

CHARLES DICKENS'  
**A CHRISTMAS  
CAROL** A GHOST  
STORY

ADAPTED BY  
AND STARRING **MARK GATISS**





## Introduction

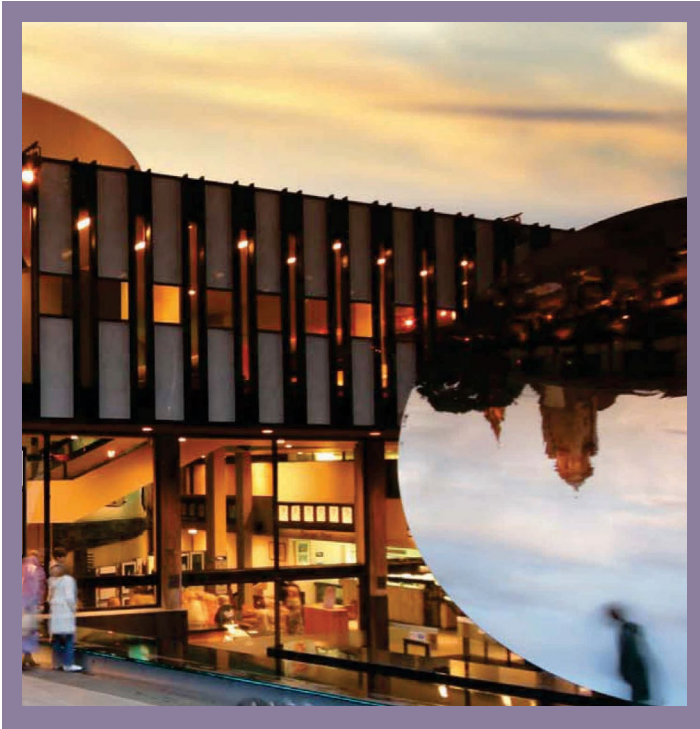


Photo: Drew Baumohl

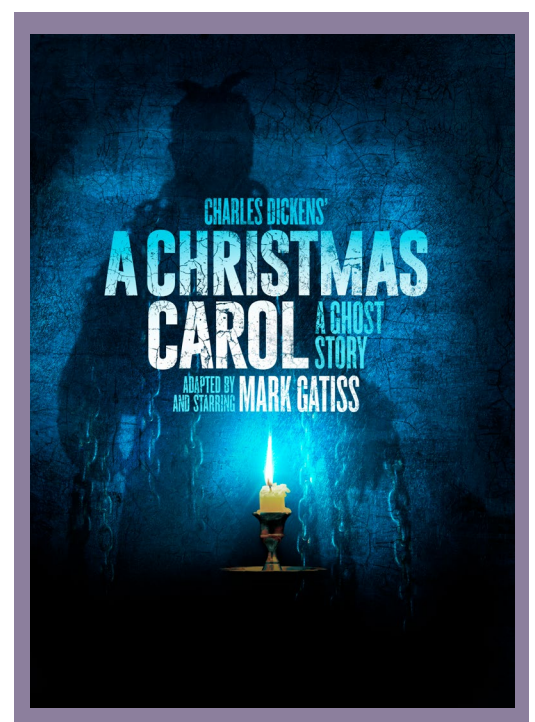
Nottingham Playhouse makes bold and thrilling theatre, proudly created in Nottingham.

Awarded Regional Theatre of the Year 2019 by The Stage, we create a range of productions throughout the year from timeless classics to innovative family shows and adventurous new commissions. Not to mention the legendary Playhouse Panto. Touring work nationally and internationally, we always remain firmly rooted in our vibrant home city, where our spacious modernist building – fronted by Anish Kapoor’s Sky Mirror – is one of the region’s most popular landmarks.

We want our theatre to be a space where everyone feels they belong, and we use our stage to tell diverse stories that reflect our city. Our wide-reaching participation programmes create life-changing experiences for our community and we also support the next generation of theatre-makers in the East Midlands through our extensive Amplify programme.

## Contents

Q&A/Cast and Team List .....	3
Synopsis.....	4
Fun Facts.....	5
Historical Context.....	6
Character Breakdown .....	8
Rehearsal Techniques.....	10
Timeline of Making a Show .....	12
Job Roles in Making Theatre .....	13
Charles Dickens Biography.....	15
Bertolt Brecht .....	16
Konstantin Stanislavski .....	17
Steven Berkoff .....	18
Augusto Boal.....	19
Frantic Assembly .....	20



## Q&A WITH ADAM PENFORD



### Why did you want to programme *A Christmas Carol*?

Dickens was a theatrical writer. His language, imagery, characters and narratives jump off the page and the words demand to be spoken aloud. Within weeks of the novel's publication, illicit stage versions were appearing. I knew it was Mark Gatiss's favourite novel and, as a connoisseur of ghost stories, he had a clear sense of how he wanted to approach it. It's so frequently adapted for stage and screen

that we only wanted to produce a version if we knew what we wanted to draw out of it. It's usually programmed at Christmas, so scheduling it for Halloween set out our stall. Mark's work tends to mix comedy with the macabre; it's very Dickensian in that respect.

### Why do you think the story remains so popular?

The themes of regret, kindness and redemption are universal and timeless. Through the pandemic, we've seen the best and worst of humanity; compassion and selfishness in equal measure. To see Scrooge's journey resonate for a contemporary audience will be really powerful to witness. But those contradictory qualities are very human, and whatever the historical context or geographical location, the story will feel pertinent for that reason. The story is also about the importance of community, and within the acting company we have graduates for whom this is their professional debut, working alongside incredibly seasoned performers, and the spirit of that collaboration has been infectious.

### Has the production changed because it was postponed by the pandemic?

As our first major production since fully reopening, it's become a celebration of both the Playhouse and theatre in general. We wanted to create something that really showed off the skills and creativity of our in-house team and freelance family. The hard working cast play fifty characters and there are over thirty scenes. We employ a range of theatrical devices to tell the story including singing, dancing, puppetry, illusion, video, and children... It's been a big undertaking, but really enjoyable to create in the rehearsal room and I hope that pleasure infects the audience too.

