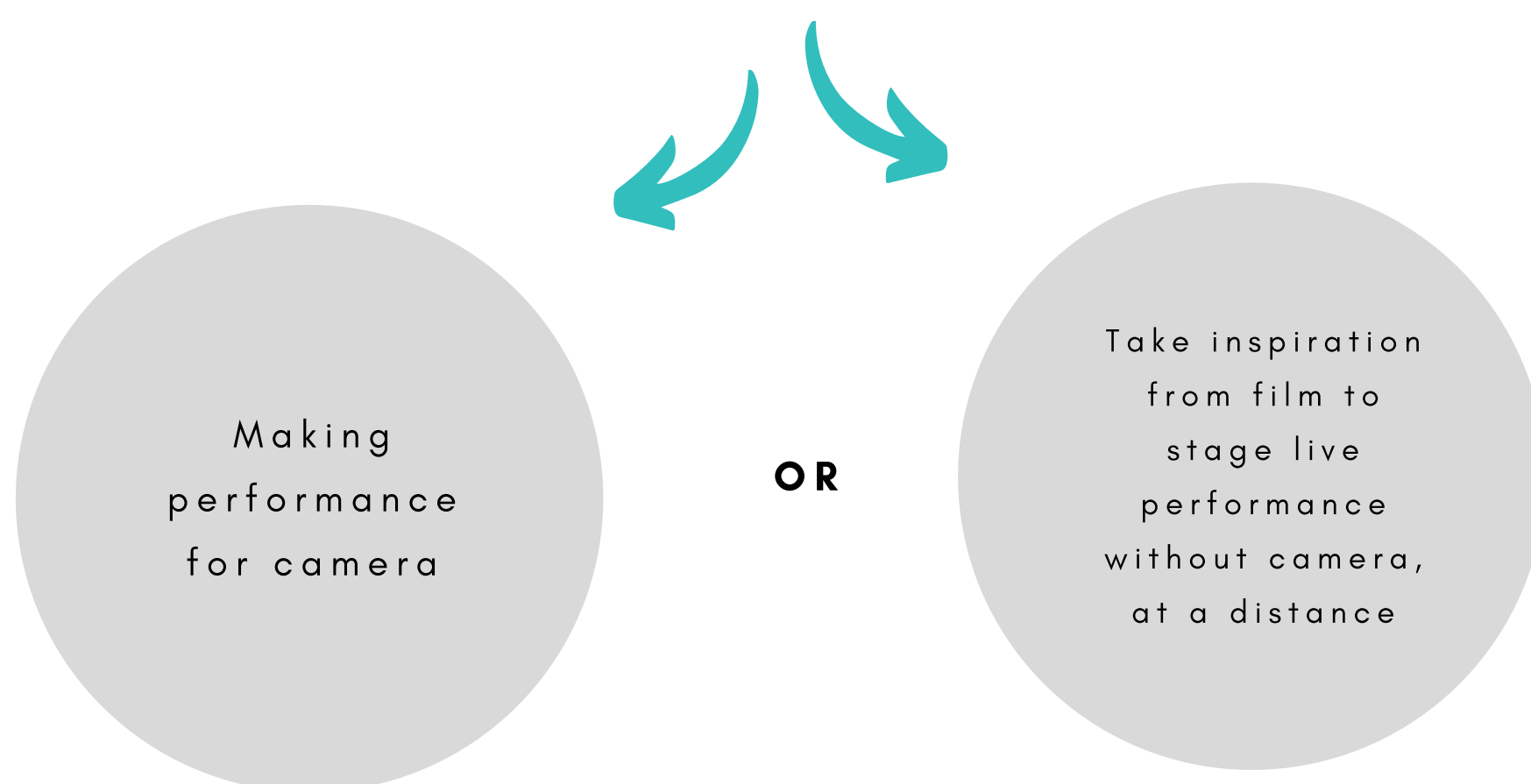
We will explore the idea of creating intimacy through the manipulation of Light, Sound and Movement, inspired by the camera and its ability to frame an image and focus an audience.

First consider:

- What do you want an audience to see?
- How can you replicate that effect on stage?
- What can we learn from film to inform our live theatre-making?



You could go in 2 possible directions



As we are theatre makers, let's focus on the second option.

