

THEATRE ALIBI



Our approach to making theatre

Introduction

Theatre Alibi is a prescribed practitioner on the AQA AS and A-Level Drama and Theatre syllabus. As such, these resources have been created with this syllabus in mind.

However, we hope that they may also prove useful for teachers and students studying Drama, Theatre Studies and Performing Arts at GCSE, BTEC and AS/A-Level with other exam boards.

These resources are also available for those undertaking Silver and Gold Arts Awards.



We also offer workshops for students aged 15 – 19. please email info@theatrealibi.co.uk for more information.

You can find out more about the company's history and past productions on our website www.theatrealibi.co.uk

Free-to-access digital resources, originally created to accompany some of our more recent productions, are available via our website. These include recorded interviews with cast and creative team members, and rehearsal room footage.

Recordings of many of our past productions are also available to purchase. DVDs cost £22 + VAT each – just email info@theatrealibi.co.uk or call 01392 217 315 to order a DVD.





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Theatre Alibi's Style of Work

Why tell stories?

We think humans need to tell stories. More than that, we think this need to tell stories is part of what makes us human, part of the unique intelligence that makes us different from other animals. Telling stories, listening to them, watching them, talking about them, thinking about them. Without necessarily realising it, we're processing our experience in a very sophisticated way when we're doing these things. When we imagine a story we rehearse our own urges and inclinations in hypothetical scenarios, like children unconsciously practising how to behave by playing games. By "playing out" stories, we expand our sense of who we are and what choices we have in facing the challenges of our lives.

If we're constantly using stories to get an angle on a chaotic world, then as the world changes, so must our angle. Theatre Alibi is always searching for the right stories to tell and the right way to tell them to question the world as it currently stands.

The way we've chosen to tell stories is through theatre. The immediacy of it appeals to us. In theatre the actor is present in the same room with the audience. As a result, and this is absolutely unique to theatre, a split reality is presented to the audience in which the actor is both their self, here and now, and someone else in another time and place, a character in a fictional world. When we approach our work, we try to take advantage of this split reality. We often begin shows with the actors talking directly to the audience, beginning to tell a story and then slipping from describing a character into becoming them. Characters often talk to the audience too and playfully invite them to imagine that real life has somehow erupted on stage or that the show has crept out into the world.





Because reality and fiction are a hair's breadth apart in theatre, it encourages the sense that fiction belongs to reality. Fiction isn't some sort of theme park where things happen that don't relate to reality - it's a gift we have to perceive the richness of real experience. And because theatre admits "play" into the heart of real life it might, in some small way, refresh the playfulness of our lives.

In keeping with these thoughts, here are some of the ways we choose to work:

- We reveal transformations: actors leap from being themselves to being a character (or several) and back again before the eyes of the audience. Simple props and set are taken up by the actors and used to suggest places and things that weren't there before (a duvet becomes a field of snow, a walking stick becomes the rail of an ocean liner).
- Our actors, and their characters, often talk directly to the audience and we play with the boundary between reality and fiction.
- We develop our actors' resources to help them suggest other characters, things and places: their voices, dance skills, puppetry skills etc.
- We incorporate other art forms into our theatre to make it more effective at whisking people from the "here and now" to the realm of the imagination: music, sculpture, photography, film etc.



How We Make Our Shows

4 members of our creative teams share their processes

The writer

Name: **Daniel Jamieson**

How did you come to work with Theatre Alibi?

I started working with Theatre Alibi as an actor when I left university in 1989. It was for a show called *The Withered Arm* based on short stories by Thomas Hardy. At first they gave the job to a bloke who could play the accordion and act but he dropped out so they gave the job to me instead (I can't play the accordion)!

What was your journey into writing?

A few years after starting work as an actor, when I was about 25, me and several other actors decided we wanted to call the shots ourselves so we agreed to put on a play and discovered how hard it is, and how rewarding. Everyone took responsibility for the job they were interested in – I'd always fancied myself as a writer so I wrote the play. I enjoyed it very much (although found it very scary!), it went well and I've never looked back.

How do you go about writing a script?

I spend the first two or three weeks thinking. If it's an adaptation, I'll read the book at least twice and think about how making the story into a piece of theatre will add a new dimension to it. I also have to think about what to leave out. If it's a new play, I spend a good while at the beginning putting together the bare bones of the story. I read stuff to inspire and inform me and I go for walks, which helps me dream stuff up. I also make lots of chain-shaped diagrams, each link being a progression of the story.

