

ALWAYS FORWARD

Independent Evaluation Report for Frantic Assembly's IGNITION 2009 – 2011



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Frantic Assembly's Ignition is a national initiative developing new ways of increasing young men's involvement in the arts: engaging creativity; developing physical theatre skills; raising aspirations and celebrating achievement.

Ignition introduces Frantic Assembly's distinctive way of working to young men who might not have considered working in theatre, but possess the crossover skills, energy and potential to be physical performers. The company believes that the talent is out there, but needs to be discovered. Frantic Assembly delivered four Ignition projects over two years 2009-2011, consisting of Taster sessions, workshop auditions and an accredited four day Intensive Residency culminating in a performance by participants for friends, family and industry professionals. This was a unique chance to work intensively with the award winning Artistic Directors and Creative Associates from a leading theatre company. Ignition benefited over 270 young men aged 16-20 years across the UK. The project was funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, with additional funding from the Big Lottery Fund in October 2009.

This summary outlines the insights and conclusions about the value of Ignition. At the start of the evaluation process, I recorded an interview with the whole company – Scott, Steven, Lisa, Laura, Neil and Fiona on 24 September 2009. We discussed their vision, planning, hopes and expectations for the project, the anticipated challenges and how these might be met. The project was well thought through and presented stimulating artistic challenges for the Directors. After writing the first draft of this document, I replayed that interview and it is extraordinary how the testimony from the Ignition participants faithfully illustrates so much of what the company describe and discuss.

Through the over-arching aim of widening the pool of future male physical theatre performers, Ignition seeks to address wider social issues affecting their target group. These are to:

- **Remove barriers to participation in the arts** for disadvantaged young men.
- **Attract participants from diverse backgrounds**, particularly those with little or no access to creative opportunities.
- **Tackle low achievement amongst young men**, by equipping participants with transferable life skills and raising their aspirations.
- **Challenge negative perceptions of young men** by showcasing their skills, experience and achievements.

ALWAYS FORWARD captures how these aims were achieved through a description and analysis of Frantic's methods. This is informed by the articulate testimony of over 200 young men in addition to interviews with the delivery partners and the Artistic Directors. Frantic Assembly hope this account of their particular and effective approach to working with young men will inspire others to incorporate it into their own practice.



Part One explores the creative activities and **Part Two** the key aspects relating to the management of the project.



The activities are explored at each level – **Taster**, **Trial** and **Intensive**. It is evident that each level manages to encapsulate the key features of the company’s approach, even the one-hour Trial. During the four-day Intensive the bar is raised, the experience becomes more profound and the vocational and personal learning is accelerated. The strong leadership and highly effective teaching is characterised by the presence of inspirational, credible role models; the clarity of the goal; economic and clear use of language; action rather than words. The dynamic mixture of challenge, risk and pace; the balance and rhythm between high-energy physical tasks, individual work on text and group creative exercise; the constant encouragement to experiment, to push boundaries, to practise and refine, the value placed on individual creativity and ideas, all work to achieve maximum engagement and tangible results. At each stage, from the outset, the company establishes a professional ethos and generates an atmosphere of trust. This provides the context and the springboard for all that takes place.

The young men describe a range of learning, change or transformation – in physical prowess and emotional expressiveness, creative and personal skills, and vocational insights. They enjoy the immersive action, the camaraderie, the risk-taking, the creative collaborative and peer to peer learning. Failure is understood as a useful part of the creative process. Their life experiences and perspectives are valued. They feel pushed, stretched, excited, exhausted. They are having the time of their lives. The all male environment accelerates conditions for emotional bravery, an important part of the company’s artistic process. Their final performances, in professional theatres in the heart of their communities, are a rare opportunity to present a positive and more rounded view of young men, a challenge to the prevailing negative media stereotypes.¹

“ I surprised myself with how far I pushed myself. Every day we go further. I found out that there is no limit to how far you can push yourself.

“ My body, the human body is capable of things I never thought it would be. When you're around other people who are just as talented as you, if not more, you're sort of you get the urge to try new things.

Frantic Assembly worked hard to recruit young men from different social, economic and ethnic backgrounds and to include those with little of no experience of performing arts as well as those studying drama or dance at school or college. They are well aware of the challenges they and others face to reach their target group. Most of the Ignition participants do not have regular access to the arts and Frantic Assembly’s approach to their pastoral support and continuing professional development is exemplary. The professional partnerships were vital in terms of local knowledge and infrastructures for recruitment and sustaining momentum and opportunities, especially in the regions of Corby and Plymouth. The partners also gained or developed useful knowledge about targeting young men in their region, understanding the power and value of Frantic’s approach and the opportunity to nurture a new pool of emerging talent.



¹ Children & Young People Now, Youth work: A battle against media stereotypes, 19 March 2009

There is little for me to recommend in terms of how things might be done differently in future. There is some fine tuning of recruitment strategy, detailed at the end of Part Two. Below I have summarised the characteristics and features that make Ignition so successful and that could be emulated by other artists, organisations and teachers.



Professional artists who are committed to teaching, sharing skills and collaborating with young people as part of their own artistic development. The Frantic Assembly artists are positive role models, approachable, charismatic and effective leaders who display confidence, inspire trust, excite and nurture talent, provoke and encourage experimentation and new ways of thinking and doing.

An extraordinary experience, new to the participants, different to the way they are taught in school or college, with unfamiliar people in an unfamiliar place. An extraordinary experience was anticipated, certainly by the time the boys had reached the Intensive. The characteristics they describe relate to the atmosphere generated, the unique, dynamic creative process and the intensity of the week.

Space to create – physical and psychological space, a space to think and behave in a focussed manner, to feel safe and enjoy being with like-minded souls. A space where time flies because, as Ken Robinson expresses it, you are in your element.²



Clarity of purpose and a tangible, high value goal – the company are frank about their ‘selfish’ motives for Ignition – to address an industry shortage by investing in unleashing potential and training young talent. The purpose of each stage of the project is clearly defined for the participants and the stages are carefully designed to be intrinsically enjoyable and valuable learning experiences. Working as a professional company towards a public performance is motivating and a source of pride. It validates their effort and demonstrates the company’s faith in their ability.

An environment of trust where the participants can feel confident in themselves and with each other. The high level of physicality and the imperative to work safely helps to generate trust quickly. Sensitive management of tasks that elicit personal thoughts and feelings, collaborative working process and pastoral support – all these features feed a working culture of respect and trust during Ignition that is noticed and appreciated at every stage. This culture gives the participants the confidence to be themselves, to push their own boundaries and to be free of any limitations imposed by other peer groups.



A sense of urgency and adventure, ‘risk in a safe place’,³ drives Ignition. The tension of learning skills, devising original material and the need to present a professional theatre production is a pressing challenge for young men and for the Directors. Simultaneously they are encouraged to freely take physical and creative risks in order to achieve their goal. The Directors are committed to ensuring that the content comes from the Ignition companies and is specific to them as individuals and groups. They themselves were taking artistic risks each time. The performance goal is a catalyst for focus when physical energy flags.

An open learning process where experimentation and collaboration are valued and failure is recognised as a useful and integral part of the creative and the learning process. Constant encouragement is offered, even for the smallest progression.



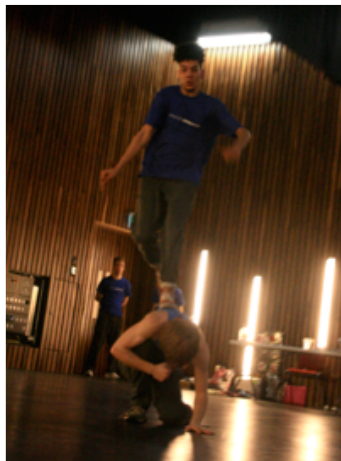
Teamwork – helping each other, listening to each other, taking responsibility for themselves and others.



It can take years to build this level of trust. We’ve done it in four days. It has shown me that trust is the foundation of everything you do if you are working in a group.

² The Element, Ken Robinson with Lou Aronica, 2009

³ Imaginative Actuality, Learning in the Arts during the Nonschool Hours, Shirley Brice-Heath 1998



The quality and use of language by the Directors is appreciated for its economy and its clarity. The writing tasks are playful and purposeful. The ideas and personal stories are shown respect and valued for their authenticity and honesty, their humour and wit.

Reflection is integral to the creative process as the participants worked in pairs, threes and fours making and refining material, negotiating and selecting physical phrases. The evaluation process itself is an opportunity to individually explore and reflect on experiences, to make connections. It is interesting to hear how the young men's use of language expanded in its level of detail, its breadth of analysis and depth of understanding as it moved from the Taster and through days 1-4 of the Intensive.

