

The Frantic Assembly Book Of Devising Theatre

structures, but this does not mean that they are not falling into the same rhythmic patterns on a subconscious level. Avoiding this makes for a purer improvisation that truly has to respond to the unexpected.

As with film scores, several Frantic shows have attempted to create a consistent sound and in this way create an arc, in the same way as one might consider the arc of a storyline. We have sometimes achieved this consistency by collaborating with a particular band or artist to provide all the music for a show. Working with the band Lamb on *Peepshow* we were given access to their entire back catalogue plus stripped down versions of songs. These alternative versions are incredibly useful in being able to develop musical recurring themes throughout a show. We had eight versions of one particular track, 'Gabriel'. By associating the track with one of the couples in the show, we were able to map out their relationship in musical terms, using the full original version at the start of the show and then a pared down, strings-only version at the end as their relationship had unravelled. Even in the event of not having a single band or artist to source music from, we have still made precise choices on the type of music we intended to use. For *Sell Out* we used many tracks that featured piano and strings and also electronic tracks in a minor key in an attempt to locate those examples of electronica that somehow melt the heart. In the case of *Underworld*, we looked for tracks that were predominantly rich in percussion or strings. In creating the arc for the piece, we placed a track in the very middle of the show that acted as a kind of keystone. The track was the theme tune from the film *Unbreakable* by James Newton Howard and was used to backdrop a physical sequence in which all four female characters experience violent nightmares over one night. The track itself is a grand cinematic blast, full of menacing strings and snarling brass with possibly the creepiest break in soundtrack history, topped off with a thundering finale with quivering cellos and explosive percussion. Everything prior to this moment in the show in terms of music was building towards this apex, starting slowly with the pedestrian simplicity of Goldfrapp's 'Felt Mountain' track. Everything after this point was an exercise in progressive distortion, each track becoming more and more ominous and degraded now that the dam had burst both musically and dramatically. In this way, the score for the show genuinely has its own arc.

We have used the musical idea of the overture and translated it into a visual form. In music, the overture is the opening section that introduces themes used in the piece about to commence. The opening of *Underworld* was an erratic, violent stab of images, bursting out of the darkness and disappearing as soon as they were established. All the images were taken from scenes to come but were presented in no particular order in an attempt to appear disorientating and nightmarish. In this way, our visual overture sets the tone and prepares the audience for what is about to come without acting

FRANTIC ESSAYS

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