

Rendered Retina

Education Pack



**“Ever tried.
Ever failed.
No matter.
Try again.
Fail again.
Fail better.”**

Samual Beckett

Rendered Retina

We are Rendered Retina, a theatre company working from Thurrock, passionate about both creating playful, physical and imaginative performances and using our work to engage, educate and inspire young people.



In this pack we will introduce you to the work we have created so far and how it can be of use to your students. You can also find out about the workshops we offer schools including what we teach and how to book with us.

We truly believe in the transformative power of theatre, not only as an audience's place of escape but also, and maybe most importantly, for the performers themselves.



Form

Form is a physical theatre tragicomedy set in an absurdist work made of office equipment and 20,000 paper balls. Three office workers explore themes of monotony, entrapment and the fear you encounter when breaking out of routine.



Interview on the show with Co-Artistic Director, Alex Mangan

Q: “This show has been touring for a while now, hasn’t it?”

A: “It has yes. The first version of the show was actually performed in 2015. When we began work on the show we had no idea that a few years on, we would still be discovering new elements of the show that we hadn’t noticed before; and this has all been down to the responses of our audiences.”

Q: “So where did the show start?”

A: “The starting point for this show was simple. We had been looking at suits in a shop and realised that a suit was not just a collection of clothing, but a symbol for a number of ideas. We were interested in exploring these in a performance and so decided to start work on show that would be set in an office. We began with two images, one was a pristine, organised and orderly office space, the other was the opposite: chaotic, messy and completely covered in paper. We knew that these images would be the start and end of our production respectively.”

Q: “And why the decision for the show to be non-verbal?”

A: “Well that came from the idea that we live in an overly bureaucratic society, where people in tall buildings fill out ambiguous forms and speak in a language that no one, not even they, understand. It also allowed us to be much more playful in the rehearsal space when devising the scenes. Because we wanted to play with the objects we had, it meant our focus could be completely on the objects instead of thinking about what we were saying. The wonderful thing about it is that since then we have been able to tour the show in other countries!”

Q: “You mentioned playing with the objects, why did you decide to only use office equipment when moving the performance through different scenes and landscapes?”

A: “I suppose that comes down to trying to limit ourselves. When you make a performance, it can be daunting because it can be about anything and be done in any way. It’s hard to start when everything is an option. So we find limits to put on ourselves. For this show they were: we are wearing suits, we are set in an office, we cannot speak, we can only use office equipment, we must create at least four different spaces. Once you have those limits it is easier to start because you have a problem to solve. You have guidelines to play in.”



Q: “And why does an audience respond to that?”

A: “Because we have to play with the rules we have given ourselves. At a basic, animalistic level, humans enjoy playing. An audience can see the rules we have placed on ourselves in this show and they can see us finding ways to make those rules work for us. We have started to call this Limitation Theatre. Theatre that requires strict rules to be put in place from the beginning to ensure that performers, directors, audiences, everyone who encounters the production is asked to be imaginative and creative.”

Timon of Athens

Timon of Athens is an adaptation of one of Shakespeare's least known plays. Three performers attempt to put on the grandest retelling of this forgotten classic. Using original songs, a large wooden box and a lot of hats, this performance highlights both the comedic and tragic parts of this story, in the hope to make this into audiences' new favourite Shakespearean epic.



Interview on the show with Co-Artistic Director Jordan Choi

Q: "When people think of Shakespeare, 'Timon of Athens' isn't the first play that comes to mind, so why did you choose this one?"

A: "We put that down to both vanity and our stubborn nature. We were having a conversation with a theatre director about ideas for a new show and he said '*so there's this play called 'Timon of Athens', don't worry you won't have heard of it*' and we were very offended. Of course he was right and we hadn't heard of it, but how dare he assume that we hadn't. So we decided to not only find out about it, but create our own theatrical adaptation of it."

Q: "So you decided to put on a play you had never read?"

A: "Of course that isn't really how it's supposed to happen. You should know the play and it's themes and what it means to you before deciding to adapt and perform it, but we realised that no one really knew the play. So we decided it would be fun to make that the point of the show, we hadn't known it and no one else really does so let's all find out together what's great about this text."

Q: “Three performers and 18 characters is a hard ask, why did you choose hats as your way of portraying the characters?”

A: “We were inspired by Commedia dell’Arte there. Where Commedia uses masks and physicality to show their characters we thought we could do something similar. Each character was given their own stance, gait, gestures and accent which was then taken to the extreme to help an audience differentiate between them; Shakespeare can be hard enough to follow at times! We went with hats as our token costume because they are easy to put on and off and some of the changes have to be very quick.”

Q: “It certainly allows for comedy, but this show is also quite tragic. Why did you choose to balance the two?”

A: “When we researched the play, it was listed as one of Shakespeare’s ‘problem plays’ which meant that people couldn’t categorise it as either comedy or tragedy, and we could see why when reading it. So we did both. We thought it might also allow the audience to go on a more emotional journey than they initially thought they would.”

