

SOUTHEAST CREATIVES AND RESORT STUDIOS:

Playwriting Workshop with Rosa Torr

STAY IN TOUCH:

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Notes

What you'll need for the workshop is:

A notebook, or numerous bits of paper and a pen or pencil.

The workshop is designed for two hours and split between 12 sections. Within the 12 sections there are what I call 'Prompts', these are mini things to push the process along, you can ignore prompts or you can go with them. You may find some exercises more helpful than others. Use it how you feel works best.

TOP TIP!

Give yourself license in this workshop to write complete and utter rubbish. From the very beginning of this workshop, if anything at all feels sticky or like you can't think of anything- then please allow your default position to be 'write the worst play anyone has ever written'. There is no such thing as perfection, good ideas ONLY come through working. There's a myth in playwriting, and the arts in general, that the artist just sits around crying or drinking wine until- BOOM! in comes the idea for their next masterpiece. The reality is there are hundreds and thousands of pages, notebooks, scrapbooks, sketchbooks lying around with rubbish ideas in them and in doing that SOMETHING emerges. A character, an interaction, a setting. These can only be generated by letting go and getting stuff out there. So don't worry about it being 'perfect' until you get to the final draft.

12 Steps to a First Draft

1:

Free Writing.

Free flowing, stream of consciousness writing. Never take your pen off the page, just keep going. Taken from Julia Cameron's 'Artist's Way'. If you get stuck, repeat the sentence you just wrote until something else comes.

(5 mins)

Finish these sentences (Prompts):

- I feel scared when . . . (1 min)
- I feel safe when . . . (1 min)
- I had a dream and . . . (1 min)
- I want to write about. . . (1 mins)
- I don't want to write about . . . (1 mins)

Questions (Prompts):

- What makes something theatrical. . . ? (1 min)
- What makes a character interesting . . . ? (1 min)
- What do you love about theatre . . . ? (1 min)
- What do you dislike about theatre . . . ? (1 min)

2:

List of Interests.

Write a list of things you are passionate about. Things you care about, from childhood to now, things that excite you, inspire you, make you happy, terrify you. Anything you are passionate about. Three minutes- go! (3 mins)

Circle the top 5 things. (45 seconds)

Circle the top thing (20 seconds)

This is your emotional backdrop to the writing process...

3:

Dream Audience Member.

Write down three people you'd love to love your piece. This could be a theatre person you admire or a critic, or someone you know personally. (1 minute)

Then pick one of those people and write out the tweet they might write giving your show a 5 star review. This will help you understand what kind of a piece you want to make, obviously

at this stage it won't include characters or specifics, but the overall feel/tone/effect you'd like a piece of your writing to have. (3 mins)

4:

Set Ups.

Write a list of potential home **set ups** for taping, or play set ups that could express the thing you picked as what you're most passionate about. You can either USE the domestic space OR MANIPULATE it.

Using- Youtuber in their bedrooms

Manipulating- Big Brother Diary Room

Some examples:

Outside someone's front door trying to get in

Firing someone over Zoom

Zooming an old relative you haven't spoken to for ages

A youtube tutorial

Online Dating tape

Blair witch project- lights off handheld

Feel free to use any of these!

Write as many as you can (3 mins)

Select top 2 (15 Seconds)

Label a set up Option 1 and the other set up Option 2.

5:

Insert a Character.

Take Option 1, consider a one person **character** for this set up. Who are they? Let's investigate:

QUICK FIRE QUESTIONS:

NAME

GENDER IDENTITY

AGE

OCCUPATION

WHERE ARE THEY FROM

HOBBY/PASSION

POLITICAL PARTY (IF ANY)

HAIR STYLE

FAVOURITE MUSIC

WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

WHO DO THEY LIVE WITH? (NEEDN'T BE HUMAN) (IF ANYONE)

IF THEY LIVE WITH ANYONE DO THEY LIKE THEM?

WHAT CELEBRITY DO THEY LOOK UP TO MOST?