Peer to peer learning is modelled and fostered. The devising process demonstrates that the Directors value the participants' ideas as well as vice versa.

The involvement and commitment of whole company, which is discernable to the participants and gives status and value to the project. The practical and moral support by other company members for the Directors/Creative Associate pre and post sessions is clearly valuable. This is a useful space for them to discuss the day, critique, troubleshoot and plan.

Professional Partnerships with agreed, individual and shared aims and objectives bring mutual practical and strategic benefits. Ongoing communication, managing changing circumstances and a contract or Memorandum of Understanding are vital ingredients for effective collaboration.



What an incredible piece of work – I laughed, thought hard and sat in awe at the physical prowess on show. It is a truly intimidating thought that four days ago, there was nothing. A very talented all-round team.

Audience Member



Ignition engages with young people in a way that is exceptional in today's theatrical community offering them genuine opportunities to participate in serious, exciting and innovative physical theatre.

Andy Dawson, Theatre Royal Plymouth



What an extraordinary achievement in such a short rehearsal time. It is such a joy to see that kind of commitment from young men of that age. You should all be hugely proud.

Anne Henderson, Casting Director, National Theatre Scotland



Elizabeth Lynch
June 2011

Images by Eric Richmond, John Hunter,
Scott Graham and Jonnie Riordan

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PART ONE

EVALUATION APPROACH

This report draws on a wide range of interviews conducted by the author and others with Frantic Assembly Directors, the Creative Associate and other company members, Ignition participants, Peer Mentors and delivery partner staff. The interviews were held with the Directors and/or Creative Associate and with Ignition participants at every stage of the process – Taster workshops, Trials and Intensives. Most interviews were recorded on video and transcribed. Monitoring information, including equalities data was gathered by the company. The author observed a sample of all stages of the Ignition programme across all four projects including three performances and viewed footage of workshops and performances.



Analysis and interpretation of this material has informed my opinions and insights with reference to the stated aims and objectives of the project and the requirements of the funder. The purpose of the evaluation is formative, to understand how this type of programme is successful and how it might be developed.

Note: Direct quotations by Ignition participants are italicised in grey boxes throughout. Quotes by Frantic Assembly and partners are attributed.

SECTION 1: VISION, PURPOSE AND AIMS

Frantic Assembly's motivation for Ignition stems from the background and career paths of its two founding Artistic Directors, Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett. As students studying English Literature they were not heading for careers in theatre. However, when Volcano Theatre Company offered its services to the student drama society they had just joined, the experience opened their eyes to a way of working and a style of theatre they did not know existed. This was a highly physical, visceral and visual world. Volcano mentored, trained, advised and employed both of them for a short time, providing the perfect launch pad from which to start their own company.

The experience of working with Volcano was crucial to the creation of Frantic Assembly. The company is seeking to emulate this special opportunity through the delivery of Ignition. The company is already well known for attracting new and young audiences to the theatre. Ignition will enable them to introduce its distinctive way of working to young men who might not have considered working in theatre, but possess the crossover skills, energy and potential to be physical performers. The company hopes to tap into what it believes is a hidden pool of talent, specifically young men, who may feel daunted or excluded by the more formal, 'traditional' routes into theatre.

Frantic Assembly have identified that the age group 16-20 years old will benefit most from Ignition's vocational training. This is a transition stage when they are moving from compulsory education to considering their futures – in further education or employment, or have some uncertainty about either of these options. The project has two distinct and connected phases: a series of Taster workshops and Trials intended to open access to as many young men as possible in each location; and an Intensive four days that provides a selection of these young men with high quality vocational training over a sustained period.

Through the over-arching aim of widening the pool of future male physical theatre performers, Ignition also addresses wider social issues affecting their target group. These are to:

1. **Remove barriers to participation in the arts** for disadvantaged young men.
2. **Attract participants from diverse backgrounds**, particularly those with little or no access to creative opportunities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

3. **Tackle low achievement amongst young men**, by equipping participants with transferable life skills and raising their aspirations.
4. **Challenge negative perceptions of young men** by showcasing their skills, experience and achievements.



The two-hour **Taster workshops** introduce participants to Frantic Assembly's unique style of theatre and are designed as a stand-alone experience as well as an opportunity to take their interest further. The Taster workshops are delivered in a variety of locations to enable as many young men as possible to take part in each region. Activities include a warm-up, high-energy team games, physical activities and creative exercises. At the end of the Taster the participants are invited to sign up for the Trials for a chance to join the Ignition Theatre Company.



By building momentum through the Tasters and Trials, we believe that the participants will be enthused, excited and prepared for the final stage. The structure of the activities enables participants to take responsibility for their experience and progression through the project.

Lisa Maguire, Executive Producer, Frantic Assembly

The **Intensive training programme** will:

- **Provide an environment** where the participants' can discover and explore their own physical language by **working creatively as a young company**.
- **Engage participants' creativity**, teaching them to work imaginatively and collaboratively to produce a theatrical performance.
- **Treat the young men taking part as professional Frantic Assembly performers** to provide them with a true experience of professional working practices within theatre
- **Inspire** young men to pursue **further training or careers in the arts**.

SECTION 2: IGNITION TASTERS

I. A Taster workshop observed, London, 9 October 2010



Always fun, always active. They are not called 'Frantic' for no reason.

The Steve Whitson Rehearsal Studio at Toynbee Hall is a beautiful large square space. There is a panoramic view across East London, flooding the studio with natural light. As the participants arrive they are registered and welcomed; the ambience is relaxed, calm. There is an air of quiet expectation, a little shyness. Some change into their loose clothing. Frantic Assembly staff chat to the young men, making introductions.

Creative Associate Neil Bettles leads today's session, supported by Dritan Kastrati, the Peer Mentor (a previous Ignition 'graduate'). Neil sets the tone for the atmosphere. They are relaxed but serious, composed, focussed. There is the unspoken assumption that the Taster workshop is important and special. The opening words are kept short.

The work begins with an energising physical warm-up. The leaders give very clear directions for all the physical activity, with regular coaching to the group and to individuals. The pace varies but the momentum is never lost. There is encouragement, laughter, small group and ensemble working. The trust exercises are high risk and thrilling to watch, let alone experience. The challenges are increased, e.g. wider gaps between falls/catches, more challenge and more danger! There is no rationale or explanation for doing these exercises, the young men just do it; they clearly trust Neil and Dritan.

When Neil demonstrates the 'flying jump' where they have to leap, twist mid-air and be caught at the height of their trajectory by three boys, there is a sharp intake of breath.

Throughout this exercise, Neil's voice is level and calm, he doesn't attribute a value to the activity, there is no 'pumping up' of the task or the participants. This is not like reality TV. There is a low-key acknowledgement of the task's difficulty and risk and a request for silence. A test run comes first, there is coaching from Neil, applause for success from the guys. With heavier participants they offer a 'test' to confirm that the combined group of 'catchers' will have the ability to bear their weight. Second tries are offered so that individuals can get their jump right. The spoken and unspoken question whispered as they wait in line – "Is it possible for me to do it?" Smiles, fear, laughter, applause, tension, nerves, team effort, individual daring, group responsibility. Finally they take their flying jumps swiftly in cannon. Music volume up!

Music is used regularly as an energising or ambient soundtrack. Sequences of movements are generated then refined and built into a final piece. It is exhilarating to watch. It is heart-warming and refreshing to witness the mixture of boldness and vulnerability.

After the high risk, high energy physical exercise, there is a short break and in the next section, in small groups they create sequences where they fall, catch and lift each other, after a brief demonstration by Neil and Dritan. The boys have to work in close physical contact, with a challenge that is not competitive, testing their strength and the use of strength, applying technique, problem solving, trying out how their bodies work with each other's. Throughout, Neil and Dritan are working the room, advising, coaching. The boys go on to work in pairs, in threes, with different people. Sweat dripping. Voices animated. Concentration. Laughter. Negotiation. Discussion. Some anxiousness. Can we work this out? A desire to do the exercise. They are immersed.

Neil contextualises the last exercise within Frantic Assembly's approach to theatre making. After the groups have shared their work (soundtracked by Underworld's *Bird 1* at high volume) feedback is invited on what makes a good sequence:

“ Pace and momentum
Surprise, variation for the audience
Not anticipating a catch or a fall
Small lifts can be really effective

The Taster closes with an acknowledgement of their contribution today and the invitation to audition for the Ignition Intensive. The workshop has been carefully programmed to ensure a good balance between intense, challenging physical exercise and lower-key physical and creative activity which gives the participants' bodies time to recover.