Then it's down to work on a first draft. I try to write at least five pages a day. Every morning I break down one link of the story into smaller links – what needs to happen, who must say what to who etc.? Then off I go, trying to imagine the words coming out of peoples' mouths, characters moving about on stage. It's a messy business – scribbling in my note book then typing up what I've done at the end of each day – but I keep going until I get to the end of the story. After that, it's a long process of making the piece better – getting feedback, remembering what I hoped to achieve in the first place and cutting out the waffle. That carries on until, and beyond, the first performance. You can never stop making something better!

Do you prefer adaptation or original writing?

I prefer writing original material, but adaptation has different pleasures for a writer. It's a luxury to have a reason to explore someone else's imaginary world so completely. It's like having an excuse to go and explore another country and getting paid for it!

Are you involved with rehearsals for the show?

Yes. I'm around in the background, ready to give advice if required, ready to change anything in the writing that doesn't work, helping to make artistic decisions if I'm asked. Nikki, the director, and I talk very thoroughly before rehearsals so we're on the same wavelength. But you've got to give people room to make the show their own.

What's your advice for aspiring playwrights?

Write as much as you can! Make it as individual as possible – don't feel obliged to copy other people to get noticed. Get feedback but don't get put off – what one person says is never the whole picture. Get into the habit of writing more than one draft of stuff – you can make it much better second time round.



The director

Name: **Nikki Sved**

Why did you choose to be a director

I was more interested initially in being a performer. But at university everyone got a chance to direct and it was then that I discovered that I could do it and I liked it, and that my interest in performing informed my directing. I carried on performing when I left university, but I think the lifestyle of a director began to appeal to me more and more – having to promote yourself day to day as a performer didn't appeal to me very much. I would have found it difficult. Also, it's easier as a director to follow your own path artistically. I'm now the Artistic Director of Theatre Alibi.

How old were you when you first wanted to get in to theatre?

I went to a drama group once a week from the age of seven to eighteen. I decided to be a performer then! It was at university when I was about twenty that the thought of directing entered my head, although I was given a bit of *Twelfth Night* at school to direct when I was fifteen and I really enjoyed that.

Where/how did you train?

I belonged to a drama group, which was run by an inspirational woman. I was in school plays, did Drama O-Level, Theatre Studies A-Level, and a degree in Drama at Exeter University. My training as a performer continued at Alibi – we got the opportunity to work with an inspirational Polish theatre company called Gardzienice, and I learnt on the job from Alibi's then Artistic Directors.

What's your role in the process of making a show?

The writer often generates several different ideas for a show and I help choose the best one to develop. Then I read initial versions of the script and comment on them. After that, I start thinking about what means we might use to tell that story - what sort of music we might draw on, what the set should be like, how we would people the show, what sort of actors we ought to be using. Then I cast the actors. You find actors in a mixture of ways. Sometimes you're lucky enough to have worked with people that you think will be just right. Sometimes you see someone in a show who you think will be just right. So, I bring things together prior to rehearsal – people and resources.

Before we go into rehearsals, there's a research and development (R&D) process. It's a bit like a playtime. We spend a week working on an early draft of the script with the actors, the writer and the designer when we try out ideas to see if they will work. It's a really nice time ahead of rehearsals when we can try things out and if



they fail miserably, it doesn't matter at all. You can take risks and try things that you've never tried before. It's a scary job making a piece of theatre. That fear can be unhelpful creatively. So, a research and development week is a way of freeing things up and allowing yourself to make more exciting and interesting decisions. As a director, I select which bits we're going to work on. I choose what seem to be key, defining moments that set the tone for the whole show. Also we tackle moments that beg a theatrical solution, things that you wouldn't imagine could be put on stage.

Between the R&D and the rehearsal process I discuss things with the writer that came up in the R&D. The other key bit of work that happens between the R&D and rehearsals is working with the designer to develop the design. It's helpful to have the designer on board from very early on in the process. Our particular style of work means that the action on stage is very integrated with the set. This requires close collaboration between the director and designer. As a director I have to think very practically about what has to happen on stage. That's a good input to the design process.