We want to change our relationship with that little unblinking eye we have all been talking to over the past few months and make it a potentially exhilarating collaborator! To do that we must explore and play.

TASK

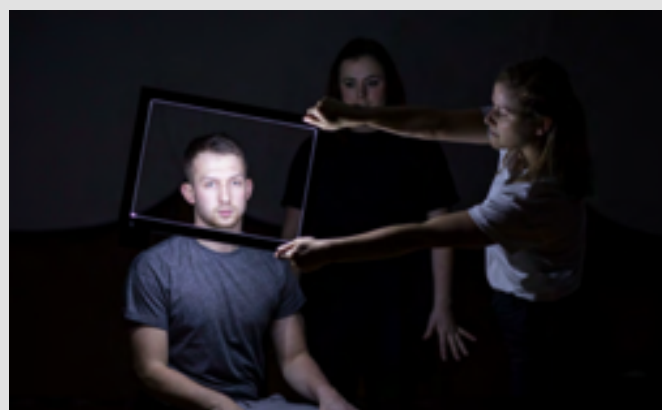
Why not take the camera shot definitions and get your students to explore how to recreate them? Some of these might be impossible but it is vital that we are considering the effect and proposed impact of each shot. They exist because they affect us in different ways. By breaking this down we are considering the potential impact the presentation of work has on an audience. This can be an incredibly empowering way to talk about theatre making, inviting the student to embrace technicality and nuance and their ability to guide the experience of the viewer.

HOW CAN WE EXPLORE THIS THROUGH LIVE THEATRE?

Below are some examples of where these camera angles might have been employed in our work. Many of these might be instinctive and may not have referenced the camera but they were all created with a particular focus and a particular effect in mind.



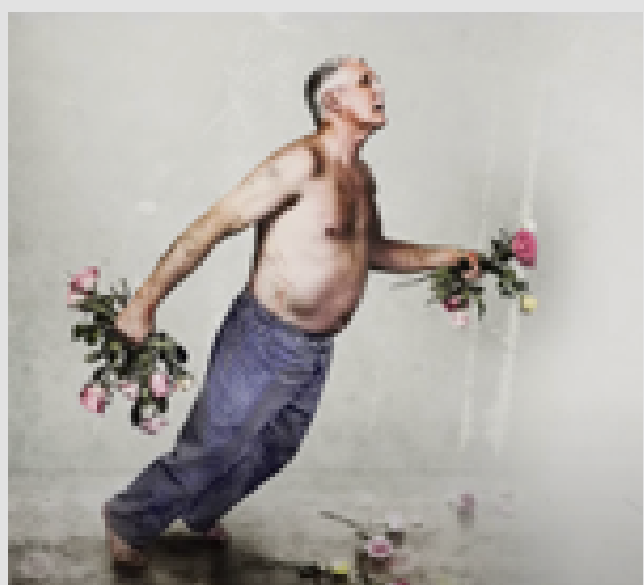
Long Shot (*Othello*)



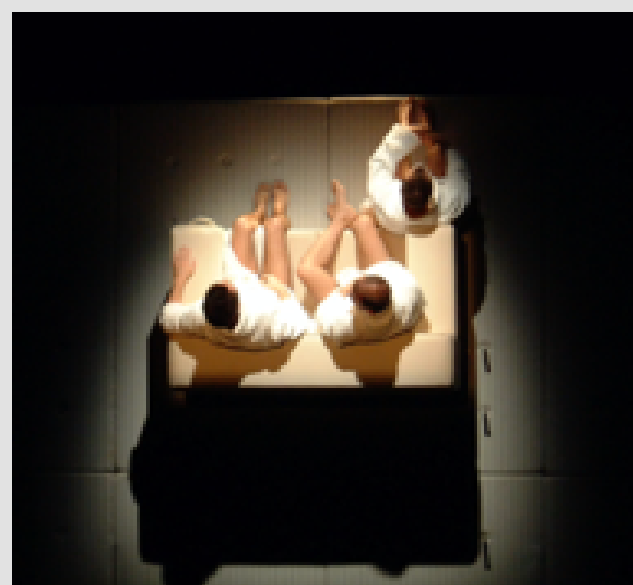
Tight Shot (*This Will All Be Gone*)



Extreme Tight (*This Will All Be Gone*)



Dutch Angle (*Things I Know To Be True*)



High Shot (*Heavenly*)



Low Shot (*Hymns*)



Point of View (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*)

It's good at this stage, to get your students inspired to think about different ways of staging work so that the audience perspective is considered. At times the challenge to make the impossible possible has been by far the most inspiring and rewarding challenge!