## Cast and Team

### Cast

#### Mark Gatiss

as Jacob Marley

#### Nicholas Farrell

as Ebenezer Scrooge

#### Jo Eaton-Kent

as Ghost of Christmas Past  
+ as cast

#### Zak Ford-Williams

as Tiny Tim + as cast

#### Christopher Godwin

as Narrator + as cast

#### Edward Harrison

as Bob Cratchit

#### Angelina Chudi

as Caroline + as cast

#### Sarah Ridgeway

as Mrs Cratchit + as cast

#### James Backway

as Fred + as cast

#### Joe Shire

as Fezziwig + as cast

## Child Performers

#### Renae Rhodes

#### Esme Tchoudi

#### Lauren Tanner

#### Charlie Westlake

## Produced by

Nottingham Playhouse  
and Eleanor Lloyd Productions

**NOTTINGHAM  
PLAYHOUSE**

ELEANOR LLOYD PRODUCTIONS

## Synopsis

Our story begins on Christmas Eve and we are introduced to a mean-spirited man named Ebenezer Scrooge. Scrooge is miserable and refuses to give money to the poor. His nephew Fred invites him to a Christmas party but Scrooge does not want to go. After the party, he returns to his cold and dark apartment and then unnerving events begin...

A ghost appears in the shadows. It is his old business partner, Jacob Marley, who appears to him in chains. Marley warns Scrooge that the reason for his heavy chains is because he lived a selfish life and this is his punishment. Marley tells Scrooge to expect to be visited by three ghosts.

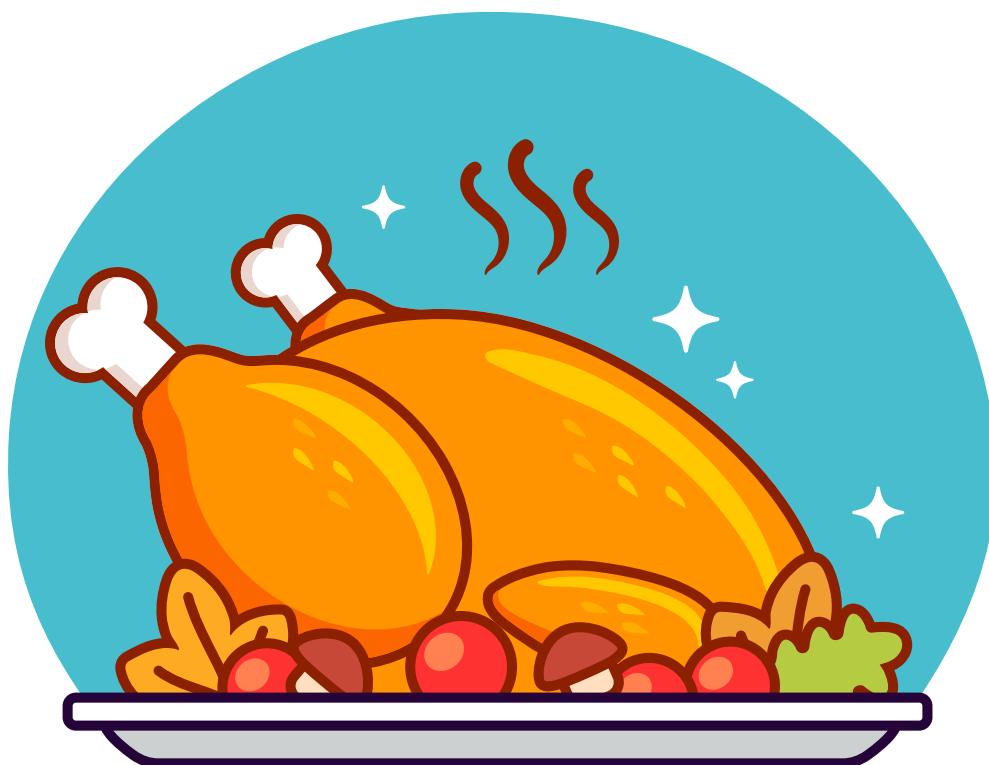
The first ghost is a childlike phantom, called the Ghost of Christmas Past. This ghost takes Scrooge back to his past, where he can watch himself in his younger years. He sees himself at his school, in his very first job and when he was engaged to a woman named Belle, who eventually left him as he was too in love with money. Scrooge finds these memories very painful and the spirit leads him back to his bed, where he sleeps soundly.

The second ghost is called the Ghost of Christmas Present. He appears to Scrooge as a jolly

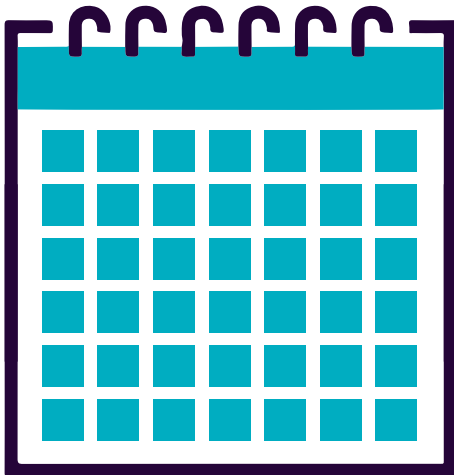
giant. He takes Scrooge through what will happen at Christmas this year, he shows him the house of his employer Bob Cratchit and how Bob is very poor but has a happy family life. The ghost then shows him two starving children and disappears. Scrooge is very upset by all he has seen and then things get even stranger...

A hooded figure starts to move towards Scrooge, this hooded figure is the third and final ghost; the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. Scrooge sees some events unfold relating to an unnamed man's death, including seeing some businessmen discussing the dead man's riches and other people celebrating the man's death. The ghost then takes Scrooge into a graveyard and shows him a grave with his name on it. Scrooge now understands the unnamed man who died was him. He is deeply upset to think people would celebrate his death and only remember him for his money.

He wakes up to find it is Christmas morning. He is thankful he has a chance to redeem his horrible ways. He buys a large turkey, which he sends to the Cratchits' house, donates money to the poor and goes to his nephew Fred's Christmas party. He is filled with Christmas spirit and is a changed man.



## Fun Facts

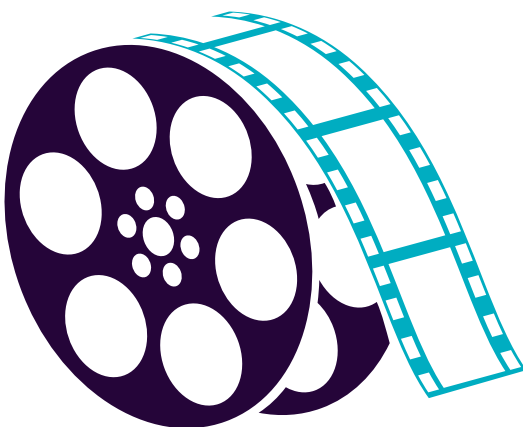


The novella (short novel) only took six weeks for Charles Dickens to write.