With the rehearsal process itself, a lot of the things I do are the same as in the R&D. I'm selecting what to work on and when, making sure we get through the material in time. I'm co-ordinating and bringing together all the elements, keeping my eye on the whole picture. Although people are throwing in ideas all the time, it's me who gets to say yes or no to them, because it's helpful to have one person doing that. In the end I would probably never say no to an idea if lots of people were saying yes, because I trust the people that I work with. Also, it's my job to put my own ideas in. The other thing that I do in the rehearsals is to develop performances – I help the actors to access a performance, to find the ways that characters show how they are feeling, and to discover who the characters are. My job is also to stage the scenes, to work out how to show the action in the script, but also basic things like how to get a chair off stage at the end of a scene.

Toward the end of rehearsals you have the tech week when you add the technical elements to the show. I make decisions with the lighting designer and the sound designer about how sound and light will work from moment to moment. Because I've been in rehearsals with the actors I know and understand the scenes. The lighting designer will have a very particular skill in terms of, say, having a sense of colour on stage but he or she won't know the show as well as I do. So, in the tech, we marry the two things together - it's a very intense and hefty job.

Once the show's opened, my job is a matter of looking at how it works with the whole additional element of audience response. You learn a huge amount from having an audience there. Often they respond in an entirely different way to how you expect. I'm in the luxurious position of being able to watch the audience and the show. I'll watch and make notes over several nights, then we give ourselves time to make some changes in response to those first few performances. After that, I'll be a baby-sitter for the show – I'll go out and see it several times on tour. Often shows get better and better as actors get to know it. It's also possible for things to go off the boil. So I go out on the tour now and again and give notes to the actors, which helps keep the show alive for them.

What is particular about working for Theatre Alibi?

How the work is generated in the rehearsal room feels very particular. The storytelling is very particular too, if not unique. We try to make shows where we enjoy what live theatre can offer us. You often see images being constructed rather than it happening in secret. We never switch off the lights to change the set (which often makes life difficult!). We really enjoy revealing the transformations from actor to character and from location to location. We also draw on a particularly wide breadth of forms – music, film, puppetry, our set designs are quite sculptural.

The composer/musical director

Name: **Thomas Johnson**

Why did you choose to be a composer/MD?

I'd been writing songs in various bands since the age of eleven, having started learning the violin at six years old. I went through the classical grades on the violin as a child up to the highest one (Grade 8) but didn't receive any other formal musical education, opting to do English Literature at University. In my teens I taught myself the guitar and got a weekend job being a minstrel in a medieval banquet gig in a castle. I also played in various punk bands (it was the late 70s) with names like The Infested! A little later I learned the accordion for a theatre show. At university I became very interested in theatre from an academic perspective, and post-university, after a few years of busking full-time all over Europe, I applied on a whim for a job as a Musical Director /musician for a theatre company called Dr.Fosters. To my considerable surprise I got the job! It turned out to be the best possible match for my dual interest in music and theatre and I've never looked back.

How old were you?

I was 25 when I got the job with Dr.Fosters.

What's your role in the process of making a show?

It starts with the script, which I'll receive quite a long time before rehearsals start. The first read is quick, to get a flavour of the play. I'm looking to get a sense of the atmosphere of the piece and what it might sound like. Where and when it is set may have an impact on what kind of music I might end up writing – for example, if it's on a French ship in the 17th century this will almost inevitably influence the feel of the music (a flavour of the sea, a sense of 17th century France). Is it melancholy? Or comic? Does it ask for dissonance or beauty? This will all have a bearing on the next (and perhaps most crucial) part of the job: deciding what instruments to use. This is like a painter choosing his or her colour palette. The musicians then have to be employed, a task shared by myself and the theatre company, and will usually involve auditions. After that, it's back to the script, this time a detailed analysis of the text, deciding exactly where I will plan to place music and what its job is with each cue. Then rehearsals start. I like to be in rehearsals as much as possible, and don't generally write anything at all before the first day of rehearsals, as I want to allow the music to emerge organically from the work that the actors and director are doing on stage. In this way, the score can be an integral part of the fabric of the piece rather than an 'extra' put on as a cosmetic afterthought. I watch a scene once it has been roughly blocked, taking notes, then retreat to my room where I'll write the music for that scene while it's still fresh in my memory. I write on a keyboard plugged into Sibelius music software which creates beautifully printed versions of the score (although I will usually write the first sketch by hand on paper). Then I'll rehearse the music with the musicians, and finally the musicians will join the actors and director, where we'll do the very satisfying job of placing the music into the scene. This involves a fair amount of dialogue as the music will often have quite a large impact on how the action has been staged, so there's a lot of give and take between everyone in the room to find the best outcome. This to-ing and fro-ing goes on till we've got to the end of the play; after that it's back to the beginning and rehearsing until it's right!