“ No one was left out, it flowed and there was a positive ambition throughout.

II. Purpose

“ Clarity of what is expected, what we are to do.

The two-hour Taster workshop introduces participants to Frantic Assembly's unique style of theatre. The Tasters are a significant opportunity for young men with little access to or experience of physical theatre to engage with the company's work for the first time or to follow up interest generated by seeing or studying their work.

As 274 young people attended these sessions it is important to consider the impact on participants in detail. The interviews and questionnaires illustrate and validate the aims of the Taster sessions and the objective that it should work as a stand-alone, intrinsically valuable experience.

III. Learning through Frantic Assembly's unique style of theatre

“ It was unusual and original. We did a lot in a short space of time.

In this section the teaching, learning and insight gained into the company's style is explored through first hand observation and the evidence of personal testimony provided in the interviews with company members and workshop participants. There were six features that 80% of the 274 participants referred to when asked to describe "the best thing about the Taster workshop". Participants across all four Taster programmes consistently cited the following:

1. **Quality of leadership and teaching.**
2. **Atmosphere** created, the ambience and inclusivity.
3. **Learning** new techniques and skills, especially lifting, catching, throwing, jumping.
4. **Physicality**, the thrill and the challenge.
5. **New** – meeting new people, trying new things.
6. **Trust** – with people they didn't know and as an integral part of the creative process.

The overwhelming greatest response to “What was worst thing about the workshop?” was “nothing”, followed up by “it wasn't long enough”. Inevitably some also expressed that “worst of all” was “the thought of not getting in after doing the workshop”.⁴

1. Leadership and teaching

“ The people running the workshop were great at their job.

In terms of the stand-alone experience and insight into the company's approach to making theatre, the testimony from the young men themselves is precise and eloquent. It captures the qualities of the **leadership** and **teaching** offered by Artistic Directors Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett, Creative Learning Associate Neil Bettles and Creative Learning Practitioner Naomi Said (Corby). They comment repeatedly on the demeanour of the artists, the clarity of their instructions, the way they inspire confidence and trust, how they are approachable, their professionalism:

“ The team is really well organised and know exactly what they are doing.
 The energy, patience and personalities of the coaches.
 Friendly people, clear instructions.
 Very enjoyable - excellent teaching.
 Dude's explanations were really good.
 It was fun to take part in and help was given when you needed it, very clear instructions.
 Gaining the advice from the expert.
 The fact that there is a huge amount of professionalism.

Being authoritative without being authoritarian, imparting skills and advice with clarity and coherence, treating the participants as they treat professional performers – and therefore having high expectations of them – all these factors help to make the group feel secure with the leaders and with each other and created fertile conditions for learning. Roles are clear. The stated messages are – we are experienced professionals, we will lead and guide you, you can trust us to give you a stimulating (and safe) experience. As the session progresses another, implicit, message emerges and is absorbed consciously or unconsciously. The leaders believe that all participants have physical ability and creative imaginations. They engage them in daring feat, they demonstrate that the participant-generated content can be used to convey a theatrical idea.



“ These two haven't raised their voice once, they treat us like a professional company. Others say this, but don't. It's the first time I've seen it done well and will learn from that, try to do the same.

The amount of motivation that I've received. I was forced to believe that I could do it and that I have potential.

⁴ See Part 2 for Pastoral Support and Professional Development

2. Atmosphere

“ Laid back but also intense.

Another fertile condition for the learning taking place is the **atmosphere** in the room. The leaders generate this at the start but it is sustained and developed by the interaction between all the participants. The young men comment again and again on the atmosphere of this two-hour workshop, they notice it is special. They attribute this to the friendliness of the company and their peers who they feel are ‘like-minded’, interested and focussed, like they are. For many it is a novel or unusual experience, it seems to have removed a tension and facilitated the trust which was so necessary to the workshop process, to learning and to understanding the company’s approach to creativity. ‘**New**’ is a word that occurs regularly in their descriptions – the new skills and ideas, the new people – referred to even more so in Corby.

“ It had a great atmosphere, it never became dull.
 The un-hostile atmosphere.
 Nice instructors and professional atmosphere.
 Very open and interesting, allows people to build a relationship with the group.
 High level of participants and professionals who know what they are doing.
 The company's work ethic is brilliant. They give everyone the same experience.
 Meeting and working with like minded people.
 Getting a group of strangers to work as a team without problems.
 Communicating with people you don't know and working as a team.
 The focus the group had due to the exercises at the beginning.
 Getting straight into trusting people you have never met is interesting.

A significant number describe the workshop as “fun”, “energetic” and “enjoyable”. No one explicitly says they felt safe. However the trust that was generated and described implies a degree of emotional as well as physical safety. This “safe” atmosphere enabled the group of “strangers” to take risks without fear of failure or ridicule. “Failure” to execute a jump, for example, was always used as an opportunity for everyone to learn, it was contextualised as part of the creative process. **Failure is useful**. As perceptions of personal failure can be a significant barrier to engaging with learning and with the arts and sport for many young people, particularly those who struggle within mainstream education, it will be interesting to observe how the young men develop their awareness of this factor during the Trials and the Intensives.

3. Learning through doing

“ Getting on with the workshop straight away, doing something different, being risky.

The learning identified by the participants can be summarised as:

- Physical skills – lifts, jumps, weight transfer.
- Greater awareness of their own bodies, fitness and stamina, how to use strength.
- Approaches to devising and creating movement sequences.
- Increased awareness of the nature of ‘physical theatre’.

“ Trying new skills that require trust and core strength.
 Knowing it wasn't about muscle and how big you are.
 The placement of hips rather than strength and muscle to lift.
 To work and create something rather than perfect particular moves.
 If I had to pick one thing it would be the devising.
 The importance of timing and pace – momentum.
 Different way of moving around a defined space.
 Being able to create our own stuff using what we learnt, it allowed me to experience how the skills work in practice.
 Understanding the concept of physical theatre.
 I learned that physical theatre is dangerous but can be fun.

Just as interesting was to observe and listen to **how** they learnt. They learnt through doing. The instructions and the coaching by the leaders built up, refined and reinforced the guidance for physical and creative exercises. Because they were immersed quickly in the workshop process, they had to trust everyone; there wasn't time for hesitation or shyness. The stakes were high for practical reasons rather than ego/pride. Lifting and carrying people requires responsible behaviour, attention to safety, collaboration. If instructions are not observed, someone could get hurt.



*The focus – things got active really quickly.
Amount of action rather than talking was good.
Getting into the exercises and activities quickly, a lot of hands-on practical.
Putting trust into other classmates, understanding the concept of physical theatre.
I loved the physical side in which we were pushed to our limits and further.
The fact that there is a huge amount of professionalism but at no point I felt I was unable to ask for help.*

There was immense satisfaction, observed and expressed, that the group created their own scene by the end of the workshop and could see how all the exercises and lifts they explored at the beginning were used. So what did they take away from this experience? They describe learning new skills (especially for lifting and shifting weight) to take away and develop, techniques and ideas they could “use for their A Level performances”. But they also talk about their increased knowledge of physical theatre and what they had learnt about trust:



*That body language speaks louder than text in performance.
That trust plays a major part in physical theatre.*

and an insight into how they had learnt:



*The level of exercises carried out and the support given was a killer formula for confidence.
There was less discussion, more action when working on something.
Being out of your comfort zone, thinking on the spot.
Being able to do daring things and having fun at the same time.*

4. Expectations



I didn't expect it to be so full on so quickly. Very practical and more challenging than I expected.



The Taster Workshop for most participants was more physical in content or more physically demanding than they had anticipated, even for those familiar with the company's work. Some were expecting more dance, acrobatics or acting. Several had prepared by watching the company's work online, Some had received recommendations from friends. Several weren't expecting to have as much fun.

Quite a few said they had come with no expectations, an open mind. A few, with sadly familiar cynicism, had low expectations, which could be an indication of lack of access to, or experience of, high quality and/or relevant arts experiences. When asked if they thought the workshop would help them in future, 89.5% said yes.



*Trying new skills that require trust and core strength.
The standard of professionalism was higher than I expected.
I thought it was gonna be rubbish but it wasn't.
It was different because I didn't expect it to be that good.
The style and movement is not just given to you. Everyone's work is shared.
It's a lot more intense than I thought it would be. I also didn't expect to be allowed to throw my body around like that, which was awesome.
It was a good opportunity to work and trust others.*

The Taster workshop embodied the ethos of both Ignition and Frantic Assembly. The Taster demonstrated professional values in its behaviours and approach to content. Significantly this includes the message that in the creative process there must be freedom to make mistakes, to fail and try again.