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES FOR STAGING AT A DISTANCE

LIGHT TO INSPIRE STAGING

Spend some time looking at how you can manipulate the darkness and light using phones or torches. How can you challenge **perspective**, **distance** and **scale**? Can you create the illusion of people and worlds appearing and disappearing?

We love to experiment with torches or hand-held lights to allow images to emerge through the darkness. You would have seen footage in the video of *Into the Light*, in which characters disappear and emerge out of the darkness; of characters seeming to float and fly - all a result of careful lighting and constant consideration of what the audience experience.

Why not spend some time experimenting with phone torch lenses? How can your students focus the light using our low-tech/high effect idea of kitchen rolls? Cutting them to different lengths will either make the focus wide (if cut short) or much tighter (if kept long).



See Appendix 1 for ideas on how to approach working with light in the Drama Studio.

Does the work feel filmic? Can we sense a relationship or tension emerging? Is a story or history developing? If so, it is worth pointing out that you have done this by crafting the darkness and by explicitly not showing us things. We, as an audience, have done the work for ourselves. This is an example of an active audience and one we feel we should always strive for.

By not being able to see something we might have brought it into focus. This is the same with intimacy, physicality and touch at this particular time. Just because we cannot safely, literally do this in the drama studio does not mean we cannot make work that is full of it!

MOVEMENT TO INSPIRE STAGING

What can the camera do that theatre can't? The camera brings a shift in perspective, the possibility to bring your audience to a completely different world in an instant.

When we talk here about movement to inspire staging, we mean the movement of the lens/camera/audience perspective. In the rehearsal room we use a camera to view the work from different perspectives. This helps us to discover new things within our work. This discovery can lead to a break-through and potentially a better way of presenting the work.

Encouraging your students to collaborate with a camera throughout their devising process could be hugely beneficial.

Camera shots have inspired us to think about staging in a different way.

How do you want your audience to view the work? Using the camera as inspiration takes you beyond perceived limitations. We view a challenge as an exciting open task to explore.

TASK

This is the time to shake things up and play with the work you have made. Set your students free with their cameras. By now they should be familiar with the various camera shots, meaning they can observe the choreography through the lens and comment on how the choreography changes. There is nothing you can do wrong here, as the real magic is in watching it back. This is where the choreography gets reinvented and the observers (and performers) can comment on the potential. The movement of the camera questions the original presentation of the choreography.

In presenting any piece of choreography you might have taken some things for granted. It might be performed at the speed it was rehearsed at. It might be performed standing up. It might be performed forwards and not backwards, etc. What we see in the camera frees all of that up.

Not everything can be gold but if you and your students can understand that you are looking for nuggets rather than bars then you will be fine! You are looking for little glimmers of potential to build upon.

See Appendix 2 for ideas on how to approach working with movement and the camera in the drama studio.



SOUND TO INSPIRE STAGING

To be specific we are talking about sound rather than music. Sound is a vital component of film making. It is just as crucial within theatre but we seldom get the chance to explore it. Maybe we are scared that it takes extensive expertise and expensive equipment but if our exercise with the phone torch and the kitchen roll has taught anything...

The point here is to think about how sound affects us. By identifying that, we can then be more ambitious and creative in how we might collaborate with it.

Film often splits the spoken text and makes it a voice over, panning over an establishing shot or a memory from a different location. Film and TV routinely focus on the character that hears the text rather than the one that speaks it. This shift in focus carefully guides us through the experience. Can we be inspired by this subtle manipulation to present more interesting theatre?

See Appendices 3 & 4 for practical tasks on how to explore the use of sound to inspire staging.



CONTINUING CREATIVITY RIGHT TO THE END OF THE PROCESS

The final section of this film is us playing with the material we have created at earlier stages. The choreography was created to be played with and moulded. It has no meaning, in itself. Its purpose is to be explored. Here we take you through just that.

