

THE WARM-UP

Warm-ups as they're known, proceed from the idea that a warm, energised body is ready to begin work. There's sense in this but it can be used as a pretext for inappropriate exercises; Martha Graham dance exercises, aerobics, ballet, yoga and even army training routines have been known to surface. But the intention is not to make ballet or war, but theatre. There's nothing worse than beginning drama work with a group that's been dragged through a series of physical exercises leaving participants exhausted, demoralised and angry. The only situation I can recall justifying this kind of approach was where the punishment related to the play. When the Living Theatre were working on *The Brig*, a show set in a marine punishment block, they used actual marine training exercises to begin rehearsals as means to inhabit the kind of mind-set which the play inhabited. More recently the National Theatre employed army training prior to a production of *Chips with Everything*.

The phrase 'warm-up' is so well established within the culture it's hard to see it being supplanted. But 'tune-up' might be more appropriate. Because players do need to tune in to each other. Everyone will arrive with a different mood, a different level of enthusiasm. Someone's come from the gym, another's been working in an office. Someone's depressed, another is behaving like an incendiary chased by the police. The task is to bring them to a common level. '*Your first job*,' argues Roger Hill, '*is to raise the level of energy of everyone in the room to a point at which it's just above the height of whoever has the most. So that even the most energetic have to stretch. And the people who've got less have to stretch more. So we've all gone up some way. Next we have to focus in . . . And when the energy is focused in, we've got to lay it to rest, ready to be used again. So you need energising, stretching things, you need rhythmic things to control it, you need focal and reaction things so the circle is formed.*'

Alternatively, we could argue the complete irrelevance of a warm-up. Jonathan Kay proposes that the attitude of foolishness, which is at the heart of performing, must be in place from the outset. It cannot be conjured by 'warming-up' because it's about an attitude, not a physical temperature. Certainly in many cases the distinction between a 'warm-up' and 'the work' is overstated. There's no reason why the initial process can't build gradually into a more intense behavioural mode. It's

possible for exercises to be seen not so much as preparation but as microcosms of the later macrocosms which are the larger challenges. This allows for a gradual acclimatisation of both mind and body. So we're always working with the whole person – albeit in a more gentle, exploratory way during the earlier period. We explore 'miniatures' of the later full-size portraits. Boal's approach is different again, it's to work consciously in the early stages with each of the different senses: hearing, sight, touch, several senses and memory. The later work then aims for an integration of these, using exercises which draw from all the performer's abilities.

However the problem is solved, we are always moving from a world of conventional behaviour into one where rules are altered. So some kind of ritual bridge is necessary. It may be a favourite game, an energy release exercise or a more meditative, imaginative journey. Peter Badejo argues for rhythm work, claiming that '*people in this country do warm-up in a stretching manner. I do warm-up in a rhythmic manner. From the beginning you get people used to using rhythm. I use live music. I can't use tapes, they don't give me the punch I need. So if you have a thirty minute warm-up you get people moving into a full rhythm beat. The head, the body. So even if they're moving their hands, the leg, they are getting used to it – for say, forty-five minutes – so by the time you get into other work, it consciously or subconsciously reminds them how useful it was . . . You don't have to be a dancer to relate your body to what you hear.*'

Interplay Theatre may set up the room so it is the environment itself which creates a starting point and generates action. '*Something is happening as the group comes in. For example, someone is lying on the floor, covered with a blanket. There's music happening, it's quiet, it's a very special atmosphere. Or there's dried leaves on the floor, which is another start point . . . Then the movement comes from what the objects gives us.*'
Jon Palmer.

I would propose four qualities that a group new to drama might consider for initial foci: ATTENTION, ENERGY, IMAGINATION, and COMMUNICATION. With these, the group will get itself into a frame of mind for more difficult challenges. The first task is always to build a group which will share tasks, and collaborate. But before even this is possible, we may need to introduce the drama medium. Group members may never have been to anything like a drama workshop

before, so while they're getting to know the group, they are also getting to know the art form.

At this point, games are listed. It's useful to reiterate that none of these can be set in stone, their titles and modes of play vary enormously. They're given as examples which can be drawn from or altered to suit the context. There is no attempt to be comprehensive in selection or present them in a preferred order. They are often transferable across categories – a concentration game might also be listed as a communication game, a movement exercise for devising. Further games under these headings are given in the appendix.

A. ATTENTION

This quality is about concentration. It implies watchfulness, a quality of being awake. It means giving someone else your full attention. To do this, you need to come into the present tense, to leave aside those preoccupying thoughts you carried here and just be spontaneous. There may be distractions – either internal or external – inevitably everyone's head is a babble of voices but through engagement with the exercise we're hoping to transfer that energy into play.

WALK, CLAP, FREEZE stands for any exercise which involves the facilitator giving instructions to the group who move freely about the room. It can be as simple as this instruction suggests or as complex as you wish to make it. The exercise usually begins with individuals separate from each other, perhaps coming together during the exercise so everyone can be given instructions 'as a group'. If played early in the session, it can help the group begin to disassociate themselves from habitual perceptions. For example, the group can be asked to walk about and name the objects in the room, then later, walk again and start wrongly naming them (so they point to a table and call out 'chair'.) This can lead to exercises which ask players to alter or 'invert' reality, perhaps using props.

Some groups benefit by being kept together in a circle during the first half hour. If everyone can see everyone, this helps the development of familiarity and trust. To encourage the learning of each others' names, Ali Campbell uses NAME CHECK and finds it breaks the ice with humour. Essentially it's a challenge game. It can be led by the facilitator who perhaps chooses not to be specially good at it. FRUIT BOWL, another circle game, has some of the same characteristics.

WALK, CLAP, FREEZE

The group walks around the space at will. Their task is to respond in different ways to different commands. The commands are given by clapping or verbal instruction. One clap might mean 'walk', two claps 'stop'. Three, 'reverse direction'. The purpose is to fulfil the commands with speed and discipline.

Extension: Invent your own variations, adding different sounds for different commands, or different verbal instructions, e.g. give instructions to influence the walking. 'Walk faster, walk in slow motion, run in slow motion.' And maybe open the group up to awareness of each other: 'Look shiftily at other people, then look away quickly. Catch people's eye and look away. Then hold the gaze for a short time before looking away.' Such an exercise can go anywhere. 'Discover you have jet-propelled shoes', 'Be on a journey together, pitch camp, climb a cliff face.'

NAME CHECK

The group is seated in a circle. One player is in the middle. Her task is to say the name of anybody in the circle three times before the owner of that name has a chance to say it once themselves. If she manages it, then that named person has to come into the centre and do the same with somebody else's name. If she fails, she must try again with another name.

FRUIT BOWL

The group sits in a circle, except for one who stands in the middle. There are no spare chairs. Each player is given the name of a fruit, either apple, banana or pear. The player in the middle calls out the name of a fruit and all those who are of that fruit, have to find another seat – including the player in the middle. Someone will fail to get a seat – that person calls the next fruit. If they call 'Fruit Bowl!' everyone has to change.

Variation: 'Anyone Who . . .' Central player calls out distinguishing characteristics: 'Anyone with a white shirt / blue socks / who was drunk last week . . .'