

# TUTORIAL FACT SHEETS - SAMPLE

## SHERMAN THEATRE

### INTRODUCTION TO PLAYWRITING



**SUPPORTED BY THE ESMÉE FAIRBAIRN FOUNDATION**

**Overview**

Thank you for signing up to Sherman Theatre's FREE Introduction To Playwriting tutorials.

Funded by the generous support of the Esmée Fairbairn foundation this scheme has been designed to support the development of literacy and oracy skills through playwriting, in a program that is specifically aimed at young people aged 15 – 18. We bring together professional writers, directors, actors and our participants in creative playful and challenging sessions, which seek to nurture the voice of the future of Welsh writers. Although the weekly sessions have been temporarily suspended due to the current government guidelines we are conducting sessions via Zoom which any young people aged 15 – 18 are welcome to join.

This collection of fact sheets and extensive glossary are useful tools for supporting the work that our writers have begun in their filmed sessions. We imagine that each writer's tasks could fill one session with your students, but that you can then apply the same techniques to a range of ways of working on their creative writing.

Although this program is aimed at young people aged 15 – 18 we know that all students in secondary education will benefit from developing their creative writing skills and so have pitched the workshops to cover across the broad spectrum. However, you know your students best so please do use whichever exercise you feel are best suited to their needs.

We hope that you enjoy writing and that you will want to share your young people's work far and wide. Please do send us any work that you think is of particular note and we will endeavour to get some professional feedback for your students.

If you should have any further questions or would like to sign up young people for the full course then please do not hesitate to get in touch with us via email: [itp@shermantheatre.co.uk](mailto:itp@shermantheatre.co.uk).

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**Below we have included just a sample of some of the profiles and exercises that can be found within the full resource and videos.**

**For access to the full resource and video tutorials that accompany this work please contact Non at [itp@shermantheatre.co.uk](mailto:itp@shermantheatre.co.uk)**

**We look forward to working with you.**

## JO CLIFFORD

- Jo is a Writer, Performer, Poet & Teacher
- She was born in North Staffordshire in 1951 and raised as a boy.
- Aged 7 she was sent to boarding school; during this time (when she was aged 12) her mother suddenly died. She discovered her passion for theatre when she played women's roles in school plays; where it became clear to her, she was not male.
- She met her partner, Sue Innes, at St Andrews University in 1971; their partnership lasted 33 years until Sue's premature death in 2005.
- In the late eighties Jo wrote a series of major works for the Traverse, with central roles given to women and with gender balanced casts.
- She is a leading translator from Spanish, French and Portuguese, as well as a radio dramatist, and adapter of novels for radio and the stage. After Sue's death, she formalised her female identity and began to re-discover herself as actress and performer. She has written over 100 plays for every dramatic medium.



### Exercise 1

Jo tells us we are all able to create. We can create anything, something that is unique to you. Jo says it like this: *“They don't have to be true. There's no right or there's no wrong or there's no good or there's no bad.”*

#### What shall I say back? – *Replay and reimagine the scene*

Pick a moment in your recent life. An event that you wish had gone differently. A time when you did not have the right words to say, when you were unable to hold your ground or could not think quickly enough in the moment.

- Once you have chosen the scene or moment write down how you would have liked it to turn out.
- Pick the words you want to say.
- Take some time to replay it in your mind or write it down.
- Experiment with the different way it could have been different.

*Are there any phrases you liked or found intriguing? Make a note of these for future writing.*

#### Making up stories about people

*“This is your world. You are free to make, to say, to do, to feel whatever you like. This is your world, and no one can judge you about it.”*

Find a place to sit and watch people. A good location with plenty of people to choose from. It could be a café or on a street corner, perhaps it is in the playground at school or the corridor.

