



Performance Workshop - An Introduction

Core themes:

- Adaptation
- Time + Memory
- Unreliable Narrator
- Place

Length: 1 hour 30 minutes

Brief Description

A performance workshop that explores the role of choice, significance of landscape and the idea of 'performing belief' as used in 'The Testament of Gideon Mack'. This session will focus on building character and community through chorus work, allowing participants to experiment with these themes and develop their own adaptations. Using a physical and collaborative approach to the literary and theatrical devices employed in the original novel and the stage adaptation, we will empower participants to transform stories for the stage with a focus on devising, character and story.

Outcomes

By the end of the session we want every participant to have...

- Built confidence performing original work to an audience
- Created effective individual and group performances
- Developed strong characterisation choices through devising and physical exploration
- Successfully contributed to a team
- Creatively interrogated the central themes of the novel/play
- Delivered their own interpretations of local landscapes through storytelling

Key words: Community, Ensemble, Identity, Status, Ritual, Audience, Voice, Movement, Objective, Devising, Adaptation, Stimulus

[Square brackets] are used to reference a connection with the text.

Possible exercises so far include:

1. **Experiencing Want:** participants line up along a wall, ready to race for a pencil. This pencil is THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT HAS EVER EXISTED TO YOU. Prepare participants for this race, and observe the different tactics used within the group. Count down 3... 2.... 1.... But the race never takes place. Explore with participants how they felt, what they were willing to do to win, did they care at all, etc. Do they feel cheated out of the race? This forms the foundations for discussing character objectives.
2. **60 Second Sermons:** three people have 60 seconds each to 'preach' to everyone on a given topic. This will be randomly generated either using words in a hat to be pulled out or playing 'hot potato'. The more nonsense the better. Potential headlines could be: frogs, why chocolate bars are getting smaller, Wallace and Gromit for President, etc. Once all 3 have finished their sermons, fellow participants will be asked to choose their leader. These groups will then be used for a following chorus movement exercise. **[Gideon and Lorna preaching: introducing the impact of body language and voice quality. This stems from the idea of converting or leading people about something- whether or not you believe in it- and what makes a strong, believable performance]**
3. **Teaching Confidence:** using a variety of voice and movement techniques to instil confidence in participants as performers, and as individuals. **[frailty vs strength: can also discuss symbolism of physical activity in the novel]**
4. **Shared Place Story:** intended to capitalise on locality, and give participants the opportunity to perform their own stories about local places. In pairs or small groups, participants will share a short story relevant to their local setting, and together recreate this memory or legend for an audience. This could be shared modern experiences, personal memories, or historical/mythical. Exploring idea of collective or individual memory, specifying time... **[literary device. See: Catherine Craigie]**
5. **Make it better / Make it worse:** Improvisation performed like 'freeze' with an audience, interrupted by a horn / bell to "make it better / make it worse". Used to warm up, introduce the idea of exaggerating stories and developing quick creative thinking *
6. **Hot Seating:** Solidifying characterisation and improvisation skills. Carrying out interviews to either explore alternate endings or beliefs of participants' own performances, or those of Gideon Mack. **[epilogue: interpreting events and experimenting with perspective]**

7. **Movement Choir or Flocking:** Developing cohesion within a group and accepting ideas. Altogether, participants will follow and copy a leader's movements. This will explore individual identity within a group, encourage intuitive flow, while also warming up towards exploring movement with a stimulus. **[supporting theatrical devices used in the stage adaptation]**

8. **Physicalising Text:** Using a short script or novel extract, groups will select 3-5 words to create movement for. They will be encouraged to explore the dynamics of the word/movement: pace, quality, etc. Next, the group will choreograph these moves to be performed together as a chorus. We can decide whether to use sound to support these performances, or to directly read the source extract. **[theatrical device used in the development of stage adaptation]**

Workshop plan to be fully fleshed out in coming weeks/months, but here is our initial vision and accompanying ideas!