There is encouragement to test and try, encouragement for the smallest thing.

Neil Bettles

Frantic always say 'Never go back... always move forward'... It's a big part of the company's ethos, to always build on your last attempt.

Laura Sutton, General Manager

SECTION 3: IGNITION TRIALS

I. Purpose and process



The Trials will last one hour. The content will be very similar to the Tasters but with increased intensity and pace. Frantic Assembly will be looking for a mix of personalities from a range of backgrounds and a selection of ages to join the Ignition Theatre Company. Above all, potential to be a physical performer, commitment and teamwork are vital.

Frantic Assembly

Prior to the observation of two auditions/Trials I speak to Steven Hoggett and Neil Bettles about the Frantic Assembly approach to selecting members for the Ignition company. We discuss how they manage the process so that it is a refreshing antidote to the X-Factor style that sharply polarises success and failure. The one-hour workshop format, for up to 20 young men at a time, is devised to generate the feeling that they are all involved and not in direct competition with each other. They are not 'put on the spot' on their own; there isn't the stress of having to prepare an audition piece. They are taught a couple of exercises that give the young men an insight into the company's work and enable their responses to be observed.

Neil explains that it is designed as a sharing, rather than a competitive process, that each individual will get something out of it by clearly contributing to a sequence created in collaboration with the whole group. Whilst acknowledging that there will be disappointment for some after today – there are only twelve places in the Ignition company and 67 are attending the Trials – Frantic Assembly make sure they assert their perception of the intrinsic value of the workshop before and after the session. They make it clear that in putting together the company they are seeking to create an ensemble featuring a range of physical types, backgrounds and ages. It isn't about skill, talent and potential alone, it's also about casting.



There are lots of things they can tick in terms of being with us for the Trial, the standard in the group is very high, they have got to a point with us where they've recognised that they are credible performers that we are interested in working with.

Steven Hoggett

All the Trial participants are encouraged to come to the final performance. They know from the communication process to date that Frantic are a very accessible company and that they can keep in touch with them and with each other as part of the Frantic Assembly network. *'We take responsibility for the hour. We make sure that we see everyone in their entirety. We instruct, we observe and try to make a clean, clear judgement about who to select,'* says Steven. Neil and Steven keep talking to each other throughout the session, make notes and these are added to individual profiles with photos, which are then laid out and discussed after the Trials.

II. A Trial observed, London, 17 October 2009



Fast, fun and pretty hard. Really intense but interesting. It wasn't nearly as nerve-racking as most auditions

Steven Hoggett and Neil Bettles lead today. The informal chat has relaxed everyone but now the work will begin. Scene setting is brief and a professional tone is established for the experience. It's straight in with the warm-up and swiftly the participants are given something to think about and to remember – a movement sequence, a favourite point in the room, a sound to register, instructions – this takes the pressure off thinking about themselves and each other as performers and as strangers to each other. Eight minutes in and there are laughs, smiles and hugs. Music has been added as a soundtrack, the group is relaxed and alert – just as well as the next sequence of exercises is at the 'harder end' of the Frantic Assembly physical movement vocabulary. Excellent clear instructions are given, in very accessible language. The tone is matter-of-fact. The exercises introduce use of strength and also serve to raise the heart rate.



After this highly physical section, Steven and Neil demonstrate a movement sequence. The group's first attempt at its execution is, for this spectator, more than adequate. The group have been brought to a receptive state of mind and body. Steven explains that the sequence is from an attack/evasion section of a Frantic Assembly performance.⁵ Later the boys are asked to add three to four moves of their own. They are instructed to perform their sequence free of narrative and emotion. They go on to vary and change the pace, to work with a music soundtrack.

The work they have created together is rehearsed and shared. After applause the group sit with the company team to hear a little more about the Ignition Intensive and how decisions will be made to select its members. They are reminded that they are all now part of the extended Ignition network. As they gather their belongings, they all exchange phone numbers. "It was great", "It was fun", "amazing", was repeated during the vox pops gathered. The boys were asked, "Did you surprise yourself?"



*I thought I wasn't going to be able to lift people, but I did.
Learning quick moves in a short time, mental and physical all working at once!
To be honest I did things that I didn't think I could do. I'm not in the peak of physical fitness.
I'm going to have to go for more things like this; just the one hour has been great fun.
I'm surprised how quickly I picked things up.
I struggled at first but I overcame it.*

The language the boys use to describe their experience is positive. It indicates that some preconceptions about their ability and about the nature of the session content has been challenged; that it was great fun. Even if they are not cast in the Ignition Company, there is evidence for a feeling of achievement. Taking part in the Trial is a positive step; another barrier to participation in the arts has been removed. The Trial workshop has demonstrated what they can do rather than what they can't.

III. Reflection



Informative and a glimpse of what we could be doing.

Later, those selected for the Ignition Companies are asked to reflect on their experiences at the Trials. The feedback from 46 young men (across the 4 projects) describes how they were struck by the originality of the format, how intense, enjoyable and challenging it had been and that they had been given a real insight into the company's way of working. They appreciated too the underlying seriousness of the leaders' approach and the professional atmosphere generated. The only recurring criticism is that the Trial had been too short. The boys often acknowledge the quality of the competition they faced from their peers:

² "Sell Out floor" p149, The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre. Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett 2009



I left feeling very sceptical whether I would get in because there was some tough competition. It was intense and a really high standard but I loved it. It didn't seem like an audition and I could relax and have fun. The audition process was really straightforward and I enjoyed it because it was active. Fun, energetic, not stressful and clear instructions. A good length of time (enough to show what you can do without getting too tired). Good variation of activities. Well structured, a step up from the workshop. Received a clear insight on how the company works, very original. No pressure and treated as professionals. I felt very comfortable and felt that if I didn't get in it was a good experience to have! Everyone was helpful and inspiring.

The company's desire to make the Trial/audition enjoyable, to offer progression from a Taster session and to provide an insight into the company's professional practice is borne out by the sample of comments above. I was impressed by the thoughtful and painstaking approach to capturing each individual's skills and qualities. The Director and Creative Associate were supported by the Peer Mentor and General Manager as they went carefully through their notes, cross-referencing photographs and information from the applications, discussing and refining their choices as they moved towards finalising the Ignition Company. The standards and stakes appear to be as high as for choosing any Frantic Assembly cast.

SECTION 4: IGNITION INTENSIVES

I. Purpose and process



Following the Trials twelve young men in each region will be selected to join the Ignition Theatre Company. The material generated in the Intensive will be set, molded and rehearsed around a theme that is inspired by the participants' real life experiences. The Directors will use a questionnaire to discover stories, anecdotes and incidents from the participants' lives that will in turn develop into text and movement for the final performance. The performance day will be spent rehearsing with sound, lighting and costumes, supported by a lighting designer, a technical manager and front of house staff from each venue. The participants will perform to an invited audience of around 150 local people and industry professionals.

The project will bridge a training gap for young men who may well turn out to be talented performers, directors or practitioners in the future. At the end of the vocational training the participants will have gained a sense of achievement through working with others towards a shared goal and will take away transferable skills in team work, communication and self-motivation as well as more specific knowledge of devising, physicality and performance techniques.

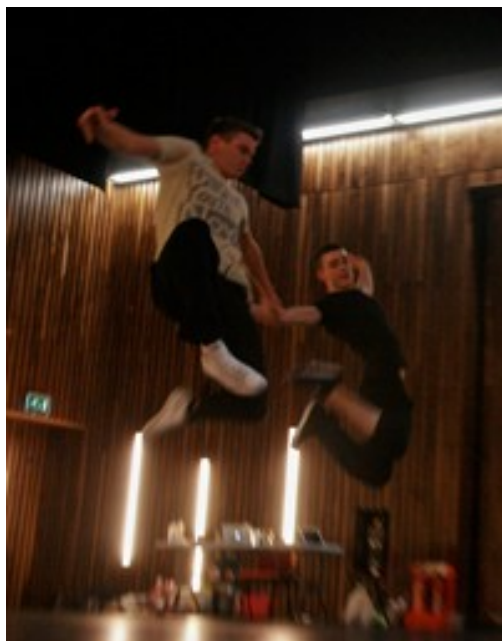
Frantic Assembly



II. An Intensive session observed, Corby, 24 February 2011



The emotional trust of when we're bringing in bits we've written and stuff, like you needed to trust everyone else or you wouldn't have felt comfortable reading that out to everyone.



