

DEvised THEATRE AT YORK

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**STARTER KIT**

# ENTRANCE POINTS – AUTUMN SMITH

**Inspiration for this section drawn from:**

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/2014/dec/16/devised-theatre-ten-tips-collaboration>

### **Be passionate about your source material**

Find something that you will want to spend time with - an immense amount of time. Create from a place of curiosity and drive. This passion is the key factor.

### **Do your research**

The more you know - the deeper the work can go. For every question there are a million more. Do not be afraid to keep digging and asking.

In every process you should inhabit your inner toddler - for every answer ask Why?

Use multiple sources and perspectives when approaching the work - this will help you avoid creating lecture based theatre.

Remember our ultimate goal is to invite the audience into our journey - not to SHOW them something.

### **Get your material out there as soon as possible**

Have people see the work - in process... and not just in the final hours. Multiple perspectives can help you shape the work to reach a broader audience and aid you in creating something super specific. You will want to know what is working before you ask people to pay for it,

As artists we are so IN THE WORK that sometimes our vision becomes myopic - we want a certain concept to read, or a line to scan.... but - there is the chance that the idea needs to be tossed out. Having people view it, encourages and empowers creators to understand what isn't working.

### **Unite the whole company around a common purpose**

Create a contract with your colleagues - make sure that you are all on the same page. The goal, first and foremost, is to gather people who are kind and empathetic and have a willingness to play. If you start with a shared purpose, creative approach - you are set. When things get chaotic - and they will - remember that in collective creation our goal is to really hear our fellow creators - employ active listening. Note: this is not always easy...but if you can master it...Bam!

# ENTRANCE POINTS – CONTINUED

### **Keep an open mind**

There is no perfect. As Samuel Beckett once stated, “Ever Tried. Ever Failed. No Matter. Try Again. Fail Again. Fail Better.” Allow your work to be a mess - what a great place to be.

### **The importance of story is relative**

You are starting with a blank slate - do not try to fit it into a neat narrative. Some of the greatest works have been non-linear, non-narrative driven pieces. Embrace new structures, new hybrids of mediums, new everything.

Always remember to go back to Point A - passion...

### **Always look for counterpoints**

Find light in dark, dark in light, humour in tragedy and tragedy in humour - it complicates the work. This works with rhythm, breath, silence, weight....

Engage in Laban work here for your movement.

### **Everyone works differently**

Embrace this. When you employ empathy in your process you will not only enjoy it a lot more - but you will learn how to engage in new ways ....EXCITING!

### **Don't be precious**

If it is not working - throw it out. Be empowered by failure.

### **Stay optimistic and enjoy yourselves**

# UTA HAGEN'S 9 QUESTIONS – RESEARCH STARTER

### 1. WHO AM I?

(All the details about your character including name, age, address, relatives, likes, dislikes, hobbies, career, description of physical traits, opinions, beliefs, religion, education, origins, enemies, loved ones, sociological influences, etc.)

### 2. WHAT TIME IS IT?

(Century, season, year, day, minute, significance of time)

### 3. WHERE AM I?

(Country, city, neighbourhood, home, room, area of room)

### 4. WHAT SURROUNDS ME?

(Animate and inanimate objects-complete details of environment)

### 5. WHAT ARE THE GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES?

(Past, present, future and all of the events)

### 6. WHAT IS MY RELATIONSHIP?

(Relation to total events, other characters, and to things)

### 7. WHAT DO I WANT?

(Character's need. The immediate and main objective)

### 8. WHAT IS IN MY WAY?

(The obstacles which prevent character from getting his/her need)

### 9. WHAT DO I DO TO GET WHAT I WANT?

(The action: physical and verbal, also-action verbs)

## USING UTA IN A DEVISED CONTEXT – AUTUMN SMITH

- ▶ Although Uta wrote primarily for actors engaging in traditional texts, the tenets of what she has laid out can still be applied to a devised process.
- ▶ You can use the questions in your research to help hone your arguments and specify the world in which you wish to inhabit.
- ▶ This can be a guide for the research portion of your process.
- ▶ Remember - keep asking questions - for every answer there are a million more curiosities at play.