What's particular about working for Theatre Alibi?

Alibi are committed to the idea of many art forms having a central place in the work, the idea that text is a starting point rather than the end in a piece of theatre. This means that music is allowed (or encouraged) to be a proactive presence, along with the design, the puppet work, the audio visual elements, and so on.

As a consequence the composer is involved at a very fundamental level in the creation of the work, which is, of course, wonderful for any composer. Generally, too, they like to work with live musicians on stage, which is in my opinion qualitatively in a different league to working with a soundtrack in theatre.



The designer

Name: **Trina Bramman**

Why did you choose to be a designer?

It was when I was looking for university courses. I was doing my Art and Design Foundation course, and I had to choose something to do. I'd already decided that I wanted to work in the arts. It wasn't so much that I desperately wanted to be a theatre designer, I looked through prospectuses and it was the course that jumped out at me. I loved painting and working in 3D and I already liked theatre, so I thought this seemed a good way of combining my interests and it was exciting to think of working at large scale. Then when I went to visit some of the courses to see what it would be like, I saw that the way students designed was by making scale models of their sets and I was fascinated by them. I'd always secretly loved dolls houses - there's something magic about miniature things, so this really got me excited. Also, I saw them working on huge puppets on one of the courses, big body puppets. It was the variety that appealed to me most of all. It seemed you could do virtually anything.

How old were you?

That was during my Foundation year - 19.

Where did you train?

Nottingham Trent University. I did a three-year degree course in Theatre Design. It gave me a chance to have a go at all areas of theatre design – set, costume, lighting, prop-making. Also, crucially, to do a placement, which gave me a chance to go and work on a professional production. I did my placement at Komedia in Brighton assisting a Designer on a children's show on a similar scale to the ones I've done at Alibi. We were in a church hall, working until two o'clock in the morning to get the set and props finished, so I was used to the hours before I even started earning money as a designer!

What's your role in the process of making a show?

Ultimately my job is to come up with a design for the set, props and costumes. To get to this point I work alongside the director, the musical director, the writer, the lighting designer, the actors and the musicians. It's a collaborative thing – we work off each other. We're all working together at the same time, and I take on their ideas as they work with what I give them. I create the visual world of the show.

The first stage is getting the script and reading it. I might do little sketches in the side of the script, just things that come to mind, starting to think about the problems it throws up, the things that seem impossible to create on stage. There are always things that seem impossible.

Then we all get together as a team, all the people who are going to be working on it, and spend a week looking at the difficult bits of the script, seeing how we can solve things. During that week I do little, private sketches that I don't show anyone. Also I note down the ideas that come up, if they need a chair or a platform, for example - practical things that get worked into the show, not so much aesthetic things at that point. Things that I need to take into consideration.

At the end of the Research and Development week I have a meeting with the writer and the director to discuss where the design might go visually. Then I go away and panic and start drawing things on the train on the way home, making sure I haven't forgotten anything, writing things down. Then I start coming up with the first ideas. That's usually drawings to begin with. I begin by drawing really loose sketches that no-one else would probably understand, and then I start making rough little models. I talk these early ideas through with the director and the writer and then go away again to develop them further - there's a lot of working and reworking. When I've got a more definite model to show, I go through the script with the director and see how the set that I've designed might work for each part of the show. Then it's refining it and finalising it and getting together technical drawings ready for it to be built. I also liaise with the painter about the textures and colours I want. The set is ready for the start of rehearsals. At that point my role changes slightly as the bulk of the designing is done and I am no longer working alone in my studio, I'm in Exeter with the rest of the team prop-making and buying costumes.

What's particular about working for Theatre Alibi?