During the time Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*, he took nightly walks around the City of London and could walk up to 20 miles in one night!

~~Merry~~  
~~Happy~~  
Christmas

The term "Merry Christmas" became more popular and replaced the phrase "Happy Christmas" for a number of years, just after Dickens' novella was published, due to Dickens' use of the phrase "Merry Christmas" in the book.



There are 27 film adaptations of the novel and over 65 different versions for the theatre and even 2 video games based on this classic!



Dickens paid the publishing costs himself.



## Historical Context



**Charles Dickens**  
1812 - 1870

Dickens published *A Christmas Carol* in 1843. Victorian England was experiencing exponential growth during this time. The population from 1800 – 1880 grew from 1 million to 4.5 million people. Marxist historian, Eric Hobsbawm, believed that the Industrial Revolution, in the UK, began after the 1760s and was not fully felt until near the end of the era in the 1830s & 1840s. During this time, pressures on manufacturers to produce a high quantity of goods was increasing, which led to a capitalism to surge and the gap between the rich and the poor to widen. Factory and business owners were getting richer as their employees were working for menial wages in poor working conditions. It is not surprising that during this time, Dickens was inspired to write a story to warn against the dangers of such a society that prioritised wealth and productivity over human welfare. At the start of the novella, Scrooge refuses to pay for extra coal to heat the fire in his office, even though his poor employee Bob Cratchit is freezing. This is an example of the numerous ways Dickens illuminated the harsh working conditions for many.

Housing conditions in London were cramped and festering with disease, with many outbreaks of cholera at this time. One outbreak in the Soho area in the 1850s was due to people drinking from a well, which collected sewage directly from ill people. Even though class divide existed, the capital was incredibly cramped and disease spread between the rich and poor with ease. The thought that Dickens wrote many pieces that centred on human mortality, including *A Christmas Carol*, was poignant in an era where health provision was virtually non-existent, consequently death rates were very high. Modern historian Peter Ackroyd notes that "if a late twentieth-century person were suddenly to find himself in a tavern or house of the period, he would be literally sick - sick with the smells, sick with the food, sick with



the atmosphere around him.”

As the religion at this time was Church of England, there was a predominant belief in a Christian afterlife and a soul needing to be ready for judgement. There is the theme of moral virtue running through the story, with Scrooge changing his ways drastically, perhaps to mirror society's beliefs that we should review and redeem our behaviour before death. Jacob Marley epitomises the tortured soul, paying for the sins of his life on earth, destined to roam forever in chains.

The religious views within the Victorian era were quite stifling and best summarised by Gerald Parsons in a book named Dickens, Religion and

Society by Robert Butterworth. Parsons mentions the following, “poverty was... the inevitable product of immutable economic laws which were themselves the product of a divinely ordained and ordered world”. We understand that Dickens, whilst religious, was perhaps more inspired by a softer idea of religion and was quite enthused by the Unitarian faith he encountered on his 1840s trip to America. It is likely that he disagreed with the prevailing belief that poverty of any kind was tolerable, or should be expected, and he deliberately shows Scrooge donating money to charities by the end of the novel as a true symbol of his character development.



**A redeemed Scrooge greets townspeople on Christmas Day.**



## Character Breakdown



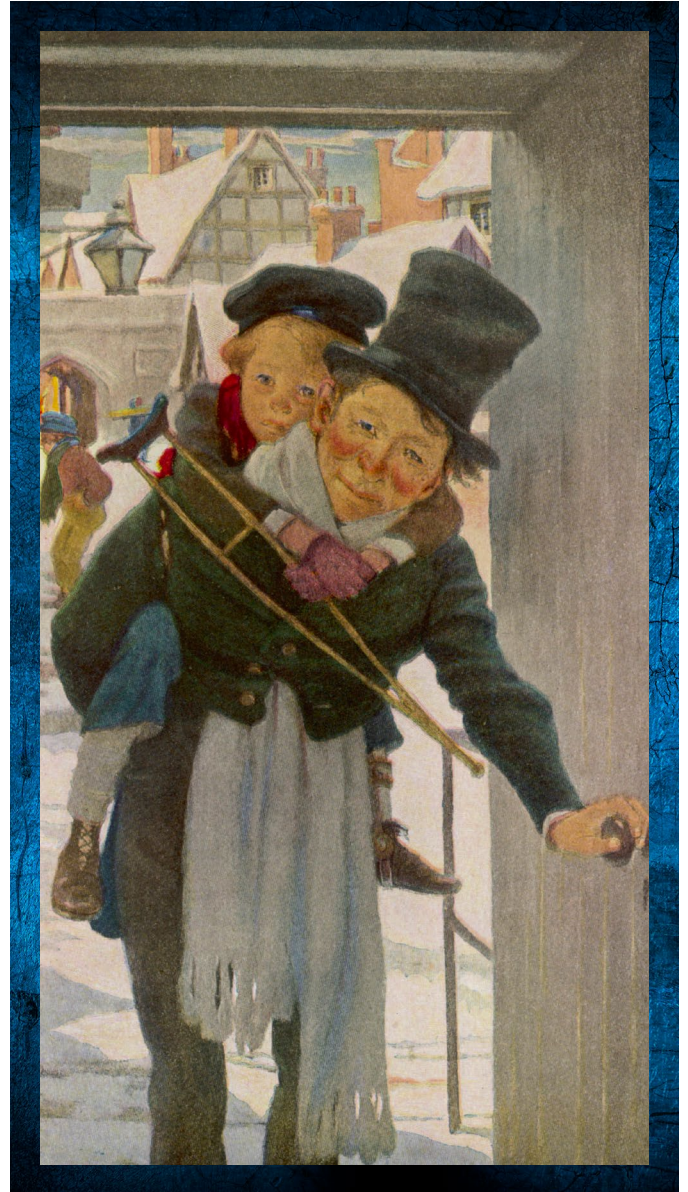
### Ebenezer Scrooge

The central figure of the story, a mean-spirited and greedy business owner. All he cares about is money at the expense of his own employees. He is a symbol of the typical business owner at the time of the Industrial Revolution and goes through a complete change over the course of the tale.



### Jacob Marley

Scrooge's former business partner, who was greedy and money-obsessed like Scrooge. Marley appears to Scrooge to warn him of the visits of the ghosts and tells him that he is burdened by chains in his afterlife as he lived the same horrid life that Scrooge is currently living.