Evening, 6.00pm, day three. Neil Bettles and Naomi Said know the boys are tired but the show is still being devised. Straight in after break they continue work on an intense physical ensemble scene. A new task – the boys talk and work in small groups, and then the new section is run. Review, organise, structure the sequence. Run the whole thing. Bodies fly horizontally across the room, music pounding. Then questions and suggestions, everyone throwing in ideas to refine, to resolve problems, finesse. Energy levels are right up, the room smells of sweat and spray deodorant.

Now a change of tempo. The guys line up across the space and deliver a series of chat-up lines and lonely-hearts ads describing their best qualities and those of an ideal partner. The stuff is really good, varied, funny and touching. The text mixes material they've written supplemented with 'best chat-up lines' googled by Neil. They are individually coached on projection, volume, emphasis, articulation, the sense behind the line. Neil encourages them to "ratchet up a level, try to top each other". The boys are tired, they are reminded of the need to keep focus, to concentrate. They suddenly look very young and vulnerable.

At the start they stumbled over the unfamiliar words but as they practise and practise over the next hour, they relax into the lines, they take it slower without being told to take it slower. They find the sense of the text, it becomes clearer and better projected. They understand how to make the punch line. "Don't try to hard to be funny, then it will be" says Naomi.

This is hard work and the group are receiving the kind of rigorous, detailed direction that you would observe in any professional rehearsal room. The Directors are demanding the best, re-working phrasing, insisting on clarity, the enunciation of every syllable, more volume, more projection. We need to hear every word, reach us, communicate!

It's 8.00pm. Do they have anything left to give? Yet they are focussed. They know they have made progress. Neil goes through cueing, knowing ends of previous actor's speech, anticipating when to come in and... the audience's laughter. Repeat. It's so much better now. Then a final run through and it's brilliant, funny. It's fixed and they've got it.

Exit on a high note.

III. Method of evaluation

In addition to observation of one or more of Days Two, Three and Four across all the projects, the progress of the Intensive was captured through a series of interviews with all participants on Days One and Four (total sample 46) and additional interviews with four boys per project mid-Intensive and post-performance (total sample 16). After the first London Ignition, I also invited all the boys to think of questions they would like to be asked which were written on pieces of paper and chosen randomly by them. This approach has enabled me to capture the views of all the Intensive participants and a more detailed account from 16 of them.⁶

The Directors and Creative Associates were interviewed about their creative approach to devising and working with the young companies.

IV. Expectations



I fully expect them to be brilliant. We know there's talent, but it's going elsewhere.
Scott Graham

⁶ For Intensive interview questions see Appendices

In addition to practical questions about marketing and communication and their reflections on the Trials, the Day One questionnaire asked: "What do you hope to get out of the week?"

The learning identified by the 46 participants can be summarised as:

- **Learning:** devising and physical theatre skills, new ways of working (22).
- **Vocational:** working in a professional theatre environment, CV enhancing (16).
- **Experience:** as in an extraordinary experience (18) – six specified this as an opportunity to be stretched, both physically and creatively.

The words "friendship" and "fun" peppered many of the responses categorised above. One specifically mentioned the qualification as "awesome". Another stated the experience working with all male cast rather than mixed gender performance. Only one said frankly: "Actually I don't know. I'm just ready to go with it and what comes, comes".

Asked to identify what their greatest challenge would be, eight expressed anxiety about keeping up with the pace of the work and the intensity of the experience. 15 cited the physical demands, stamina and fitness levels required and six mentioned their confidence. Four mentioned arriving on time each day and another four were unsure about what to expect.

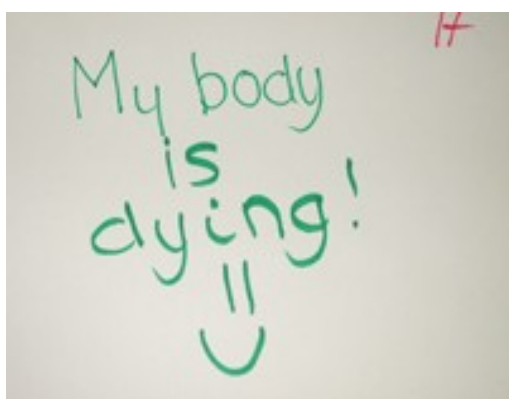
““ My greatest challenge? :
Probably the speed of everything, picking things up quickly will be a toughie.
Not being afraid & scared!
A new level of confidence in my physicality. Becoming fearless.

V. Reality Bites. Mid-week

1. Physical fitness and creativity

““ It wakes me up and helps focus the mind.

Mid-week even though the boys are finding the demands of the physical work high, they also find it enjoyable and energising. The public performance at the end of the week is very motivating. This goal, the professional leadership and the support of their peers helps them push through the pain and endure the long days. The mixture of ages and backgrounds was commented on by several boys and noted as a factor that contributed to and supported their high aspirations.



““ It's completely different from being at school and working with people that may not want to work to the same level, or same intensity. It's a completely different ethos, it's very driven and very focussed and I enjoy working with people who have the same drive as me. I think you just produce better work.

They talk about the importance of the daily warm-ups – to prevent injury, strengthen muscle groups, particularly the core for stability and lifts.

““ Learning the lifts and being lifted. I always found that quite difficult being a big chap. But being lifted I quite enjoy... Just the kind of chucking each other about and learning the set choreography and working to set counts, that's something I haven't done before...

By this stage, even the very physically fit boys – and most are also active sportsmen and/or dancers – are acutely aware of the benefits of the punishing daily regime. They notice improved fitness, strength, stamina and flexibility. Five mention that they had been able to push personal boundaries and try new things.

“ Keep practising – trying different things and not being afraid as well just try something different if it is a bit scary just go for it really.

The participants frequently comment at every stage of Ignition on the clear instructions given for the physical and creative exercises. I notice the precise breakdowns for exercises, the use of colloquial language, e.g. backside, belly – not personal trainer language! (E.g. ‘glutes’, ‘abs’) and helpful metaphors. Coupled with the level tone and calm demeanour of the delivery, the Frantic Assembly language style is careful, strong and very effective, light-years away from the gym and many a dance class.

The open process of creative collaboration is appreciated. Taking a small idea from the Directors, making it their own, expanding it, transforming it, sharing it with the group - then seeing the Directors put it together with other material generated in the same way – this process is a wonderful revelation for the participants – and for the observer. One boy mentions the richness that the wider age group brings to the process. Another says the creative process is ‘like a family’ working together and he attributes this to the mixture of subtle leadership and organic collaboration.

“ Working with strangers that you’ve never spoken to until now and you’ve just got to trust them. Share ideas, express your own ideas, listen to someone else’s, give feedback and be really honest with yourself and someone else. It’s a challenge to just come up with something new instead of what you do always.

It’s amazing how Scott and Steven can just string the ideas together so we’ll create material individually, or as a duet, but they then string all that together to make a group piece.

2. Working as a team and the nature of the Ignition ensemble

“ Try to be a bit more out there. Don’t be in your comfort zone too much. Don’t worry about what everyone else thinks. If they don’t like it just take it and move on.

Half of the sample interviewed feel that they are good at working as part of a team. Helping each other and listening are cited as important conditions for successful teamwork. One mentions that he holds back too much when it comes to the creative ideas, another (naturally a leader) that he’s aware that he’s able to hold back to give space to others’ ideas.



The comments in the section above about working with people they don’t know, working in a environment very different to their experience of school or college – along with comments about the different social backgrounds, levels of arts experience (from zero to undergraduate level) and in the age range in the groups – are all contributing factors to the effectiveness of the team building. In fact it appears that there is a virtuous circle of factors at play. Frantic Assembly have created Ignition Companies from individuals deliberately diverse in terms of personality, arts experience, talent and skills, with a capacity for commitment and teamwork. Their creative approach builds a strong team very quickly. The range of backgrounds, the fact that the boys are away from their regular peer group and not in a formal education setting, the high status of the experience, the fact that

they have been selected – all help to make them ripe for being developed as a new team. They are away from familiar surroundings, united by their experience of being in a new and special situation, experiencing creative challenges for a shared goal being guided by respected and admired role models.

From an artistic viewpoint, the Directors believe that it is exciting for an audience to see some of this diversity represented on stage.

3. Developing ideas and themes

“ They’ll give you just the tiniest bit and say go and explore that and before I know where I’m going with it, I’m coming out with all these ideas that I wouldn’t have thought of before and I’m creating/devising scenes that I would never have thought of devising before I came here.

Midway through the Intensive, the ideas and themes for the final performance are clear. London 1 explored fears; Plymouth imagined looking down from heaven after an untimely death and the reflections that this generated; London 2 considered the nature of religious faith and spiritual belief. In Corby the company explored the way males express their emotions.