## DRAMATURGY IN A DEVISED PRACTICE – LUCY POWIS

- **Dramaturgs shape stories, the experience of an audience. In a DT process, everyone is a dramaturg.**
- **Every choice that you make, large and small, is dramaturgical, from the “why here, why now” of the story you’re telling to the clothes that everyone wears.**
- **When giving feedback or building ideas, try to build up and out on what someone else is saying. Think of the improv tactic “yes, and”**
- **The questions that we asked about each other’s ideas (in this case, specifically discussing adaptation):**

**What in the source text inspired you to want to adapt it in this way?**

**What does this choice add, and what could it take away from the original?**

**If your collaborator posed this idea, what questions would you have for them? What questions would you enter rehearsal still wanting to answer?**

## HOW TO MAKE MONEY IN THE ARTS – AARON JAN

### **- DO NOT USE YOUR OWN MONEY**

- Box office is not reliable to make money, what's more reliable is fundraising, grants and going after donors with SPECIFIC asks based on their needs and values (No one cares about your play, but how does your PLAY help them with things they care about in their own lives)**
- There is NO SHAME in self producing as long as you can pay yourself.**
- People fund the arts because like science, the arts HELP PEOPLE. When asking for funding, think beyond "I want to make art!" How does your project make the world a better place?**
- Make sure when you're pitching a project, YOU are in your pitch. Why do YOU care about this? What is your place and perspective in the impact statement?**
- Pitches are like storytelling, get people excited!**

# PRODUCING YOUR WORK – LUKE REECE

### KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON

- Know your peers
- See shows
- Invest in the people who will invest in you
- Have meetings
- This work needs to start NOW

### DEVELOP

- Take time with your craft
- Know what you know, know what you don't know
- Know your value
- Plan for failure

### CONTRACTING/CHOOSING GIGS & PARTNERS

- Communication and expectation is key in developing relationships
- This is the same with contracts – outline how you will work together
- Transparency & trust, you're all working towards the same goal – but that's not good enough without a contract (DeMar)
- Know your value, now USE it – what does the producing partner/company see in your work that aligns with them

### MARKETING

- Knowing your audience, what do they look for?
- Devised work – what's the hook if it's not a known show
- Titles are important – don't be artsy
- Marketing – how to reach them? It's all about the audience



## DEVISED THEATRE EXAMPLES

Tectonic Theatre Company – USA

Company Trailer

Creators of the Laramie Project

Verbatim Theatre

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yH4ZK5JG59E>

Wooster Group – NYC

Trailer for two new works

One of the original theatre companies to produce devised work

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTUCb5JA8TE>

Rehearsal Video:

Oh, What A Lovely War – Hart House Theatre 2020

One of the first devised theatre pieces – reimagined.

Originally produced as agit-prop theatre by Joan Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=29&v=\\_LJlcwoA-As&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=29&v=_LJlcwoA-As&feature=emb_logo)

RashDash and the National Theatre

Online masterclass focusing on physical aspects of devising

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47QhuLMLDL8>

National Theatre Production – Jane Eyre

Devised based on a classical piece of literature.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMrkTVbocEk>

## REFERENCES

Theatre at York University

[theatre.ampd.yorku.ca](http://theatre.ampd.yorku.ca)

Theatre@York (FB and Instagram)

Marlis Schweitzer – Chair of the Theatre Department/Co-Developer of Devised Theatre at York - Starter Kit

[thechair@yorku.ca](http://thechair@yorku.ca)

Theatre@York (Instagram and FB)

Autumn Smith – Co-Developer of Devised Theatre at York – Starter Kit and Facilitator

[autumndmsmith@hotmail.com](mailto:autumndmsmith@hotmail.com)

@autumndmsmith (FB and Instagram)

[www.littlewoodsmith.com](http://www.littlewoodsmith.com)

[littlewoodsmithco@gmail.com](mailto:littlewoodsmithco@gmail.com)

@littlewoodsmith (FB and Instagram))

Aaron Jan – Facilitator

[ajan4458@gmail.com](mailto:ajan4458@gmail.com)

@aaronjan (FB)

Lucy Powis

[lucy.tp7@gmail.com](mailto:lucy.tp7@gmail.com)

@lucyp (FB) @lucytp7 (Instagram)

Luke Reece

[lukeareece@gmail.com](mailto:lukeareece@gmail.com)

@lareece93 (Instagram) @lukereece (FB)

Obsidian Theatre Company (FB) Obsidian Theatre (Instagram)

[obsidiantheatre.com](http://obsidiantheatre.com)

## ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

The Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts

[www.tapa.ca](http://www.tapa.ca)

Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas

[www.lmda.org](http://www.lmda.org)

Toronto Arts Council

[www.torontoartscouncil.org](http://www.torontoartscouncil.org)

Ontario Arts Council

[www.arts.on.ca](http://www.arts.on.ca)

Canada Council for the Arts

[www.canadacouncil.ca](http://www.canadacouncil.ca)