### Bob Cratchit

Scrooge's employee. He is kind and has a large loving family but is very poor. Cratchit represents the everyday working man of the time, struggling to afford to feed his family and working in less than satisfactory conditions.

### Tiny Tim

Bob's son, who carries a crutch and wears iron bars on his legs but has an incredibly joyful outlook on the world.





## The Ghost of Christmas Past

The first ghost who visits Scrooge, a childlike spirit, who shows him his childhood and early life.



## The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

The third and final ghost to visit Scrooge. The most terrifying of the three ghosts, a hooded figure, who remains silent and shows Scrooge the haunting reality of his future grave, if he does not change his ways.

## Fred

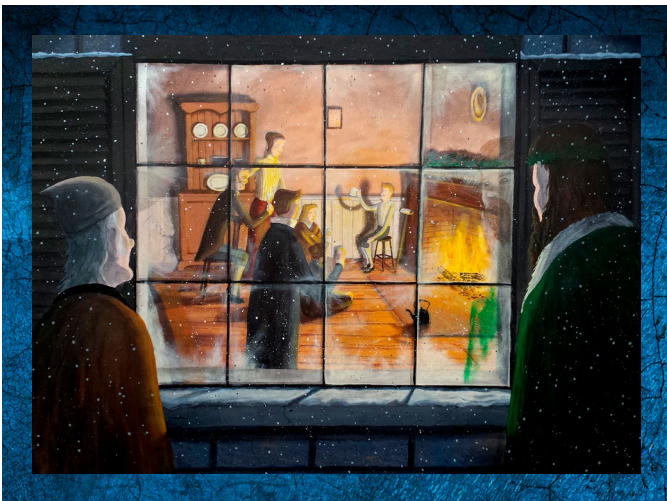
Scrooge's nephew, who loves Christmas and is a jolly young man.

## Belle

Scrooge's past fiancée, who is shown to him by the Ghost of Christmas Past. Belle left Scrooge as she felt he loved money more than her.

## Fezziwig

Scrooge apprenticed with him when he was younger. Fezziwig was known for his lavish and amazing Christmas parties.



## The Ghost of Christmas Present

The second ghost who visits Scrooge, a large friendly giant, wearing a green robe. He allows Scrooge to see insights into the Christmas of that year, particularly focusing on the Cratchit household.

## Rehearsal Techniques

Dickensian characters are often some of the most fun and exaggerated characters to play. Dickens is known for creating very eclectic and bold personas and A

Christmas Carol is no exception. In this section we provide some rehearsal techniques to help develop incredibly distinct and strong characters.

### Physicality

#### • Animals

This is a Stanislavskian activity and focuses on character physicality, tone of voice and speed of speech. Imagine a character is a particular animal and perform a short scene (either text-based, or improvised scenario) as that animal. Ask your teacher or workshop practitioner to shout out numbers on a scale from 1 - 10, where 10 is the most exaggerated version of that animal whilst the performance style of 1 is very subtle.

### TOP TIP

Remember to think about speed of speech and movement as well as allowing your whole body to become that animal. Then discuss your thoughts afterwards and try the exercise again with different characters and animals.



Maybe you could try playing Scrooge as a **spider** and Bob Cratchit as a **mouse**. Or perhaps you might try playing the role of the Ghost of Christmas Present as an elephant and Scrooge as a snake.



### Text Work

#### • Facts and Assumptions

Starting with your script, and working in groups if preferable, find out all the facts about a specific character. Once you've done that, assumptions can also be made based on these facts, building a set of Given Circumstances for each character in the play. This can then be shared with the group so that the Given Circumstances for the whole play can be set.



## The World of the Play

### • Cross this Space

Dickensian London is a very specific time in history, walk around the room / cross the space as if you are the following (think about how this affects the speed of movement):

- **The beggars** - You are freezing cold and hungry
- **Scrooge** - You are in a bad mood and in a rush
- **Bob Cratchit** - You are in a happy mood

Continue to add your own characters / people from the story. Then designate parts and walk around the space as your given character. Create three tasks to mime in three separate spaces of the room and work out how you will travel between them. Repeat the sequence and take it in turns to step out and watch your very own creation of Dickens' world. The person or people who have stepped out can also be temporary directors and give notes to heighten parts of the scene, this could include asking people to be bolder with their movements, or asking your peers to emphasise facial expressions.



## Creating Backstories

In A Christmas Carol, we view glimpses of Scrooge's backstory but there are many other characters in the play whose history we don't see. Through improvisations act out the following scenarios:

- In pairs, one person as Bob Cratchit and the other as his wife, Mrs Cratchit, act out the first moment they met, or fell in love.
- In pairs, one person to act the role of Belle, Scrooge's old fiancée and one person to act out Scrooge. Perform the moment Belle breaks up with him. Think about how hard he fights to keep her in that moment.
- In small groups, one person as Fred and the rest of the group as Fred's friends, act out a small gathering they have, to show their lively and optimistic natures.

## Timeline of Making a Show

### Assembling the Creative Team

Theatre-making is a collaborative process, and appointing the right creative team is essential to the success of a production. Usually the Producer will appoint the Director first, as the Director will want to play a part in selecting the other members of the team. These are likely to include a Designer (set, costume or both), Lighting Designer, Sound Designer, Stage Manager(s) and Specialists (such as Choreographer, Musical Director, Fight Director etc), depending on the needs of the show.

### Casting

Some people say that theatre-making is 90% about the casting. Certainly getting the right actors to play the roles and to work with in rehearsal is vitally important. Bigger shows work with a Casting Director, who helps the team to find the right actors. The most common way of finding actors is to run auditions, where the actors will present their skills to members of the Creative Team. Sometimes there may be a 'straight offer' where the actor is so perfect for the role, or quite famous, or well-known to the Director, that they don't have to audition.

### Pre-Rehearsal Meetings

The Creative Team will meet regularly before rehearsals begin, to plan and develop the vision and designs for the show. The Director will usually be at all of these meetings to ensure an overall coherent vision.

### Script Preparation

Long before rehearsals begin, the Director will do a great deal of work on the script and in researching the play and context. This ensures she/he is highly knowledgeable about the play and can run the process and the rehearsal room calmly and effectively. Sometimes the Assistant Director will help with this preparation.

### Model Presentations

The Designer will usually create a detailed small-scale model of the set to aid visioning and discussion. There are 2 stages to this process: the white card and the full model. The white card model is made of card and is a very basic model that allows for lots of changes to happen easily. The full model is painted and contains lots of detail – at this stage there are unlikely to be many further changes. The full model will usually be shown to the actors at the start of rehearsals to help them imagine the set in rehearsals.