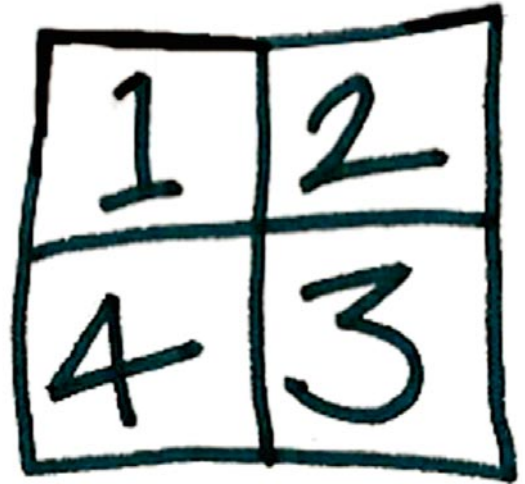
I would say that it is that the whole team work together so closely. The fact that we all start production time together means the Design team are making the props and costumes at the same time as the actors and director are creating the piece. So we don't know everything about our last bit of making until the actors have finished their last bit of making. This is difficult and means a lot of last-minute work and late nights but it makes the whole thing more vibrant, more interesting. Also our workshop is right next door to the rehearsal room which is a luxury, as it means we can be very responsive to what happens in there. I think we also have very high standards, every detail matters. This is as true in the rehearsal room as it is in the workshop and it's nice as a maker and a designer to be creating work with this in mind.

Rehearsal Games and Exercises

A sense of 'play' has always been key to Theatre Alibi's approach, informing every aspect of our theatre making, from physical and vocal warm-ups and ensemble building to devising, rehearsing and performing each show. Below are some of the games and exercises we use.

Four Square

Mark out a square on the floor with masking or electrical tape about four metres by four metres. Divide the square into four equal squares and number them clockwise 1,2,3 and 4. Get a large ball or football. One person stands in each small square and the rest of the players form a queue outside the big square. To play, the person in box 1 serves the ball by bouncing it once and hitting it upwards with the palm of their hand so it lands in someone else's square. That person returns the ball by hitting it upwards with the palm of their hand into another player's square and so on. Play continues until someone fails to return a shot or someone knocks the ball right out of the square. The disqualified player joins the back of the queue and a new player steps into square 4. All the other players move round clockwise towards the server.



Great for: physical warm up; spatial awareness; body control

Passing Patterns Game

You will need several tennis balls of different colours and patterns, or anything that can be safely thrown and caught. Ideally you would have the same number of items as members in the group, so we use company members' shoes. Everybody stands in a circle and one person has all the balls / shoes (etc) in a pile at their feet. The player with the shoes takes one and throws it to a player on the other side of the circle. That person throws it to another player and so on until everyone has caught and thrown the shoe and it has returned to the first player. Carry on throwing the shoe in the same pattern. When everyone is used to this, player one picks up another shoe and throws it after the first, but to a different player, so there are two shoes travelling back and forth across the circle in different patterns. Gradually player one introduces more and more shoes until, ideally, they are all in circulation.

Great for: concentration and focus; spatial awareness

Keep a ball in the air

Stand in a circle and keep the ball in the air by tapping it upwards (as in volley ball), passing it across the circle. Count the passes and see how high you can go before the ball is dropped. The group needs to work together to get a higher count. A few thoughts: Don't apologise! Take your time and relax. Try not to be 'frightened' of or to 'attack' the ball. Take suggestions from participants for rules that might allow the group to keep the ball in the air for a higher count. It's a good game to return to several times over a period of time and see how skills improve.

Great for: ensemble building; concentration and focus; physical warm up; spatial awareness; body control

Group Count

The group stands in a circle, with their eyes shut, each in a relaxed neutral position. The aim of the game is to reach the highest count possible before anyone interrupts each other with no signalling of any kind; don't even designate who will start the count. It can really help a group build a sense of ensemble as well as to encourage patience. If you try the game weekly over the course of a term (for example) you will soon see the count get higher and higher.

Great for: ensemble building; concentration and focus

Keeping equidistant

Each person chooses two other members of the group. Don't say who they are. On a given command they must attempt to remain an equal distance from each of them.

Some members of the group can step out and watch if the game is repeated. Look at the quality of interaction and the movement of the group.

Great for: ensemble building; spatial awareness

Yes Let's!

Anyone can suggest an activity (eg: pretend to be cats) and everyone shouts out "Yes Let's!" and carries out the suggestion with as much enthusiasm as they can possibly muster. No one is to suggest "Let's stop"! It's a useful game to refer back to if you're trying to remind students to approach suggestions with a spirit of commitment.

Great for: ensemble building; energizing performance skills

Impulses

Partners face each other. One of you will be sending an impulse (A) and the other receiving (B). On an out-breath, 'A' touches 'B' on the shoulder, elbow or forehead. In response and on an out-breath, 'B' moves away the specific part of the body that has been touched and then returns to a neutral position ready for the next 'impulse'. Try to work as precisely as possible.