There was very little planning in the workshopping of this work. It was just observing, commenting and then making one adjustment at a time until a story started to emerge. Even then, it was the tiniest glimmer.

The next stage was simply putting elements of what we had recorded together to see how they commented upon each other.

Immediately the movement of the hands in one film reached out to connect with the hands in another. We threw the text up against it and played with the speed of both the movement and that text. Testing these presumptions opened up a fragile relationship between two characters. We only recorded Sophie's voice but by playing with the pitch the lower voice sounded like Simon's. That turned a monologue into a duologue but, crucially, this did not change the loneliness. If anything it was even more about the lack of connection now that there were two voices reaching out to each other.



As we said in the beginning, this is not a film course. The film at the end only serves to show what can be discovered through play.

Encourage your students to keep their analytical observation keen throughout the creative/rehearsal processes as most of the best discoveries come painfully late. And it is important to point out that they are DISCOVERIES. They had remained hidden beneath something. Only your ongoing creative tenacity will discover them!

Be prepared to make changes late in the day. This is the moment when all of the potential and magic really gets seen. Stay open to how sound, lights, and the physical work all come together to tell your story. The technical elements are integral to Frantic's storytelling. Have a look at conversations between creatives on our Frantic Digital to see how all these elements come together in [The Unreturning](#).

We hope this resource has been helpful in inspiring you and your students to collaborate with the camera.

Your students will be able to use that camera to to explore new perspectives for staging. Think about how you can experiment with light and darkness to allow the magic of film to become the magic of live theatre.

Challenge the presumptions around the monologue and experiment with sound and how the audience experiences text.

Continue to use the building blocks right up until the first performance, safe in the knowledge that if the building blocks have been used throughout, nothing is ever lost, and you can always go back a step.

APPENDIX 1

STEPS TO TRY WHEN EXPERIMENTING WITH LIGHT:

- Choose a specific sequence or scene that a group has created. It could be a Swipe Duet, or any scene from their devised piece.
- Choose 3-4 different camera angles and run the scene a few times, filming it from those angles.
- Watch them back and critically observe what you see.
- Choose one angle that you want to explore re-creating for a live audience. What do you need to do in order for the audience to view it from the perspective of that camera angle?

Here's where the light comes in

- Choose something specific that you want the audience to focus on.
- Make the studio as dark as possible, if you can't get total blackout it's still worth experimenting.
- Using torches - made with kitchen rolls to focus them, like ours, or bike lights also work well. You may need some sort of focus on bike lights otherwise light bleeds out and it's harder to sculpt the darkness.
- Experiment with the lighting - how can the group control the light and sculpt the darkness to take the audience on a journey?

Critical Observers:

- What's the audience experience?
- What are their observations?
- How successfully did you manage to take the audience on a journey to view a part of the scene from a different perspective?
- Did you provide new information about the scene?
- Did your audience see it in a new and more complex way?

TEACHING POINTS

- You can always go back a building block and play with a different presumption/camera shot or lighting a different area.
- To do this work, you need your critical observers to help guide the performers that are holding the lights, and those being lit. If you are tasked with holding the light, or being in the light, it's likely you won't be able to see what the audience is seeing.
- It also helps to have access to blackout or as near as possible. If you don't have a space that you can blackout, you could do this exercise for camera and explore making this a section that is a film element of your final performance.

APPENDIX 1 CONT...

AN IDEA ON HOW YOU MIGHT USE LIGHT TO CHALLENGE DISTANCE

If it's a spoken scene, what about lighting **ONLY** the lips, or the hands, or the feet? Inspired by the Extreme Tight Shot.

AN IDEA ON HOW YOU MIGHT USE LIGHT TO CHALLENGE PERSPECTIVE

Can you change the perspective and show a scene happening from a bird's eye view? E.g. the writing of a letter flip a table on its side and light the top of the table with a pen and paper, and someone writing with that pen. Inspired by the High Shot.

*** The great thing about using lights is that you would only have to flip the part of the set that you were lighting, not the whole set.*

AN IDEA ON HOW YOU MIGHT USE LIGHT TO CHALLENGE SCALE:

What about using two people to imply that contact is being made, but in fact, with the trickery of tightly focused light and allowing an audience to 'take the leap', lighting one person's hand going through a light on one side of the stage, for instance, and another person's hand coming into a tight light on the other side of the stage and cupping their own face could imply physical contact, or the ache to make physical contact.