### The Read-Through

The cast, creative team, producer and often others with an interest in the process will sit around a large table and hear the play read aloud by the cast. This is very exciting and quite nerve-wracking for the actors who may have only just met one another. The read through may be the only time some of the stage management team and technical team will hear the play before they work on it in the theatre space – so it is an important part of the process.

### Rehearsals

The period of time – usually between 3 and 5 weeks – when the cast, Director and Creative Team work intensively to make the show, often including table work (where the script and research are examined), blocking (where the moves for the actors are decided), games, exercises and run-throughs of scenes, acts and the whole show. The Deputy Stage Manager (DSM) is a crucial member of the rehearsal room team, keeping notes, organising schedules and acting as a conduit between the producing team and the rehearsal room. The DSM will usually also be in charge of cueing the lighting and sound for performances, so they create and keep the 'bible' – a version of the script with all the cues and notes needed to operate the performances.

### Technical Rehearsals

Always happening on the stage – the technical rehearsals usually take between 3 and 5 days, and are a chance for the lighting, sound, set, costume, projection, and all other elements to be carefully brought together – all under the watchful gaze of the Director. Technical rehearsals are vitally important and can be very slow and laborious, but also a really exciting chance to bring all the collaborators and their work together.

### Dress Rehearsals

These are the final rehearsals – a chance to run the show as if it were in front of an audience. Unless something goes very wrong, the dress rehearsal would not be stopping for notes or to alter anything. Instead the Creative Team will write lots of notes, and then share these with the cast and DSM in a meeting straight after the dress rehearsal.

### Previews

Some shows have preview performances. These are performances in front of an audience, but where everyone understands that the show is very new and one or two things might not go quite to plan. The tickets are usually cheaper to attend these performances. The Director and Creative Team will always give notes to the cast and team after a preview show so that it keeps getting better before the opening night.



## Job Roles in Making Theatre

You may have heard the phrase 'get a proper job' in relation to working in theatre. But this is very out of date. There are many job roles with good salaries in theatre and culture. Nottingham Playhouse has over 100 permanent staff! Here are just a few...

### **Actor**

Actors bring characters to life on stage with their performances, using speech, movement and expression to act a script or improvise their roles.

### **Administration**

Administrators deal with customers, run offices, and take care of the day-to-day running of the business.

### **Agent**

Agents are often the first point of contact for anyone looking to hire actors. Few actors work without the support of an agent. Agents can also supply artists for corporate and private events. Their clients may include actors, singers, dancers or supporting artists.

### **Artistic Director**

The artistic director makes sure their theatre is putting on the kind of shows that fit with the artistic aims of the organisation.

### **Arts Journalist**

Every show hopes for good reviews. Journalists get the word out about the show to the public. They make sure people know what shows are on offer and what is happening in the world of theatre.

### **Backstage Crew**

Building sets, helping create props and operating equipment, the backstage crew support the designers and performers with the running of the show.

### **Box Office Staff**

Box office staff work in cinemas, theatres and concert halls. They are responsible for taking bookings and payments for tickets. Box office staff also arrange for group visits and discounts. They may also advise on seating for people with disabilities or special needs.

### **Carpenter**

Carpenters and joiners in the theatre and dance sector and crafts sector work with wood. They work in theatres or in workshops. In the theatre and dance sector, they specifically make, fit or repair scenery and props that are part of a play or show.

### **Choreographer**

Choreographers create routines and movement sequences for singers and musicians to perform.

### **Costume Designer**

The costume designer is responsible for designing all the costumes to be worn in a production. This can involve a mix of designing from scratch, and sourcing existing items of clothing.

### **Dance Teacher**

Dance teachers educate and instruct on different forms of dance. They work with individuals and groups of all ages and abilities to help them learn dance practices.

### **Dancer**

Dance is a term for describing ways of using the body to tell stories, interpret music and express emotion. Some dance forms require an intense training starting from an early age; others can be learned later.

### **Dialect Coach**

Dialect coaches or voice coaches work with actors to develop and improve their vocal technique, and help them adopt convincing character accents.

### **Director**

Theatre directors take responsibility for the overall creative production of plays.

### **Dramaturg**

A dramaturg is a theatre practitioner who focuses on how to convey the particular message the director wants to highlight.

### **Events Staff**

Events staff work with centre and gallery and theatre managers to deliver an event. They manage, organise and oversee the running of a venue or function. They are responsible for coordinating all the arrangements such as room bookings, catering and special effects or promotional items.

### **Finance Staff**

Finance staff officers in the performing and visual arts sectors provide administrative support to organisations.

### **Front-of-House Work**

The 'front-of-house' of a theatre refers to all areas accessed by the public, including the auditorium. Front-of-house staff look after the public to make sure their visit is safe and enjoyable.

## **Hair, Makeup and Wigs**

People that work in hair, makeup and wigs for the theatre and dance sector help to style performers. The style of makeup needed depends on the type of production. The hair, makeup and wigs may be contemporary and straightforward or require more creative approaches. Performers may need to appear as a different nationality or from a different historical period. The makeup artist will also need to dress wigs and attach them correctly to the actor or performer.

## **Lighting Designer**

Lighting designers work to ensure effective lighting for a commercial or residential property. They aim to enhance a building's environment through lighting.

## **Lighting Technicians**

Lighting technicians are vital to theatre. Their work may involve design, operating lighting rigs, and looking after equipment.

## **Marketing Officer**

Marketing is about understanding what a customer wants and promoting this product, event or service. It is also making sure the public is talking about a brand, which for the arts sector could be a theatre, museum, art gallery or community arts project.

## **Participation and Education Staff**

Arts education staff in the creative industries support teachers and development workers in cultural venues. They work in art centres, galleries, theatres and other venues to provide an educational experience. They may work with individual children or visitors, small groups or a whole class.

## **Playwright**

The playwright or dramatist is the author of a production, the writer or adapter of the original play. Often they work alone, but sometimes they also collaborate with a director and the cast.

## **Producer (Live Events)**

Producers of live events are responsible for running successful live spectacles. The producer works on live shows and events in the music industry such as concerts and music festivals. They must coordinate technical staff and performers to ensure everything runs smoothly. They have to have high-quality acts and performers for a successful event. Live events may be one-offs or regular annual events. They can be held in indoor and outdoor music venues of all sizes.