Great for: partnership building; refining performance skills

Opening the door

Working individually, and on a given command, each person mimes opening a door, seeing what is behind it and responding to it. A long lost relative, a disgusting ball of slime, an adorable kitten... It's important to try not to predict what's behind the door. Surprise yourself.

Great for: refining performance skills; devising

Props becoming different things

Select a prop and use it as something different, so a toy spade can become a dagger or a turnip can become a ticking bomb! Limiting your means creatively can squeeze you into being inventive and playful.

Great for: refining performance skills; devising

One word storytelling

Tell a story in pairs. Use one word each. Don't pause. How is the game improved if you keep active? Walk around the room. Try playing a game at the same time. Mirroring? Touching the backs of knees? How does the game affect the story? Watch other pairs at play.

Great for: refining performance skills; devising

Text and game play

In groups of two or three write a love scene, preferably with some element of conflict. Keep it simple, just two or three lines each. Once everyone is secure with their lines, try playing a game while speaking. Allow the game to influence the speaking of the lines. Really play the game, don't show it.

Try out different games. What effect do they have? Try contrasting games – very still ones perhaps or ones that need a great deal of movement. Do they illuminate the text in a particular way? Select the game or games that work best and show your piece to the rest of the group.

Great for: refining performance skills; devising

You might want to use this as an acting exercise, using the game play as part of the rehearsal process working towards a more naturalistic version. Remove the game but ask the actors to work with the memory of having played it

You may choose to use the game play to inform staging or indeed as part of a devising process that incorporates games as part of the finished piece.

Another option is to use game play that isn't necessarily obvious to an audience (for example games that use eye contact) as a means of maintaining genuine interaction between performers.



Storytelling and Devising Exercises

Fundamental Questions

Storytelling is at the heart of everything we do. We often start with these fundamental questions as a springboard for exploration. You might find thinking about them and discussing them a useful start to a devising process. These questions can be applied to individuals and to society at large:

- Why tell stories?
- When do we tell stories?
- Where do we tell stories?
- How do we tell stories?
- What stories do we tell?

Making a Graph of the Show

We use this exercise at the beginning of rehearsals to get a sense of the shape of a show. In small groups, spend some time thinking what is the central question the show asks the audience. The question must have a yes/no answer. For example, “Will the central character ever find happiness?” Or “Will x and y ever get together?” Or “Is Z a good person?” Or “Will grandpa’s silver watch ever be found?” etc. On a large sheet of paper draw a graph. The horizontal axis represents the sequence of events as the story unfolds. The vertical axis represents the answer to the question, with YES at the top and NO at the bottom. Draw a line on the graph to show what the audience might think at each moment in the story. You should end up with a pattern of peaks and troughs that show the shape of the show.

Exercises for the Solo Storyteller and Group Storytelling

The following exercises are taken from a theatre paper written by Mike Alfreds in 1979 called *A Shared Experience: The Actor as Story-Teller*. These can be a useful tool for learning about the different modes of storytelling; practising and refining technique; and understanding the nuance of performance. They can also be used as part of a devising process to make decisions about the way in which the story will be told.

Theatre Alibi takes a great deal of inspiration from practitioners like Mike Alfreds. Two of his books are included in our Suggested Reading list below.

Solo Storyteller

Choose a simple, short scenario which can form the bare bones of a story told in multiple ways.

Each student tells the rest of the group their story of this scenario. Give the students time to prepare, before sharing with each other and discussing the different ways that the following techniques affect the storytelling.

Different students are given different instructions, for example:

First person narrator

- 1 Tell a story, emotionally reliving the experience narrated.
- 2 Tell a story, emotionally responding to your past experience from the vantage of the present
- 3 Tell a story with a blend of these two emotional standpoints.

Third person narrator

- 1 Tell a story, relying totally on vocal expressiveness. Decide on a clearly defined response you want to get from your audience; have a definite attitude to the story. Explore the vocal techniques which will achieve your aims.
- 2 Tell a story using gesture.

Alfreds describes four basic purposes for gesturing:

a) Illustrating b) Commenting c) Responding d) Contacting

Illustrating – acting out or duplicating what is being said creates either an intensification of an image or a deliberately naïve, highly coloured one. The way in which the story-teller carries out their illustration may possibly give another texture or nuance to the verbal information.

