

# **assembly line**

for any number of performers

by

James Whittle

2014



## assembly line (2014)

**Premiere** The Assembled, University of York, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

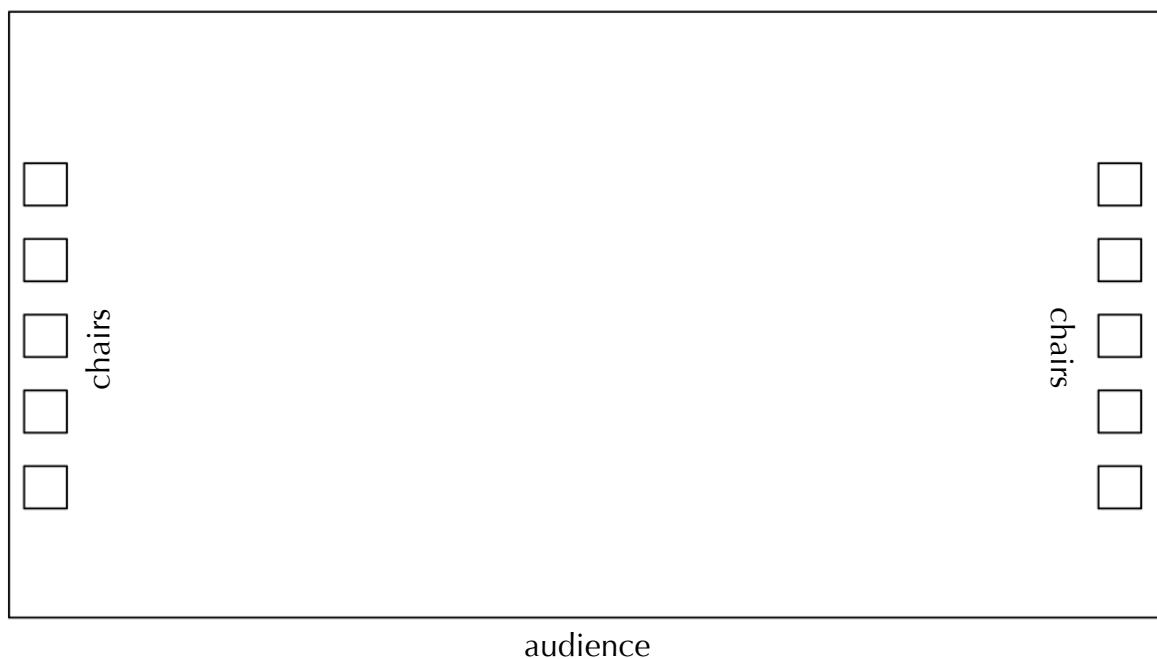
**Duration** variable

**Lighting** a bright general wash throughout

### Programme Note

*assembly line* is a theatre piece for any number of performers. First devised with The Assembled, the piece developed from the group's observation that musical improvisations can sometimes exhibit repetitive or derivative patterns of behaviour.

### Stage Layout



Preset any instruments/objects that you may want to use in the performing area.

These may be scattered on the ground or placed on a props table.

The stage should be otherwise empty.

## Performance Instructions

This piece consists of simultaneous, improvised, isolated events.

All start the piece sitting in silence, half the group on each side of the stage.

'Enter' the stage at any point to begin/join an event: any musical or theatrical action.

No more than three events should occur at once.

Use any available instruments, objects, voices, body parts, silences.

The kind of action you perform, the manner in which you perform that action, and the manner in which you interact with other performers in an event, is determined by any one of four traits: **Dependent**, **Supportive**, **Independent**, **Traitorous**.

**Dependent** (should feel passive)

- Be in unison with another performer.
- Be in as similar a register or tone as possible with another player.

**Supportive** (should feel complementary, neutral)

- Copy/haunt another player.
- Accompany another player.
- Push the dynamic of another player.

**Independent** (should feel active, assertive)

- Make your action/sound last as long as possible (e.g. waffle).
- Make your action/sound last as short as possible (e.g. monosyllables).
- Become gradually more confident throughout. Blend more.
- Become gradually less confident throughout. Blend less.

**Traitorous** (begin Dependent, change to Independent)

- Hijack the conversation.

These traits may manifest in any musical and theatrical ways, allowing all sorts of characters, scenarios, sound worlds, dialogues, to be available and able to be juxtaposed. Anything is possible.

When you have completed your chosen action, or when the event for which you entered has ended/disbanded, 'exit' the stage by returning to an available chair.

Aim to demonstrate your trait clearly through your action/sound and interaction with other performers in an event. Develop ideas by considering:

- physicality of gesture
- spatial/physical relationships between performers
- shaping the tone and form of the piece
- the audience (what they may/may not be enjoying)

## Optional 'Director' Voiceover

Performances can feature the addition of a disembodied Director.

The Director should be either sat in the audience, or completely out of the audience's view. They should be amplified through a microphone linked to the house PA system/speakers. Their sound should come from behind the audience.

The Director can intervene and manipulate the performance, at any point, by using a key word:

- 'freeze' – performers freeze motionless, only moving if
- 'stop' / 'cut' – performers cease whatever they are doing, but are not frozen, so are free to respond to the Director in any way.

The Director can alter the direction of the whole performance this way. Other actions the Director may take are:

- take performers off stage
- bring performers on stage
- combine or reorganise performers)
- give a specific instructions for actions/sounds they want to hear
- ask the performers to explain what they are doing
- suggest alternatives to the performers
- announce the end of the performance

The Director may need to be prepared to face disagreement from the performers!