## **Props Manager**

A props manager supervises the building, making and buying of the props needed for a production.

## **Puppeteer**

Puppeteers animate and manipulate puppets as part of a theatre, television or film production. Puppetry is a performing art used to entertain adults or children.

## **Sound Designer**

Sound design can involve making sure the mix of sounds is correct at a live event, designing the sound effects on a mobile phone, and many other things.

## **Sound Engineer**

Sound engineers work in the theatre and dance sector to handle all aspects of a production's sound. They ensure that speech, music and sound effects can be heard to the best effect in a theatre production.

## **Sound Technician**

Sound technicians ensure that the best sound possible is available in a variety of venues for performances. They prepare, operate and maintain technical equipment to amplify, enhance, mix or reproduce sound. They work in recording studios, films, radio and television programmes (on set or location) and live performances, including theatre, music and dance.

## **Special Effects**

Special effects and pyrotechnics staff are responsible for special effects and pyrotechnics required as part of a production. In some shows, for example using magic, special effects may be an integral part of an act.

## **Stage Designer**

Stage designers are responsible for designing stage settings for productions. This can range from single-scene dramas to complex scenery and scene changes required by major productions.

## **Stage Manager**

Stage managers coordinate all aspects of a theatre production or event, including actors, technical staff, props, scenery and costumes. They make sure technicians and performers alike are in the right place at the right time and ready to meet their cues.

## **Stagehand**

Stagehands in performing arts are the behind-scenes support staff for a production. They carry out a wide variety of jobs backstage to ensure a production is successful.

## **Technical Manager**

A technical manager in the theatre and dance sector coordinates a production's technical staff. This could include the set-making staff, lighting staff and props making staff.

## **Wardrobe Assistant**

Wardrobe assistants work to provide support with costumes and accessories. Performances like plays and musicals rely on a strong wardrobe team to make the production look credible.





## Charles Dickens Biography

7 February 1812 – 9 June 1870 (died at 58 years old)

Dickens left school at a very young age and started working in a factory after his father lost all his money and was imprisoned for his debts. He began writing and editing short stories for local newspapers to earn more money. These stories became very popular and Dickens ended up writing 15 novels, 5 novellas (short novels) and hundreds of short stories. He was one of the first authors to read his work at public readings and was also a lecturer and defender of children's rights, education and many other social care reforms. Described by many as a socialist, it is unsurprising that Dickens wrote a story about a money-obsessed mean-spirited man, transforming into a kind-hearted generous person and

employer, who develops a true sense of charity and care for those less well-off than himself.

He married a young woman named Catherine Thomson Hogarth, daughter of George, who was the editor of the paper he wrote for, and together they had 10 children!

Towards the end of his life, he was involved in a deadly train crash, when all the first-class carriages came off the rails apart from his! This inspired the last of his works including a short ghost story called *The Signalman* and *Our Mutual Friend*.

He is now regarded as one of the greatest writers of the Victorian era.

## Theatre Practitioners

# Bertolt Brecht (1898 – 1953)

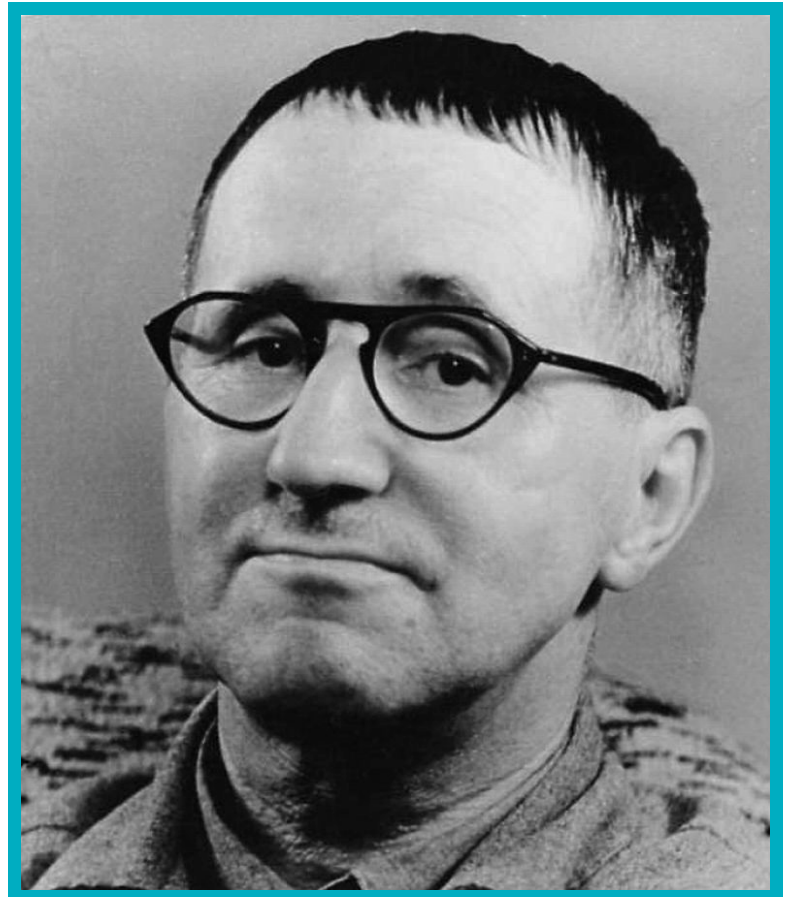
Born in 1898 in Augsburg Germany and sickened by the impact of the First World War, Bertolt Brecht began studying theatre in 1917, and wrote his first plays *Baal* and *Drums in the Night* in 1918. By 1921 he had arrived in Berlin where he soon became involved with a large number of Berlin's leading actors and directors.

When discussing Brechtian theatre, we are fundamentally examining **theatre of Politics**. Brecht was reacting directly against the Fascist regime and, following the teachings of Karl Marx, Brecht's writings were focused on a **Marxist ideology**.

Brecht was a Playwright, Director and Poet who created what we now know as Epic Theatre. Epic Theatre was a reaction against Naturalism, and aimed to provoke the audience into action. This was a theatre of change. He believed that theatre should not only reflect the world, but change it. After watching one of his plays, Brecht hoped that the audience would leave the theatre determined to take action against the unfair society they were living in. He did this through the development of the *Verfremdungseffekt* – or **Making Strange**.

