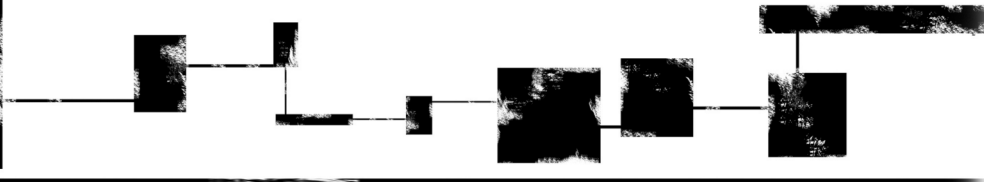
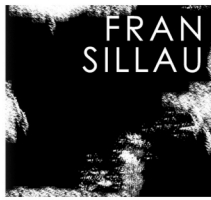




**Lesson #4**  
**Staff Development.**  
**Theater IN THE CLASSROOM!**

**Fran Sillau**  
**Teaching Artist**  
**VSA ARTS**

**This two and ½ hour interactive presentation will be hands on experience for teachers to view first-hand the power of the theater arts in the core curriculum. Fran will cite examples from Public School Bench Marks/Curriculum to illustrate the power of theater arts in the classroom. Fran will also show how the theater arts can empower ALL students in a positive way and also help them succeed in core subjects.**



We've come to the end.... But it is really only the beginning! Below are Ensemble activities that your students participated in while I here. Feel Free to use them too! Best wishes! Fran

#### Ensemble Games

All these games are good in any classroom to get students brains working!

**Go, Stop, Melt, Drop-** Needed for this game, is a fairly open space, where students can move freely. There are four choices in this game, GO! STOP! MELT! DROP! when the facilitator says GO! The students move about the room, (usually in slow motion) as whatever character you give them to be, the crazier the character the better. Let the students move about the room for a bit, then when you feel it is time for a change you say STOP! When the students hear stop, they freeze like statues, when the students are frozen, comment on how they look as statues look, when you are done commenting on the statues say MELT! When the students melt they should melt slowly, they do not fall to the floor until you say DROP. The same process is repeated again, with a new character. NOTE: The more outlandish you can be with your characters the more students can stretch their imaginations. This game enables students to think "outside of the box"

**Bus Stop-**This is a character-building exercise that focuses on physicality. Set up a corner bus stop in your playing space with a bench (or 2-3 chairs). Select a small group of students to perform. Assign each student an age to portray. The student then enters the stage, concentrating on playing the age. Encouragement should be given for detailed physical exploration. When the first student has established their character, cue the second to enter the playing space, then the third, and so on. You can add conflict to the scene by adding new information, like "the bus is coming," "the bus is very late, and so are you," "there is a sudden downpour of rain," etc. At the end of the improvisation, the audience can guess what age the actors were assigned. *Variation:* Give the student other details to incorporate into the scene. For example: "You are a 45-year old high-powered executive, forced to use the bus this morning"; "You are eight year old, brand new to the city, taking a bus to school for the first time"; "You are 16 years old, and you've just had your hair done for the prom, and you're anxious to get home and get dressed for the big night," etc.

**Pass a Gesture-**Students stand in a circle in "actor's neutral" (with their hands at their sides, feet about shoulder's distance apart). Leader initiates a gesture, any movement at all. The person to her/his left imitates the movement, not changing it. Each student in turn imitates the original movement until it comes back to the leader. The point is to duplicate exactly what you see, not to add your personality or expression. The exercise is to build a group, not a collection of individual personalities. If the gesture is changed or amended in any way, the leader stops the game and starts over.

**Counting Game-**Students stand in a circle, as above. The idea of the game is to count as high as possible, but no two people may talk at once. The leader simply says the word, "one." Without talking, gesturing or making eye contact, another member of the group says "two." See how high your students can count without two of them saying the same number.



**Mirroring-** is a great way to "try on" different actions. First stand directly across from another person. Next, decide whether you or your partner will be the mirror. If you are, then your partner will do the actions and you will copy them and vice-versa. Now comes the tricky part, you have to do exactly what your partner does at the same time he or she does it. To do this you must be able to sense your partner's next move.

**Statues-**Students stand in a circle in "actor's neutral," with their hands at their sides, feet about shoulder's distance apart. The teacher leads the exercise by naming an emotional state, such as nervous, or angry, or proud, etc. Students then have ten beats (each beat is about a second) to slowly move into a posture that expresses the emotional state. At the count of ten, they freeze. Teacher chooses another emotion and repeats the game. The emphasis here is on encouraging the students to move very slowly and thoughtfully, and to keep adding details to their pose as long as they have time left.

**Hot Seating the Character-**A good research tool, or a way to get students to learn more about fictional, historical or mythical characters is by "hot seating" them. Assign students different characters to think about based on your curriculum (Snow White, Anne Frank, Clara Barton, one of the Little Pigs or the Wolf). Once students have chosen a character to research, allow them enough time to think about their character: what might their voice be like? How might they sit? What kinds of things are they thinking about? Are they angry? Afraid? Who are their friends? Ask for a volunteer to come up "on stage." The student, in the role of his or her character begins by sitting in a chair (hence the expression "hot seating"), and should concentrate on exploring the character's physicality, demeanor, etc. while being interviewed. The rest of the class may ask questions of the character. These questions can be prepared ahead of time with the class, or be left to the spur of the moment: "So Mr. Wolf, what on earth possessed you to think you could blow down a brick house?" This interview process will often give a teacher insight into the depth and breadth of student understanding and involvement with the subject matter.

Some Descriptions Courtesy of: <http://www.cpsd.us/web/curriculum/drama/games.html#statues>

## WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

All the participants pair up. Within each pair, one player(it doesn't matter who goes first) asks the other "(their name), What are you doing?" The second player responds by naming whatever action comes to mind, from "I'm building Frankenstein" to "I'm dancing in a ballet" or whatever. The first player then immediately starts performing whatever action the other player named, and while they are doing so, the second player asks them, "\_\_\_\_, what are you doing?" and enacts whatever action the other person names. This goes very quickly, and once it gets started, both players should always be doing something physically. Theoretically, this can go back and forth forever.

One great way to get everybody started is to declare an action yourself that one person in each group starts with, and the other will then begin the questioning. Description courtesy: <http://www.geocities.com/Shalyndria13/warmups.htm>