Q: “The box is also an important part of the show, becoming each of the set pieces. Why did you decide on it as your set?”

A: “That idea also came from our fascination with Commedia dell’Arte. You would have roaming troupes of performers who would travel around on a wagon, stop wherever they liked and perform out of it for any audience they could find. We wanted to give the idea that we had just arrived suddenly at the theatre, we make a mess and create chaos for 50 minutes and then when it’s done, we pack everything up and are gone again, as if we were never there in the first place.”



Q: “And lastly the songs, what was the idea behind using the songs throughout the show?”

A: “I guess that came from our own problems with understanding the play. When reading it, there were moments that were quickly brushed over that we felt important or somethings that weren’t clear. We wanted a way of making the story accessible and fun for everyone whilst allowing them to understand the narrative. Songs were the best way to do all of that.”

Workshops

Alongside our performances we have developed a concise range of workshops that allow students to focus on understanding of texts, editing texts, creating material, working in the style of a practitioner and developing performance skills.

Our workshops have been separated into three strands:

- **Devising**
- **Physical Theatre**
- **Shakespeare**

All workshops can have a practitioner focus, exploring how the application of a practitioner's methodology impacts the creation of the work and the final product. This is useful as an opportunity to develop and extend students' knowledge of a practitioner they are familiar with or to introduce them to a completely new way of working. We can work with students to explore how our work has been influenced by practitioners to enable them to apply it to their own work. The practitioner of focus can be selected from the list below:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Grotowski | • Phillipe Gaulier |
| • Brecht | • Steven Berkoff |
| • Emma Rice | • Antonin Artaud |
| • Jacques Lecoq | • Max Stafford-Clark |

We offer our workshops alongside a performance, so you are able to book a performance and workshop for the same day. Additionally, the workshops can be booked by themselves in either 2, 4 or 6 hour slots. Workshops can be modified depending on age group, subject and level of study, however we also offer workshops specifically aimed at younger learners. (see pg. 15). You can also use some of your allocated workshop time for CPD workshops for teachers.

The structure of the day is negotiable and the way the allocated time is used can be decided through discussion with us depending on your needs.

For example -

Performance + 4 hour workshop can translate to -

'Form' with 1 x 4 hour workshop targeted at a year 11/A level class preparing for an end of year performance or devising exam.

OR

'Timon of Athens' with 3 x 1 hour sessions, used for 3 early years classes to help with listening and communication skills, with a 1 hour CPD session for teachers.

If you would like to find out more information then you can contact us at:

Email: [**www.retinatheatrecomp@gmail.com**](mailto:www.retinatheatrecomp@gmail.com)

Website: [**www.retinatheatre.com**](http://www.retinatheatre.com)

Devising

Our devising workshops will give your students a variety of skills to use when creating their own pieces of work; whether they are adapting a text, working from stimuli or in the style of a practitioner.

Alongside this, the workshops provide students with a bank of skills to take away - to generate material and develop their performance skills.

Devise: Storytelling

In these workshops we introduce students to skills that will allow them to tell stories in visually engaging ways. Students will develop skills in Physical Theatre including physical control, lifts and working as an ensemble. They will be encouraged to use the body in new ways in order to tell a story and understand how effective the body can be in conveying emotion and intention without the use of dialogue.



2hr/4hr/6hr

Devise: Object Theatre

This workshop is perfect for helping students develop work when starting from a physical stimulus. We show students how effectively objects can be used to create different worlds on stage and how responsive audiences are to the use of objects as malleable, transformative devices. We encourage students to explore not only how objects can be used as a stimulus for the themes and ideas of a piece but also how playing with objects and materials on stage is a highly effective way of engaging an audience.

2hr/4hr

Devise: Limitation Theatre

This workshop introduces students to the importance of creating limits and boundaries in order to be more creative in the rehearsal space. An energetic, playful and practical workshop that exposes students to some of the techniques we use to create work. This method of creating material requires critical thinking and problem solving to generate innovative ideas. This workshop can be delivered as an introduction to our style in which students can create short pieces of work or to help them in the development of projects or assessment/exam pieces they are working on.

2hr/4hr/6hr

Physical Theatre

Our physical Theatre workshops are a fantastic way to get students on their feet, playing and practically engaged and introduces them to the idea of using the body as the starting point for creating work. Whether you would like the workshop to have a specific focus on devising, lifts or physical technique, these workshops will all help to develop students' skills in working as an ensemble and becoming more responsive to other performers.

Physical Theatre: Neutral Mask

Our neutral mask workshops give students the opportunity to learn a different way of using the body on stage. We understand that this can be a difficult technique to learn, but using our energetic and playful style of working, students soon lose that inhibition and can start to unlock their physical potential. Through these workshops students will learn the importance of specific, controlled movement in conveying emotion and intention whilst developing confidence to work physically; by themselves and in a group.