The V effect is also known as the A effect, or **Alienation effect**, and is essentially a range of devices that Brecht used to prevent the audience becoming emotionally attached to the characters within the plays. He wanted them to maintain a '**distanced objectivity**' so that they could see things as they really were. An example of these techniques were: **Audience interaction (breaking the fourth wall)**, **Narration**, **Montage**, **Gestus (Gesture with attitude)**, **Spazz**, **Song**, **Mime** and **Third Person Dialogue**.

Brecht's impact was so pertinent that he had to flee from the Nazi regime in 1933, only to return to Germany in 1948 after the end of the Second World War. In 1949 Brecht created the **Berliner Ensemble** where he continued to develop his work until his death in 1956.



### Notable Works

- **The Threepenny Opera**
- **Life of Galileo**
- **Mother Courage and Her Children**
- **The Good Person of Szechwan**
- **The Caucasian Chalk Circle**
- **Mr Puntilla and his Man Matti**
- **The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui**

### Highlighted Information

- Fundamentally examining theatre of Politics
- Writings focused on a Marxist ideology
- Created what we now know as Epic Theatre
- A reaction against Naturalism
- Aimed to provoke the audience into action
- Not only reflect the world, but change it



## Theatre Practitioners

# Konstantin Stanislavski (1863 – 1937)

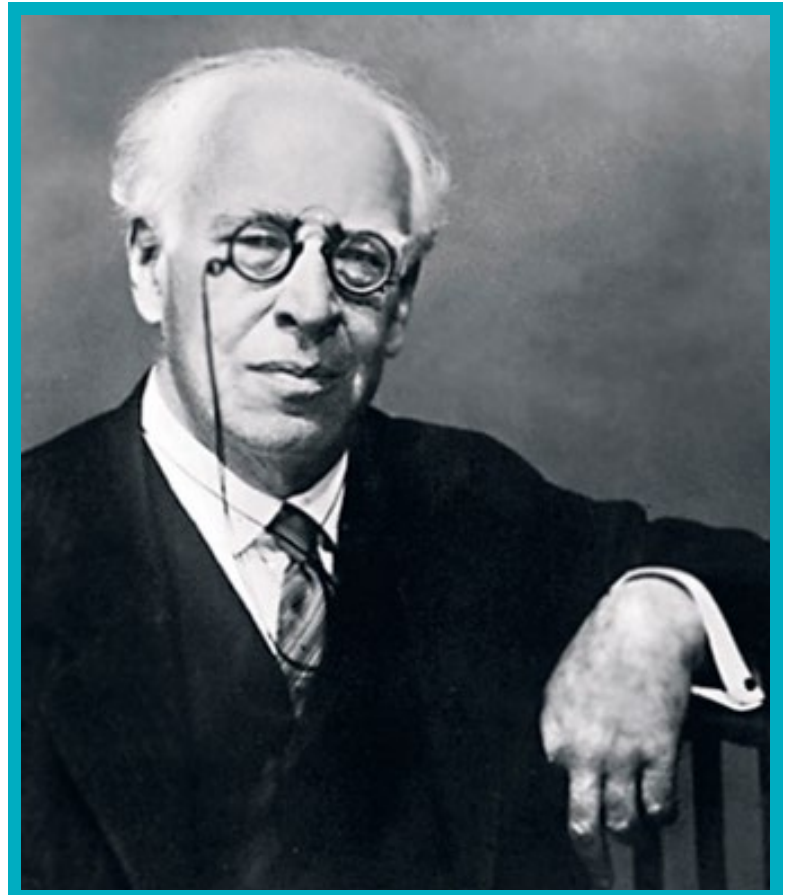
Konstantin Stanislavski, born to one of the richest families in Russia in 1863, is widely credited with the development of the first form of formal actor training in the modern world, most commonly referred to as his System. Set out across three major books, *An Actor Prepares*, *Building a Character* and *Creating a Role*, Stanislavski was the first to document a process which trainee actors could follow in order to create the image of **truth on stage**.

Stanislavski's privilege and wealth enabled him to create an alternative theatre to the melodramatic and declamatory style which was prevalent in Russia at the time. He dedicated his life to changing outmoded practice with a desire for perfection that led to international success. With barely any training, he embarked on a quest for truth in art and devoted his whole life to this journey. In 1897, he and **Nemirochov-Danchenko** created **The Moscow Art Theatre** to develop and shape his ideals.

The System that he developed aimed to be a systematic approach to lay down ground rules for approaching character, and for how an actor could use their voice and body effectively to **fully embody a character** on stage. Working closely with playwright **Anton Chekhov**, Stanislavski was able to experiment with text and actors in order to hone and develop his teachings.

Exercises that are included in The System and that are still widely used in actor training today include: **Emotion Memory**, **The Magic 'If'**, **Circles of Concentration**, **The Method of Physical Actions**, **Imagination**, **Relaxation** and **Action with a Purpose**.

These exercises still form the basis of most actor training in the western world which is a testament to how truly influential Stanislavski has been in the development of actor training.



### Notable Works

- **Founder of the MAT Stanislavski's 'system'**
- **An Actor's Work**
- **An Actor's Work on a Role**
- **My Life in Art**

### Highlighted Information

- The first form of formal actor training
- Create the image of truth on stage
- An alternative to the melodramatic and declamatory style
- Fully embody a character on stage
- A systematic approach

## Theatre Practitioners

### Steven Berkoff (1937 – present)

Steven Berkoff is a British Actor, Director and Playwright who was born in London in 1937. Berkoff trained as a mime artist at the **Lecoq School** in Paris before he began developing his own work. Alongside the many plays that he has written, Berkoff has also had a successful career in film; often playing the sinister 'bad guy' character.

Berkoff's approach to theatre is incredibly **physical and non-naturalistic**, often focusing on **movement rather than voice**. According to him, the only purpose of a script is to help '**minimalise and physicalise**' the story; stripping it down to its most basic components.

The theory of **Total Theatre** is key to Berkoff and stemmed from Artaud's theatre style. Total Theatre maintains that every aspect of theatre must have purpose: every movement, that is choreographed; to each line, that is learned perfectly; to each lighting effect, that is used to convey a mood or message; to each sound effect, that enhances the audience's experience; to each prop that has a use.

The aim of Total Theatre is to create extreme moods to give the audience an overwhelming experience and to shock, amuse, scare, or amaze them. Berkoff particularly embraced this in his **Kafka adaptations** such as Metamorphosis, The Trial and In the Penal Colony. Total Theatre performances are often stripped back and minimalist with bare stages and little language, so that the focus remains on the physical movement. This serves to detach the audience from the play and make them think about what was being said.