The participants’ comments on the content demonstrate their general interest in the subjects, but their responses to questions about the ideas and themes reveal their fascination with Frantic Assembly’s creative technique. They describe how they explore the dynamic process of experimenting first with gesture and choreographed movement and then later adding emotional expressiveness to communicate. For example, in Corby, starting with the idea of a heartbeat:

“ Everyone’s doing it at the same time, feeling your heartbeat on your chest, looking at where your heart’s going, it’s exploding out of you, you’re trying to find it. Your heart is bursting out of your chest. We have to focus on the physical expression, we don’t try and express emotion. This is relaxing because you are able to focus on the physical and go beyond stereotypical interpretations of movements.

If the performer puts in the emotion from the start, then it can only ever be that one thing says Naomi. The Directors want to find the clarity of the material first, before they ask for adjustments in performance or a change of music that guides the audience to take a meaning from it. By asking the boys to explore the pure gesture, the movement and really work it, they are free to go much wider than if you asked them to show what your heart feels like when it’s sad.

This search for truth rather than posture, the real rather than the role, enables the boys to create a fresh movement lexicon from which they can draw to express emotion, attitude etc. It helps to avoid reproducing what the performer thinks they ought to or what they have seen elsewhere.

VI. The Directors’ role and their creative process

“ We are paid to have imaginations.
Steven Hoggett



The Directors consider the venue for the final performance prior to the Ignition Intensives. Toynbee Studios in London and The Core at Corby Cube are high specification theatres with full lighting rigs and sound systems. “*What does the space do and what can they be if they are in that space?*” (**Steven Hoggett**). In Plymouth, Ignition was offered the TR2 rehearsal studio which was large and modern but with fewer technical resources, essentially a black box. “*There is no pretence about the space and so the group have to be themselves*” (**Steven Hoggett**).

The Directors use a range of written tasks on the first day, followed up by further writing as the week goes on.⁷ They use questionnaires to generate thinking and ideas for the themes of fear, faith, death and what they love, e.g. in Plymouth the writing task was given a week prior to Day 1. Imagining themselves waiting at Heaven’s Gate, they have to write a letter ‘getting off their chest’ something they needed to say to someone left behind. In Corby the boys have to write lonely hearts ads. The Directors also bring text to the group, e.g. a catalogue of familiar

⁷ The company were careful to make the participants feel confident about responding instinctively to the task and not to worry about spelling or handwriting. Transcription was always offered as an option.

and obscure phobias, topical neuroscience research on the brain, ‘best’ embarrassing chat-up lines. They freely cut and splice this with material generated by the group and sometimes write text to link or frame their words.

Reflecting on the writing tasks, Steven and Neil observe that responses to the questionnaire can sometimes be concise and clipped. Having a more open task such as the letters allows the young men to flex their creative muscle. The sharing of written work (initially the texts are pooled and then read out anonymously within the groups) brings confidence and encourages their further creative writing efforts. Subsequently they observe that the quality level rises. In the sessions I attend it is always a powerful moment when written work is shared, to witness the delight expressed on the boys’ faces when their words make an impact – nods, recognition, laughter, empathy.

In terms of the creative process, Steven says this is not always set up in their notebooks or their heads – they constantly look at what the boys are doing, observing, reviewing and throwing in ideas. For example an exercise, where they had asked the group to imagine movement sequences inspired by careers they might have followed, became more about their hands and the itch of their hands to do something, to create. Later, observing some improvised duets, “[the sequence] suddenly became about stopping and taking someone’s pulse” says Steven. Neil and Steven had been talking earlier about resuscitation and so an idea fell into place.

When asked about their use of precise, down to earth language mixed effortlessly with metaphor and simile to help the boys understand physical movements and expression, Steven says “It is important that the boys feel they can be completely unafraid to be imaginative, that they can create a quietly lyrical physical phrase.” I ask what influences the choices they make to help them thread together and connect the stories that emerge during the sessions. The Directors plan the structure of the piece, then constantly observe and make decisions on the spot about what fits together. They have the overall vision for ‘the structure of the house’, but they elicit the bricks, the content, from the group.

At the start they ask the boys to trust them to select and reject ideas:



This means that they don’t have to think about the bigger picture, the arc of the show. We have to be the ones who are responsible for that. We say to them be as creative as you can and get the most out of the exchange with us. If you create these foundations, then they hopefully have the bravery to make the work.

Steven Hoggett



We haven’t even done a whole run of the show yet! I’m not worried, I feel as though I’m in safe hands, but I’ve never worked like this before. It reduces the panic knowing that the Directors are confident it is going to come together.

After speaking to Steven and Neil in Plymouth, it was interesting to observe their confidence in the face of so many unknowns – technical challenges and limitations imposed by the space; the ebb and flow of the creative ideas generated in the sessions; the mutual trust between the young performers and their leaders and the expectation of something extraordinary for a public performance in less than 48 hours. During the hours and days I spent with all four groups the excitement and exhilaration was counterbalanced by effort, practice, tension, exhaustion. The pressure to work things out, repeat, explore again, refine, perfect, was framed by this steady confidence. The group could take risks because they felt safe, physically and psychologically. They could fail and move forward. The impulse of a session is always forward, towards the public performance goal, but it is not propelled by rhetoric of hyperbole, just hard work, encouragement and creativity.

Imagination never sleeps during Ignition.

VII. Rehearsal. Day Four



It lived up to its name INTENSIVE.

1. Reflection

By day four the groups are working with the Intensive Directors to thread together the ideas and sequences for the final. They are tired, mentally and physically exhausted but remain elated and excited, fully immersed in their work.

“ You have to be daring, be brave and trust people a lot more than usual.

When asked whether the Taster and the Trial prepared them for the experiences of this week, 41 agree that it had (the remaining five with good-natured reservations about the stamina required) and also that they have a real sense of progression through the different levels. They like the fact that skills and techniques learnt on these days have been picked up again and developed during the Intensive. They have a strong sense of stepping up to the next level and of the excitement of pushing themselves to meet the demands of this higher level working.

“ The foundation in the Tasters and Trials flows into the Intensive.

The audition was up a gear and then this is up a gear. We've got that time now to play, I think when we did that everyone came out like 'that was awesome' and now we've come and done this and it's like 'Woah!' It's a lot faster!

It's tough, but the groups did it together. We didn't distract each other.

That adrenaline rush and that feel good feel when you've actually learned something

The fact that I can now say to myself that I've actually progressed – I actually hit a brick wall, I'm not going to lie – I had quite a few, but I overcame that and, just overcoming that has really helped me. So yes it has and no because it was better and more physical than I ever imagined.

2. Learning and progression

“ I learnt that you don't have to have the most exaggerated, fantastic flips and things like that to create something that is really unique and special... The smallest gesture can be more interesting than the biggest gesture.



In terms of working safely, this week's experience has driven home the vital importance of the daily warm-up to avoid injury. It has refined their understanding of how important trust and good communication is for the potentially dangerous activity they are engaged in. More than half of the group identify this as a key learning from the week. 21 talked about understanding more about the need for self-awareness, self-control and the sense of responsibility they felt for each other. Understanding how to pace movement sequences, the importance of practice and being focused and alert were also indicated by twelve individuals as important factors for safety. Pace, practice and focus recurred several times in responses to further questions.

There is a marked difference between the descriptions of learning from the Tasters and those for the Intensive. Whilst there are repeated features, such as physical fitness and physical theatre techniques, these are recounted with more detail. Several strands emerge which are new, or were referenced infrequently beforehand. 27 describe learning related to creativity and specifically how the environment has encouraged them to take risks, experiment and explore, to push their own boundaries for physical boldness and expressiveness and for trying out ideas. They understand more profoundly how powerful it is to collaborate and appreciate the impact of ensemble performance. Eleven mention learning and increased confidence related to dance, especially in Plymouth where the performance featured a witty and poignant 'cheesy disco' sequence. The language used in the interviews is more varied and specialised. They talk now about choreography, telling stories, concepts, directing, writing, visualisations, improvising, abstraction. They give detailed descriptions of exercises and devising which carefully break down their elements and analyse their delight at the result, the impact it will have on the audience, the collaborative nature of the creative work and the coaching and direction they receive.



Just to have a go and if you can't do it you can't, but just have a go, just be imaginative.

I have learnt about the choreographing process involved within professional theatre and the demands of working in a short time frame. Exploring how to tell stories through movement, and challenging ourselves to try new things.

How to listen to people and allow everyone their ideas and not to judge those ideas before trying them out.

When you create work in unison it is much more effective.

Lifts – I have realised just how beautiful the lifts are.