**TRACY HARRIS**

- Tracy is a playwright from Swansea.
- She studied at Gorseinon College where her love of theatre grew before going to Lancaster University to study Experimental Theatre after being highly influenced by Volcano.
- As part of that course she did a playwriting module where she wrote her first play *Past Away* which was commissioned by Sgript Cymru on her return to Wales.
- Her other plays include *Ripples* (RWCMD/ShermanTheatre) *The Cloak Room* (Sherman Theatre/ Mighty Theatre, Washington) and *No Vacancies* (Sherman Theatre) *Lost, Found, Stolen* (National Theatre Wales)
- Alongside writing, she started making TV Documentaries and set up Gritty Productions to make hard hitting films and radio programmes for BBC including BAFTA nominated *Swansea Living on the Streets* and most recently *Selling Sex to Survive* about prostitution in South Wales

**A quick introduction to Free Writing.**

Within Tracy's exercises she talks about using the technique of *Free Writing*. We have put together a very brief introduction here:

This technique involves continuous writing in an effort to overcome the blocks that prevent us from writing without fear. The writing should always take place over fixed period of time – we suggest between five and fifteen minutes. At no point during this time should the writer's pen leave the paper (or their fingers stop typing). Writers should be encouraged to ignore spelling, punctuation or grammar. If they reach a point where they cannot think of anything to write, then writers should still keep writing; either saying that they cannot think of anything or describing the room around them, until they find another thought.

This process encourages you to freely stray off topic; let your thoughts lead you to make connections and create abstract views on the topic. In doing so it helps a writer explore a particular subject by giving up the constraints of writing in a particular style and framework.

**Exercise 1 - Music**

***"I like the idea that a play is like a mix tape and you can evoke different scenes from using different music."***

Tracy sometimes uses music to help her start to write. She thinks about her play like a soundtrack. Each song has its own rises and falls, which she writes in response to; creating scenes that do the same. In Tracy's tutorial there is a track she would like you to write in response to (*Music Track Plays once at 19.39*).

Begin by listening to it. Simply close your eyes and listen to it. Think about the different sounds you hear. What rhythm and tempo changes are there? What instruments? What is happening in the silence or during the long notes?

**KYLE LIMA**

- A Cardiffian graduate of Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Kyle is an Actor, Writer and Director.
- Since graduating, Kyle has had a career working in theatre, TV and film and is an associate artist at Sherman Theatre and Theatr Iolo.
- Kyle was a member of the BBC Writersroom Welsh Voices in 2018-9, after he submitted a script based on his 2017 one man show *Heart And Soul*, written, performed and directed by Kyle, which took place at the Wales Millennium Centre.
- Kyle's stage acting credits include: *Muscle*(Chapter); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Bristol Old Vic, Barbican Centre & Kennedy Centre USA); World Cup Final 1966 (Bristol Old Vic); *The Last Mermaid* (Festival of Voice - Wales Millennium Centre); *The Little Match Girl* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Tristan & Yseult* (Shakespeare's Globe, Bristol Old Vic & Theatre Clwyd); *The Motherf\*\*ker with the Hat* (Sherman Theatre & Tron Theatre); *Peter Pan* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre).
- Kyle's screen work includes BAFTA Cymru nominated film *Pink Wall* and the highly acclaimed 2019 *Gavin & Stacey Christmas Special*. He will also be seen soon in the ITV drama *The Pembrokeshire Murders*.

**Exercise 1 – Headlines**

Kyle suggests an easy starting point or stimulus for writing - newspaper headlines.

Start by looking through a range of different publications; broadsheets, tabloids, free papers, magazines.

Pick out some article headlines which intrigue you. Why do these ones grab your interest? Are there characters or locations that interest you? Do they have a clear genre? Perhaps they are just unusual. Try to choose a range and have a few ideas as to you have chosen them.

Now you have your headline ask yourself the following:

- Who is involved? (the characters)
- Where are they?
- What is the incident that started it all?

Make a brief note of these facts at the top of a blank page.

Now decide if you would like to write a scene based on the headline or a monologue for one the characters you have found within it. **Set a timer for 3 minutes and start writing.** Once you have done this repeat as many times as you like.

Finally read these scenes aloud. Hearing them aloud will help you identify the things you like about what you wrote and the areas you want to improve. Choose one of these pieces for re-drafting and spend a bit more time addressing the changes you want to make.