Berkoff likes to use **stereotype and cliché** in order to examine human behaviour. These stereotypes require the actor to demonstrate the character in a heightened manner, through **exaggerated physical movement** and often base, foul language.



#### Notable Works

- Sink the Belgrano!
- Shakespeare's Villains
- A Clockwork Orange
- Beverly Hills Cop
- War and Remembrance

#### Highlighted Information

- Physical and non-naturalistic
- Minimalise and physicalise the story
- Every aspect of Total Theatre must have purpose
- Create extreme moods
- To detach the audience from the play



## Theatre Practitioners

### Augusto Boal (1931-2009)

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1931, Boal is most renowned for creating the **Theatre of the Oppressed**, a form of interactive theatre intended to transform lives. Boal's theatre invited **spectators to become performers**, acting out solutions to their own social problems. Boal (like Brecht) believed that theatre should be a **vehicle for social change**, and his Theatre of the Oppressed aimed to show the people what was possible and give them a voice for action.

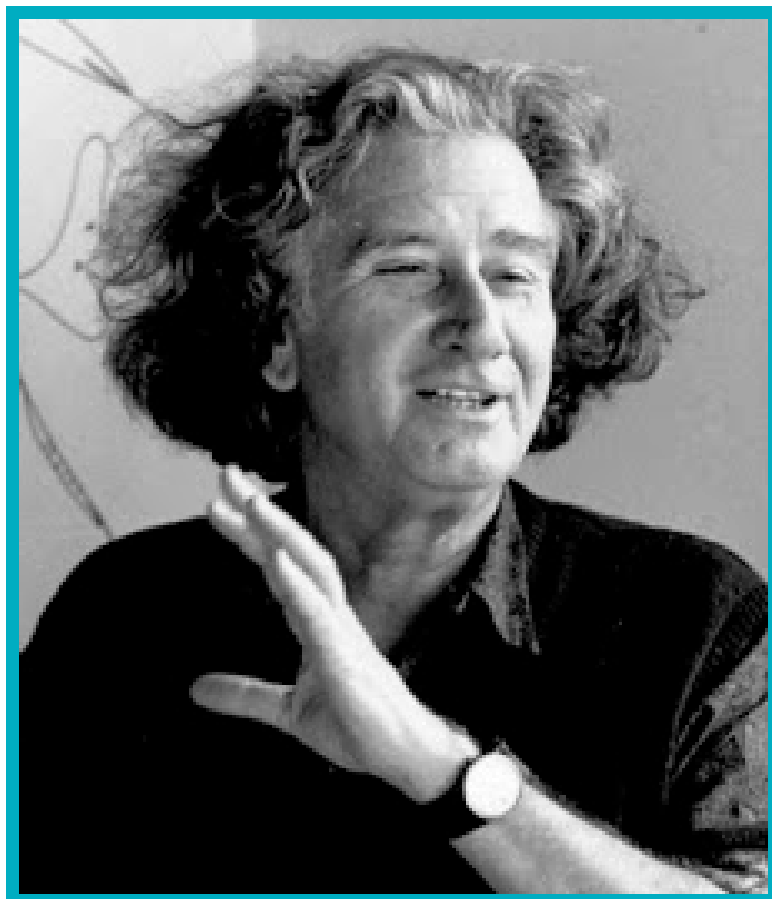
Theatre of the Oppressed begins with the idea that everyone has the capacity to act in the 'theatre' of their own lives; everybody is at once an actor and a spectator. Boal called his audience '**Spect-actors**'.

Theatre of the Oppressed encompasses three key forms:

**Image Theatre** invites spect-actors to form a tableau of frozen poses to capture a moment in time dramatising an oppressive situation. They are then asked to reflect critically on this situation before being asked to depict an ideal outcome, or to reshape an image to show different **perspectives**.

**Forum Theatre** is a short play that dramatises a situation, with an oppressive ending that spect-actors cannot be satisfied with. After an initial performance, it is shown again, however this time the spectators become spect-actors and can at any point yell 'freeze' and step on stage to replace the protagonist(s) and take the situation in different directions.

**Invisible Theatre** is public theatre that involves the public as participants in the action without their knowing about it. The objective is to unsettle passive social relations and spark critical dialogue among the spect-actors. Several actors rehearse a scene which they then play in an appropriate public space in order to provoke a reaction from the public who think they are watching a spontaneous event.



#### Notable Works

- **Torquemada**
- **Theatre of the Oppressed**
- **Games For Actors and Non-Actors**
- **The Rainbow of Desire**

#### Highlighted Information

- Interactive theatre intended to transform lives
- Acting out solutions to their own social problems
- Everyone has the capacity to act in the 'theatre' of their own lives
- Give people a voice for action

## Theatre Practitioners

# Frantic Assembly

Frantic Assembly are a **physical theatre company** who were formed in 1994 by Scott Graham, Steven Hoggett, and Vicki Middleton, who had all met whilst studying at Swansea University. They aimed to create physical theatre, using **dynamic and engaging movement** with storytelling at the heart of the work.

Scott Graham is still the Artistic Director of the company, who have developed and created a wide range of work. Notable productions include, *Pool (No Water)* by Mark Ravenhill, *Beautiful Burnout* by Bryony Lavery, *Things I Know To Be True* by Andrew Bovell and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* by Simon Stephens.

Frantic Assembly devise most of their work in **collaboration with a playwright**. Taking the movement as the basis for action, they use a series of exercises to develop physical theatre. Speech and dialogue is then added in order to **create a narrative structure**. The movement and the dialogue go hand in hand to create

visually dynamic and engaging theatre. It is essentially **directing through movement**.

Scott Graham describes their way of working as '**The Frantic Method**'. He says: 'The Frantic Method is approaching devising as a series of tasks, each broken down into building blocks. This is designed to establish progress from the **simplest discoveries**.

Performers are encouraged to **take a moment back to its simplest truth and build from there**. This places dancers, actors, students, teachers and all participants on the same starting point. Using these building blocks they are empowered to find and create complex work through a process that is safe, fun and constantly illuminating.'

Performers who work with Frantic Assembly have to have extremely high levels of physical fitness, as their work is very demanding. They do lots of outreach work with schools and colleges to share their methods and encourage participation in physical theatre.



### Highlighted Information

- Dynamic and engaging movement with storytelling at the heart of the work.
- Devise most of their work in collaboration with a playwright
- Movement as the basis for action
- Visually dynamic and engaging theatre - Progress from the simplest discoveries