I've learnt how to do a little bit of descriptive writing. Like, I've never been asked to do that before and then Steven asked me 'will you write something for me'. I was like, well I've never done anything like that before cus I'm more of a dancer, but I just kinda threw myself into it and then he said it was good so I was kinda surprised with myself, shocked but happy. And picking up scripts as well. Like today I've had to learn a script really quick.

I would love to work more on the very small movements. Scott explained that they're the best and most intriguing, most astonishing moments. The audience thinks these subtle moments are the most simple but effective.

The way where it lets you put emotion into your dance. Incorporating that into a dance is really interesting.

The questions what Frantic use, they're really good because they're not direct questions, they're not like, right we're doing a performance about bullying – have you ever been bullied, they're not direct questions so they get more out of you.

The learning they describe is as much about their **attitude** as it is about creative techniques. 15 talk about realising that they need to push themselves more not only physically but mentally, to be more creative and more daring. They realise that they have to trust themselves more and to be more confident in their abilities. They talk about the importance of getting enough sleep, practice, working harder and being more disciplined and controlled.



With the sequences I felt that I was conscious about what everyone would think of my ideas but if I did it again I would be a lot more creative and daring.

I can now try out new things in my everyday life now and it may sound a bit drastic whatever, but it has actually given me confidence.

I think that sometimes it's better to just slow down... just take your time and I'm starting to learn to do that, but I think there's a whole new barrier I can reach, where if you just take your time and slow things down you can make things better.

Control in the duets. Learning to be more delicate and slow it down.

The understanding of the importance of **teamwork and trust** is also articulated in more depth. Most notably more boys extend their appreciation beyond the requirement for the physical daring and safety and talk about the creative, professional and emotional benefits. They describe the positive work ethic generated by a group that wants the same thing, wants to experiment and to move out of their comfort zones.





You have to throw yourself and be caught literally and psychologically.

You can be brave with everyone and they will give you the same backing if not more. I feel more comfortable to go past my limits because I know they're going to be doing the same and they're going to support me through it.

Everything is orientated around that. Co-operation. You just have to do it, there's not a question about it, and you can't not like someone. Pretty much if you're not going to do that then you might as well go home.

It requires so much commitment and focus as well as patience with each other.

We're taking risks, we're really breaking boundaries. We're going places that people wouldn't go in a normal rehearsal. So in order to do that you really need to trust the people you are with. You really need a team, company spirit. Once you've got that you can do anything.

In physical theatre you've got to be open and share things, like personal stuff. We had to answer a questionnaire and I'd never tell those things to a stranger, but in theatre it is different. You feel open to it because of the trust. The dynamics of the group really compliment each other. That's down to Frantic Assembly.

The mix of ages is great, the people, where they are from is great. Having three directors is great and they never clash. I've never experienced that before.

The experience of working with a professional company was daunting at first, but I realised that I'm here because you want me to be and that's when I started getting really stuck in with the group.

The boys all describe **their contributions to the final production** with cautious pride as they also acknowledge the collaborative nature of the work. Several mention the creative writing tasks and their pleasure in performing the text.



The process with the questionnaires was good as I can see some of my stuff translated in the work. I don't know who wrote the script but they were beautiful, Scott? Well he has just taken what I wanted to say and made my work poetic and beautiful.

The boys divide equally when asked whether **their greatest risks** have been physical or emotional during the past week. Again they go into detail, demonstrating their technical grasp of the physical feats they undertake and the personal qualities required for success- as individuals and as a team. They are frank about the range of emotional risks they have faced, exposing their creative ideas, their vulnerability to each other, showing fears and uncertainty, sharing personal information, expressing and performing intimate emotions.



The biggest risk was thinking the right thoughts. Am I actually physically able to do this?

Emotionally – probably work we did at the start, working on the caring tender moments. A lot of physical contact, holding and gripping and assuring, quite daring and risky for me to come out of my comfort zone and do those things, make those emotional connections with my body and be completely ok with it. Before, I don't think I'd have been able to do it but now after coming to Ignition I don't think there's anything I can't try.

Sharing ideas and being confident with your own ideas. It's quite risky to say what you think works better. You've got to trust the group to decide. Also I think I've worked hard in the action. It was hard to express the emotions, but not overact. To pretend to care for another person on stage – even though in real life we'd never met before, was really challenging. It's quite risky to act that way but when you get the feedback from the Directors and you find out it works, that's great.

3. Personal development and aspiration

“ I’ve learnt more than I thought. I’ve learnt more about myself than I expected.

A wide range of learning is described in the interviews ranging from physical skills, dance and creative writing to personal and social skills. There is detailed reference to attitudinal changes, increased self-awareness, confidence, ability to listen to others and feeling clear about this theatre as a career choice. Limiting self-beliefs have been disrupted and rejected through working with like-minded peers and the Frantic Assembly company.

“ My body, the human body is capable of things I never thought it would be. When you’re around other people who are just as talented as you, if not more, you’re sort of you get the urge to try new things.

I’m actually quite strong – physically and mentally. Quite determined. I felt after the first day people were saying I would bail out because it would be too much for me. I surprised myself with how far I pushed myself. Every day we go further.

I’ve learnt to find the detail in the movement and this is often the most special moment.

Socially I fit in.

I can come up with ideas on the spot to a good standard.

I’m willing to give everything to a project and a little bit more.

Things are always possible when you put your mind to it!

I’m actually a bit better at learning dance than I thought.

I’m fitter than I think I am.

I’m not as fit as I thought I was.

I can work harder than I normally do.

I’m not as bad at picking up stuff as I thought I was.

I think that I have more potential than I believe.

I’ve learnt that if it I really focus on something I can actually do it. I can look back on it now and think it was worth doing and worth pushing myself that little bit more.

I’ve tried to listen to others. I think my skill at listening was perhaps better than I thought it would be and in the end that’s a skill for life let alone drama! So thank you for that!

That I can keep up. It has been so fast paced. I used to think I was slow. I don’t know how I have learnt all the choreography and lines.

Several talked about **developing as a performer**, using what they have learnt at college, school and to find work as a performer and the importance of continuing to train and be exposed to new ideas.

“ I can write descriptively. I never knew that. I didn’t think I could and now I’m a bit more confident with writing skills. I hate to write, I hate to read. I’m a dancer. I just like to do physical stuff all the time.

Your body can be more expressive than a word. Don’t be afraid to use it.

Yesterday, structuring the piece, I took a leadership role – odd for me – feeling responsible was a good and scary feeling, I’ve not done this before, I’ve always gone with the crowd.

I’ve learnt about myself that I definitely want to keep creating theatre,

I’ve learnt that this is really what I want to do... This week has really really shown me that this type of work is exactly what I want to do and I really really know that for sure now. I’ve also learnt that I’m a lot more capable than I thought I was.

This has opened more doors for me, ideas for how I can devise more physical stuff. I realise that as I want to apply to a drama school I should do more physical stuff e.g. pilates. It’s quite reassuring that it’s the right industry, this is what I want to do because people are easy to work with and encouraging.

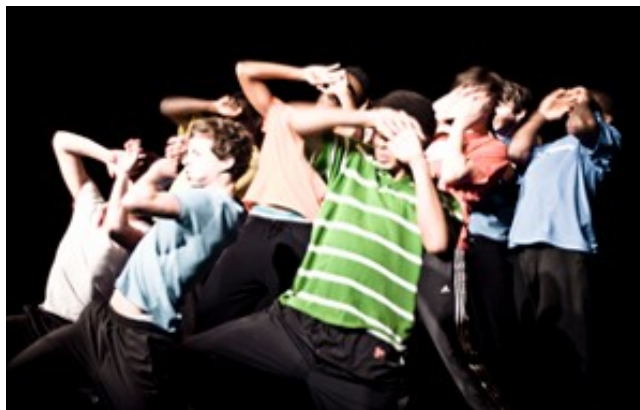
The Frantic Assembly company demonstrates that they ‘walk the talk’. The aspiration to work in theatre and to earn a living from this vocational path is viable, achievable. By people like them. With Ignition, Scott and Steven are modelling

their own experience of finding theatre through contact with a professional theatre company. Neil Bettles has progressed and come into the company through an initial school workshop with Frantic. Jonnie Riordan was employed after London 1 Ignition as a Peer Mentor, photographer and media designer. Dritan Kastrati was also employed after London 1 as a Peer Mentor. The new Administrator Alex Turner took part in a pilot Ignition project. These stories are particularly powerful in Corby where Scott and Neil grew up.



We are very explicit at the start that this is a selfish venture on our part and that we hope they'll be knocking on our doors in two year's time.