What does the distance between the two lights say to the audience? What do you want it to say to the audience?

With the use of a tightly focused light you can change the audience experience into something really quite intimate and it doesn't need to include high tech and expensive equipment. It does take **precision, accuracy, patience**, and thought from everyone.

APPENDIX 2

HOW TO APPROACH USING MOVEMENT AND THE CAMERA AS A COLLABORATOR IN THE DRAMA STUDIO:

1. Get your students familiar with the various different Camera shots
2. Use a camera in rehearsals and try filming scenes
 - Using different perspectives
 - Thinking about scale
 - Thinking about audience/performer relationship
 - Questioning how to create intimacy and connection to the characters at a distance

These are all ways of exploring atmosphere, tone, and relationships

3. Challenge your students to stage these without a camera. How can you find these perspectives for the audience, live?

TEACHING POINTS

Referring to the camera as a collaborator to your students adds a whole new perspective. If that collaborator could go anywhere and view the work from any position, where would it be? This is truly exciting! This whole new perspective can be aspirational, ambitious and challenging. It is a brilliant way to start thinking about your work and the impact you want it to have.

APPENDIX 3

HOW TO APPROACH EXPERIMENTING WITH SOUND IN THE DRAMA STUDIO:

Use Sophie's list of the presumptions within the presentation of monologues to explore the use of sound with your students.

With your students:

- Watch a monologue
- Explore the presumptions being held around that particular monologue (Look back at the video at when Simon lists the presumptions about Sophie's monologue)
- Choose one presumption to play with (e.g. Often the presumption is that we see the person whose monologue we hear. So let's challenge that presumption, Now come the options:
 - What if there's a completely different scene happening on stage - could be movement, and the text has been recorded as a voice-over, played in headphones,
 - or over a speaker, or even performed live but the actor is unseen by the audience
 - What if it is whispered over a monitor?
 - What happens if music is so loud the audience can't hear the text? Can the character hear the music?
 - Perhaps you film parts of the performance to bring the audience in close to the detail, but withhold sound from them
 - Is the monologue a voicemail that is being picked up by someone else? And we are watching them receive it?

You are exploring the potential ways of presenting the monologue in relation to sound. Just as with movement and light, it is important to understand the effect each choice has on the audience and their understanding of the situation.

TEACHING POINTS

- Only challenge one presumption at a time
- You can always go back a building block and go in another direction

APPENDIX 4

ANOTHER APPROACH TO EXPERIMENTING WITH SOUND IN THE DRAMA STUDIO:

TASK

This is partly inspired by the creative choices made in the presentation of the letter scene in *Things I Know To Be True* where the angst of reading a letter is seen at the same time as the angst of its composition.

Take a section of text from a play or devised piece. It could be a piece of text explored in a previous film.

Think about the many ways that text could be HEARD. We often spend our time thinking about the ways it could be spoken but we seldom explore the impact it has on those that hear it.

Options could be:

- Two people on a bench. The light fades on the speaker and only stays on the listener, pulling their response into focus.
- Maybe this is a recorded phone message playing out on a desk. Who is listening? Is this the first time or the 20th time they have listened to it?
- This could be a radio playing. Does that become a narrative voice?
- Or does it come over a TV? Does this make a literal setting become a fantasy?
- Is it spoken by a chorus of people in a café? The one silent person becomes the focus. Is it about them or is it their thoughts? Is it knowledge that only the chorus possesses?

There is lots to play with here. While at it, explore the potential and pitfalls of employing a narrative voice. What does it implicitly tell us? Do we trust this voice? Should we?

TEACHING POINTS

- Only challenge one presumption at a time. Lots of ideas can emerge from challenging just one presumption.
- Allow time for these observations and ideas to emerge. These tasks should be about discovery and new perspectives, ultimately leading to the application of that new knowledge. This needs time and space.
- Think of your play and exploration as non-destructive editing. Trying something out and seeing that it does not work is a vital part of the create/learning process. You can always go back a building block and go in another direction.

APPENDIX 5

We reference *Mama* at 20:10 in the CPD video. You can view the Movement Test [here](#).

And the short film [here](#).