



KESTREL THEATRE COMPANY

March 27 2020

Dear Resident,

We at Kestrel Theatre Company have been working alongside people in prison for many years. We bring professionals in to facilitate original pieces of work mostly theatre and film. We sometimes work as a team devising the work together ending in you performing what you have created, and sometimes we run writing workshops for those of you who want to write something on your own.

Now we are all in lockdown, we can't come in so we have put together something that you can do in your own time. We believe being able to access your creativity at this difficult time is even more important than usual. So what we aim to do over the next eight weeks is to give you some tools, exercises and ideas that will help you write. Because we are a theatre company we are focusing on writing something that can be performed live to an audience, a play or a sketch – maybe something that you'd like to see performed or maybe something that you want to keep private. It might be funny, serious, thought provoking. It is up to you.

Because what matters is that it is your story. And with a little bit of guidance you can channel that story into something amazing.

We have asked Simon Longman, a professional playwright who has often worked with us, to come up with some weekly exercises which will help you format ideas. You might want to write a series of funny sketches. You might want to write a full-length drama. You might just want to engage your mind and play along. Whatever you do, have fun.

I very much look forward to hearing how you get on. And now over to Simon...

Arabella Warner
Artistic Director
Kestrel Theatre Company.

Hello and welcome.

I am thrilled to be working with you, albeit remotely. Over the next weeks I'll be providing you with a series of workshops that – we hope – will inspire, help and unlock your writing.

Each workshop will look at a different aspect of playwriting - from structure, to character, to story - which will aim to help you think about writing plays in a way that enables you to find the stories you want to tell. Each workshop will contain a few exercises, and some explanations as to why we're doing them. Remember: a huge part of writing is not actually, literally, writing. A lot of it comes from just thinking about things in a way that you might not have thought about before. And the action of you putting pen to paper, or finger to keyboard, is a consequence of this thinking. So some of the exercises might

feel a bit, “what’s the point in this?”. But trust me, try and stick with them. The more you write for writing’s sake, the more you’ll discover things inside your head that you might not have known were there. All this is useful when writing. And especially when writing plays.

Each week you’ll get a new workshop. Each will inspire and inform the next one and, hopefully, the culmination of all the workshops is that you have a nice selection of thoughts/scenes/characters/images to go on and develop a play. That’s the dream outcome. But I hate outcomes. So if you write a play, great. If you just use the exercises to play around with writing and with words, also great. Writing is a big experiment. It’s messy and hard. It’s frustrating. But anyone can do it. And it’s a really amazing way, simply, to engage your imagination.

The first workshop will all be exercises designed to discover some things in your own head. This is what I do for my own writing, and also every playwriting course I lead. It’s a session designed to get your brain thinking about writing in a personal way, which is a good starting point to go on to write fiction. Someone once described where writing comes from is a sort of muscle in your brain that needs exercise in order for it to work properly. Which sounds pretentious but I quite like it. Think of it like a gym for this muscle: leg day was yesterday, writing muscle day is every Friday.

I hope the workshops are useful. The whole joy of writing is to just write and express some things. To engage with the world around us in a way that helps you try and understand it. Or helps others try and understand it from your point of view.

Workshops will be with you every week for the next eight weeks. The first, as mentioned, will be imaginatively called “FIRST UP: GETTING STARTED WRITING” and after that each one will be on a different aspect of playwriting. This will be:

- Structure
- Character
- Story and Themes
- Locations and Objects
- Dialogue
- Beginnings
- Middles
- Endings

I hope you find some things you might not have thought about before.

Best,

Simon Longman
Playwright