WHAT IS ONE POSSESSION THEY WOULD SAVE IN THEIR HOUSE IN A BURNING FIRE?

IF THEY COULD KILL ONE PERSON WHO WOULD IT BE?

WHY ARE THEY BEING FILMED IN YOUR SET UP?

HOW DO THEY FEEL ABOUT BEING FILMED?

BIGGEST QUESTIONS:

WHAT DO THEY WANT FROM THIS SCENARIO?

WHAT DO THEY NEED FROM THIS SCENARIO?

6:

Monologue.

Write a monologue for your character in Option 1. THIS CAN BE RUBBISH. (5 minutes)

Label this Development Idea 1.

7:

Set Up 2.

Go back to your favourite set up you labelled Option 2. Consider TWO different characters that could be in this situation. Labelling them Person 1 and Person 2.

QUICK FIRE QUESTIONS:

WHAT ARE THEIR NAMES?

WHAT IS THEIR RELATIONSHIP?

IS IT A GOOD OR RELATIONSHIP?

WHAT ARE THEY WEARING?

WHERE ARE THEY FROM? SAME PLACE OR DIFFERENT?

WHAT DOES PERSON 1 THINK OF PERSON 2?

WHAT DOES PERSON 2 THINK OF PERSON 1?

BIGGEST QUESTIONS:

WHAT DOES PERSON 1 WANT FROM THIS SITUATION?

WHAT DOES PERSON 1 NEED FROM THIS SITUATION?

WHAT DOES PERSON 2 WANT FROM THIS SITUATION?

WHAT DOES PERSON 2 NEED FROM THIS SITUATION?

8:

Dialogue.

Write the interaction between them in this set up. (7 minutes)

Label this Development Idea 2.

BREAK! (5 MINS)

9:

Developing your Idea.

Pick your favourite, either Development Idea 1 or Development Idea 2. (15 seconds)

Ask of the piece you've written, these 3 big questions to discover where the drama comes from:

1. In this scenario what is their biggest antagonist?
2. Going back to the earlier big qs: Do they eventually get what it is that they want at the beginning?
3. **How** does it go right or wrong for them?

10:

Dream Audience 2.

Go back to your list of people you'd love to admire your piece. Write out a tweet in which they review your piece and give it 5 stars. (2 mins)

11:

How does it end?

Write a short synopsis outlining what happens from start to finish- how does it end?
(6 mins)

12:

Beginning your First Draft.

Without reading back over your monologue or dialogue of your favourite Development Idea, rewrite the play. You might want to keep it exactly the same, you might want to push it further or change the character voice, make it funnier or scarier? Just write it again.
(15 minutes)

Prompts: (You can ignore these as you write or if you're stuck or it sounds interesting- incorporate them, these are good for inserting drama, if they can't be used now, they may be useful to push your work further down the line)

- The character(s) enter differently
- A sound is heard
- Someone else enters
- It goes silent for longer than it should
- Someone tells a secret

And away you go...

Moving Forward

Three top tips I use every time to move forward with a draft:

1- Have a creative workspace. A space that is dedicated to nothing but writing/creating. When you are here at the desk/in this particular chair/in this room, you are solely working on your draft. Could you commit to one hour a day in this spot? 20 minutes? Even if it's just for some Free Writing (Task 1).

2- Find a writers group. This could be an official writers group you can apply for through a theatre or organisation. This could be something you set up with a couple of friends to share your ideas. Once a week is best, but once a month is enough. Email those you know working in theatre that you think could be useful and reach out.

3- Remember to give yourself breathing space- time spent away from the act of writing can be just as beneficial. Read. Walk. Talk. Watch. Listen. One small exercise is to sit with your feet on the ground, back straight in your chair and breathe for one minute.

Enjoy the feeling of accomplishment of getting through a workshop, regardless of the work being great- you did it!

Stay safe, keep creating and best of luck with all your new projects!

Best wishes,

Rosa

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