## ELGAN RHYS

- Elgan is one of the founders and co-Artistic Director for *Cwmni Pluen*; creating original, bold and relevant theatre that offers a vital platform to voices within our society.
- He has devised, co-written and performed in *Mags*, *Ti.Me*, *Llais/Voice* (Cwmni Pluen) and *Follow Me/Dilyn Fi* (Frân Wen).
- For S4C/It's My shout he wrote *Fi a Miss World*.
- As well as writing he has also worked as a director including work for Sherman Theatre (*The Magic Porridge Pot/Hud y Crochan Uwed*), Canoe Theatre (*Blue/Orange*), University of South Wales (*Woyzeck* and *Dan Y Wenallt/Under Milk Wood*)
- His Assistant Director credits include *BIRD* (Sherman Theatre & Manchester Royal Exchange), *Yuri* (August 012), and *After The End* (Dirty Protest).
- Elgan is an Associate Artist for Frân Wen, and lectures on the BA (Hons) Drama a Theatr at University of South Wales.



## Exercise 1 – Adapting

Adapting a piece of work means that its creative form has been changed. Quite commonly in theatre we adapt novels into stage plays, or we translate and adapt from other languages and forms. *Elgan's exercises will give you the opportunity to do this yourself.*

Start by thinking about a story that you have not yet seen on stage (*This could be a film, novel, a comic book etc*).

***Make sure that it is a story and characters that you know well.***

- What is it about this story that appeals to you?
- Is it the characters? The locations? Perhaps the themes or topics it explores?

Make a list of some of these facts.

Now begin to think about the moments within the story that you really enjoy or find intriguing.

Choose from these your favorite moment that happens between two characters.

Take two separate bits of paper and assign each one to a character.

At the top of that paper write the character's name, and complete the following sentence:

***“In this moment this character wants...”***

Below this write all the facts you know about the character (such as)

- What or who they like / dislike?
- Where are they from?
- What do they do?
- Why are they here?
- How did they get here?
- What are they afraid of?

*These are just some examples – feel free to expand on them. The more you collate here the easier the rest of the exercises will be for you.*

## GLOSSARY OF THEATRICAL TERMS:

Here are some terms and words that you may find useful when watching our tutorials and you begin writing:

### A

**Accent** A style of speech which denotes where someone resides.

**Adapting** a piece of work means that its creative form has been changed, i.e you could adapt a novel into a stage play, or a musical theatre show into a film.

**Alexander Zeldin** is a writer and director for theatre and film. Alexander made work in Russia, South Korea and the Middle East as well as at the Naples Festival, as well as teaching in East 15 Acting School. He has also worked as an assistant director to Peter Brook and Marie-Helene Estienne.

**Alienation Effect** also called **Verfremdungseffekt**. Central to the work of Brecht it involves the use of techniques designed to distance the audience from emotional involvement in the play through reminders that they are watching a theatrical performance.

**Alistair McDowall** is a playwright who grew up in the North East of England. His play *Brilliant Adventures* was awarded a Bruntwood Prize in 2011.

**April De Angelis** An English dramatist of part Sicilian descent. She is a graduate of Sussex University who trained at East 15 Acting School.

**Artistic Director** The person with overall responsibility for the selection of the works performed by an arts company.

**Arts Council** A government organisation dedicated to promoting the arts; mainly by funding local artists, awarding prizes, and organising arts events. Each nation in the UK has their own arts council with slightly different aims and names.

**Aside** The lines spoken by an actor to the audience which are not supposed to be overheard by other characters on-stage.

An **Associate Artist** is someone who has the development of their creative practice supported by a venue or company. Often leading to them being commissioned to develop, produce or curate work specifically for the organisation they are associated with.

**Auditorium** The part of the theatre where the audience sit during the performance, also known as the "house". The word originates from the Latin; *Audio* - "I hear".

### B

**Back Story** The history or background created for a fictional character in a book, theatre, film or television.

**BBC Writers room** An initiative by the BBC which helps to discover, develop and champion new and experienced writing talent.

**Belarus Free Theatre** is a Belarusian underground theatre group. Under the current political system the Belarus Free Theatre has no official registration, no premises, nor any other facilities. Rehearsals and performances (always free of charge for the public) are normally held secretly in small private apartments, which, due to security and the risk of persecution, must constantly be changed.

**Big Finish Productions** A British company that produces books and audio plays based, primarily, on cult science fiction properties.