2hr/4hr

Physical Theatre: Clowning

Our clowning workshops are fun, loud and full of energy and are great for engaging students of all different interests with physical comedy. Through these workshops students will learn about Jacques Lecoq (and Commedia dell'Arte depending on the length of the workshop) and how to use the physical, vocal and mask skills they develop in other styles of performance. Depending on the length of workshop you would like to book, we can teach students a number of the different Commedia dell'Arte masks and even allow them to start building their own scenes.

2hr/4hr/6hr

Physical Theatre: Puppetry

Our puppetry workshops are a great way to introduce students to this ever-more popular and valuable performance skill. Our introductory workshop teaches students about Bunraku puppets, giving students the basic skills needed to bring puppets to life (gravity, breath, eye-line) as well as responsiveness, focus and working as an ensemble. Our Contemporary Puppetry workshop looks at using everyday objects as puppets, and the possibilities presented by doing so, which are useful not only in developing puppetry skills but also developing skills in devising work.

2hr/4hr



Shakespeare

To accompany our adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Timon of Athens' these workshops will expose students to different practitioner styles and help them to understand Shakespeare's writing, use of language and the characters he created. These workshops are also suitable to students studying drama or English, as our practical way of working also challenges the students to understand the text and the themes raised in Shakespeare's work.

Shakespeare: Unpacking his Characters

Whether your students are working on monologues, duologues or group scenes, this workshop is perfect for giving students the skills needed to perform Shakespeare. Working on both physicality and vocality, the students will not only develop performance skills but also a deeper understanding of the language used and speech patterns. These workshops will also use elements of Commedia

dell'Arte to encourage students to think about how to perform Shakespeare in new ways; helping distill the very layered characters into more accessible stereotypes. This allows students to more easily understand the function of the characters within the play and its themes. We can deliver this workshop using scenes from 'Timon of Athens' to encourage students to apply knowledge to their own work or, if provided in advance, their set text; drawing comparison with our production.

2hr/4hr/6hr

Shakespeare: Unpacking the Scenes

In this workshop we help students breakdown scenes from Shakespeare's texts to establish what the characters are saying, what they mean and how it links to the overall narrative of the play. Using our playful and energetic style, students explore these scenes practically and will be asked to perform their own adaptations complete with songs that they will write themselves! This workshop is perfect for students who are studying Shakespeare or are adapting a text for performance as they will be identifying the demands of the scene whilst developing skills in cutting and editing text to create meaning; finding a new way to retell a classic throughout as well.

2hr/4hr

Shakespeare: In Style

Through these workshops we introduce learners to 2-4 practitioners (depending on the length of the workshop). Students then recreate scenes from 'Timon of Athens' exploring how the differing techniques of the chosen practitioners create contrasting pieces. This can give students a practical understanding of how different methodologies influence the creation of a performance and highlights the differences between styles to further students' understanding of practitioners.

2hr/4hr/6hr



Workshops for Younger Learners

Our workshops can be modified and are aimed at all ages, but below are a selection of bespoke workshops for younger learners. We are passionate about inspiring the next generation of theatre makers and feel that our workshops can leave pupils with invaluable transferable skills.

Think: Building a Character

This is the perfect introductory performance skills workshop that looks at how to understand and perform a character. Working on both physicality and vocality, the students will not only develop performance skills but also confidence and communication as they are encouraged to perform with and in front of their peers. These workshops will teach students how to use facial expressions, body language, stance, gait and vocal control to perform emotions and intentions. We can deliver this workshop using characters from 'Timon of Athens', another text (e.g. if you are working towards the Shakespeare Schools Festival) or the students' favourite stories.

2hr/4hr/6hr

Think: Building a Scene

Learners will work practically to identify the key components needed to tell a story and will then use that knowledge through play to create short scenes. These scenes can be devised during the workshop or can be adapted from a play or storybook identified by the school. Using our playful and energetic style, students will work practically in groups and will be asked to perform their own scenes to their peers; providing feedback to each other on how effectively they told the story. This workshop is perfect for students who are studying Shakespeare, are adapting a text for performance or just want to have fun!

2hr/4hr

Create: Storytelling

In these workshops we introduce students to skills that will allow them to tell stories physically. We will develop students' performance skills through a variety of different games, before teaching a range of techniques and then using those techniques to create short pieces of Physical Theatre. These workshops will allow students to develop skills in listening, communication and working as an ensemble. They will develop physical control as they are encouraged to use the body in new ways in order to tell a story and an understanding of how they are able to use their bodies to tell stories without the use of dialogue.

2hr/4hr/6hr

Play: Clowning

Our clowning workshops are fun, loud and full of energy and are great for engaging students of all different interests with physical comedy. Through these workshops students will experience clowning and Commedia dell'Arte and how to use the physical, vocal and mask skills they develop to create short pieces of theatre. Depending on the length of workshop you would like to book, we can teach students a number of the different Commedia dell'Arte masks.

2hr/4hr/6hr

**“Do not fear limitation.
Think, play and create a way through it.
Against limitation is how you truly measure success.”**

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