Commenting – implies strong attitudes and value judgments on the part of the story-teller to what they are narrating – gestures of approval, disapproval, made for an entirely didactic purpose.

Responding – the other side of the coin to Commenting is the spontaneous reaction to the story they are telling with which they may identify or become subjectively involved.

Contacting – gestures are those used to make sure the audience follows the story to the narrator's satisfaction; also to emphasise details.

Of course these techniques can overlap; for example, a gesture of illustrating which is also coloured by an emotional response. However, the point of the exercise is to isolate and work on one technical problem at a time. The same text or story should be used each time.

IMPORTANT: gesturing is not confined to the hands and arms alone; search for all sorts of body and facial gestures.

- 3 Tell a story using sound effects:
 - a) made vocally and bodily
 - b) with objects available in the immediate vicinity e.g. the floor
 - c) made with musical instruments.
- 4 Tell a story, characterising the protagonists, whenever there is dialogue. The changes from narrative (as yourself) to dialogue and back should be sharply defined.
- 5 Tell a story, giving the narrative (from yourself) a very strong attitude, preferably conflicting with the characters' views of themselves and their situations. Try to make your transitions between opposing or differing attitudes clear.



Group Storytelling

As an exercise, choose a simple, short scenario which can form the bare bones of a story told in multiple ways as above. Or apply the different approaches to your own narrative as part of the devising process.

As well as helping you to explore how the story will be told, you may well find that these exercises suggest aspects of the story's content, how characters might develop and how relationships might change.

- 1** Explore the different potential relationships between two narrators. The main point is to develop sensitivity between partners. It is also vital to clarify functions eg:
 - a)** The main narrator with an understanding supporter who eagerly adds details they feel have been understated or ignored.
 - b)** Two narrators with totally different viewpoints refute each other's views: (sections of the narrative can be divided between them in advance or left to improvisation).
 - c)** One narrator tells the story; the other provides all the sound-effects, illustrations, gestures etc.
- 2** Explore the different potential relationships between multiple narrators eg:
 - a)** group narration trying to help and support each other
 - b)** group narration trying to prevent each other from narrating

- 3** Explore the different potential relationships between a narrator or multiple narrators and characters eg:
- a) Narrator and characters have no contact.
 - b) Narrator comments on characters; points them out; walks amongst them
 - c) Narrator comments on characters; characters do not react; characters can comment on “comments” of the narrator amongst themselves or to the audience, but do NOT relate to narrator.
 - d) Characters comment or relate to Narrator and their story about them and/or their ‘narrative technique’; narrator does NOT react; or they MAY react.
 - e) Narrator addresses characters directly at high moment, i.e. narrator gets caught up with them emotionally: “How brave you were!”
 - f) Characters react LIKE audience to the narrator and the story about them.
 - g) Characters, willingly or unwillingly, adjust to narrator’s emphases.
 - h) Narrator adjusts to character’s behaviour and attitudes, should it conflict with theirs.
- 3** Explore the different potential relationships between a narrator or multiple narrators and the audience eg:
- a) Story-tellers tell a story in such a way that the audience is required to move: e.g. whispering so that they must move closer to hear; creating a story amongst them so that they must give up space.
 - b) They tell a story from a position which might create the maximum impact for that particular story on the audience e.g. above the audience, below the audience, distant from the audience, very close to the audience, all around the audience, with the audience around them.
 - c) Story-tellers use audience as part of their story: e.g. crowds in streets, courtiers.
 - d) Story-tellers move freely amongst audience eliminating any established acting area while they tell story.
 - e) Several actors narrate story consecutively from different focal points around or within the audience.
 - f) Several actors, individually and simultaneously, form clusters with audience to tell their own story; or different sections of the same story so that various parts of the audience learn the whole story in different sequences.



Suggested Reading

<i>Then What Happens? Storytelling and Adapting for the Theatre</i>	Mike Alfreds
<i>Different Every Night: Freeing the Actor</i>	Mike Alfreds
<i>Drama Games for Classrooms and Workshops</i>	Jessica Swale
<i>Drama games for Devising</i>	Jessica Swale
<i>Theatre Games</i>	Clive Barker
<i>Impro for Storytellers</i>	Keith Johnstone
<i>101 Drama Games</i>	David Farmer