Scott Graham



4. Changes and improvements to Ignition?

In response to this question, 14 suggested the Intensive could be longer – anything from one extra day to an extra week. This was mainly expressed in the context of not wanting it to end and they were in broad agreement with the 17 who said that the project was perfect as it is. A few said that the Trials should be longer, four said that they'd like to know more about where the content and themes were heading earlier on in the process. Some suggested that there could be more performances, a tour?



A tour. More performances. We're in need! We're crying for it. Share it with others. Take it to youth clubs. Show people what we've done in a week.

Ignition is by definition a nanosecond in the life of a flame. And there is a well known theatre adage – 'Always leave them wanting more.' The last thing we would have wanted was for one of them to say that any aspect of the process took too long. That would completely defeat the purpose.

Scott Graham

I don't know whether not knowing where the project was going from the start was a good thing or a bad thing. In a way it forced us to trust Steven and Scott's idea's and made the final result more exciting when it came together but on the other hand it was a bit frustrating not knowing what we were working towards. Over all I thought it was an awesome week!

The lack of knowledge of what this show will be and trust in each other to get there is replicated in the relationship between directors. We are not withholding what the show will be. We do not know what it will be, but we trust each other to find it together. Some creative tasks simply depend on participants not anticipating an outcome.

Scott Graham

VIII. For young men 16-20 years old



I am surprised with how well a group of male performers has managed to be together. Usually there is one that lets their ego get in the way.

Unprompted, several boys commented on the all-male nature of the group:



It is the perfect type of theatre for males and this age group – interactive. I've enjoyed watching a diverse group of boys working together with total focus, trust and commitment.

At The Core, the Directors are Creative Associate Neil Bettles and Frantic Assembly Creative Practitioner Naomi Said. We discuss whether having a female director affected the dynamic in any way. Neil observes that the boys do react differently to Naomi in some respects. They can see she is a strong female, as a performer and in her leadership. However he notices that they open up to her a little more, try to impress her and even flirt sometimes. A sequence where they rehearse a series of lonely heart advertisements is always delivered to her.

Naomi doesn't have the experience of the three previous Ignition projects to make a comparison but she is aware of "a sense of fun and a real willingness to run with the physical tasks" that she attributes to the fact that they are an all male group. She says "It's because they're boys, they can just be boys, they can climb on each other like they climb on trees, they can run as fast as they can, they're not holding back. It's not necessarily because it's single sex, it's because they're boys". What they bring to the creative process is a lack of worry about the end product that is liberating and enables them to experiment with physicality and produce things that are unexpected.

It is worth pointing out that whilst Naomi was the only female Director, the working environment is not all male. Female company members, members of the partners' team were a constant presence throughout all the projects. Only the peer group was male.



We could show a lot of young people in the country what boys our age can do. And show people how we can work professionally as a company. It's a great example to other guys.

I think that you could have an Ignition with just boys and an Ignition with just girls. Then seeing how those worked, try an Ignition with girls and boys. I mean, as soon as you introduce girls and boys together you get different feelings and stuff.

The powerful camaraderie amongst the young men is palpable – in the rehearsal room, in the breaks, onstage. It manifests itself not only during the high tension of performance but in the humour and ease they display when relaxed. The boys comment on this throughout the interviews and it is witnessed with pleasure and joy by all the project teams and the audience.

The company's theatre style is multi-disciplinary and there is cross-over with other physical styles – gymnastics, dance, acrobatics, even parkour and martial arts. Whilst attractive to both girls and boys, notably during their UK-wide school workshop programme, the success of their education work is not reflected in who turns up at open workshops, who turns up at their auditions. What Frantic hope is that Ignition will serve as a lightning rod for some young men.

The careful, targeted recruitment has successfully attracted a balanced mix of those with a vocational commitment to performing arts and those with an interest but no specific plans for the future. It has also attracted many young men who don't visit the theatre or take part in any creative activities outside school. Many of the participants described how their preconceptions of what theatre could be (limited, negative) had been challenged and changed through Ignition. It's interesting to note that in the workshops the companies references aren't theatrical, "We talk about film, music, videos", says Neil.

Competition features in Ignition but individuals are not pitched against each other. They are encouraged to push themselves beyond their personal best and to work as a team to improve, do better. The boys' comments on how they learn (see Section III 3 above) indicate that Frantic's approach is appropriate and effective for young men. The ingredients of physicality, varied pace, exploring ideas through doing, integrating appreciation into the practical exercises, encouragement, praise, pressure, risk and urgency to achieve a clear and tangible goal are effective strategies – effective strategies for many young people, it can be argued, irrespective of gender. Many of us are familiar with the long running debate about gender and learning styles. What can be learnt from Ignition is that Frantic Assembly's approach is successful with their target group and effective for the nature of the project, i.e. Intensive learning.



Young people are not challenged enough and I feel that we need more challenges like this. I appreciate it. They don't treat us as if they need to be in control of us, they treat us as if we need to be in control of ourselves and this makes a huge difference to how we work as a group.

This last comment is a credit to the Frantic Assembly ethos, which eschews patronising attitudes, values young people's talent and potential and holds high expectations for their achievement.

IX. The Performances and their impact



We want to bring young men and their energy into our world.
Scott Graham

1. The Productions:

The Fear, Toynbee Studios, London October 2009

Dead Kids, TR2 Plymouth, June 2010

The Believers, Toynbee Studios, London October 2010

60 Hugs, The Core, Corby, February 2011

Each production was 35-45 minutes of classic Frantic Assembly with their signature ingredients: thrilling physical sequences; intimate humorous and lyrical scenes; dramatic and poetic choreographed movement; changes of pace and tempo; a wonderful soundtrack mixing classical, rock, pop and disco; economical design, sensitive lighting. The text mixed facts and flights of fancy, personal thoughts and imaginings. We were taken through from the sublime and the visceral to the humorous and humane, sometimes in a heartbeat.

All these elements served to bring out the best in the youthful Ignition companies, not only in terms of their technical performance abilities but also in terms of the authenticity of the content, the ideas and experiences expressed, the stories told. All the coiled energy, passion and vulnerability of youth was captured in the productions. The strength derived from wild physicality and the intimacy of friendship was heart-wrenching to witness because it rang so true. The trust was real, the contact was physical and emotional. The casts were brave and fragile, strong and tender, funny and sad. Sentimentality was avoided at all costs, visual humour, jokes, self-deprecation rescued us from tears.

One of the stated objectives of Ignition is to "challenge negative perceptions of young men by showcasing their skills, experience and achievements." Evidence for achieving this is reflected not only in the comments the young men make about themselves but in the specific comments from the audiences, some of which are quoted below.

The project has been well documented and high quality recordings of each of the performances are available, in addition to short trailers/promos, which are useful for websites. It will be interesting to see in the longer term what part viewing these will have in promoting future opportunities to other young men.

2. The impact on the Frantic Assembly Directors



It's good for us, as Directors, to see each other when we're on fire.
Scott Graham

Before embarking on Ignition the Directors talked about how they also wanted to be challenged as artists through their work on the project. Afterwards Scott Graham reflected on their experience:



It's an incredibly intensive experience for us as Directors as well. We really do go in with nothing, it's just an idea and in those two and half to three creative days we are writing, choreographing and directing, trying to think how to make the show. You're under pressure, you're thinking fast, but you're also working with other Directors under the same pressure and it brings out some really good qualities in each other. You have to really trust each other, really go with ideas. You can't sit down and talk about them too much. You have to trust that that spark of (another's) idea is strong enough for you to catch up and then help it along. You're learning from other Directors at the top of their game. These are people you might work with on a day to day basis but being under that pressure, you see each other differently.

Scott Graham



The Directors had an aspiration for each show to achieve something different, to push themselves a little further each time. Their ambitions were higher with each group because they had learnt from the previous one. The four day timescale brings limitations and *"there's always one nagging little doubt that pushes you on to make the next one even better"* (Scott Graham). They always have one eye on "falling into a formula" with the productions. They're aware that patterns do emerge in the work. The intensive and short timescale, the size of the cast mean certain things work very well. They don't want to throw these out but they are alert to what they could avoid and what else they might be able to achieve. They are wary of predictability.

Scott, Steven and Neil all worked on *The Fear* and after seeing it, Scott was aware how the three had been able to contribute seamlessly to the show. This was a good demonstration of Neil's artistic growth through Frantic Assembly, born out further when Scott and Steven weren't able to work on the Corby project and Neil was given responsibility for the direction alongside Naomi. Watching the recording of the show, they observed how Neil had grown through the Ignition process. Working on *60 Hugs*, he had flourished, bringing his own personality and interests to the work.

3. Post-show thoughts from performers

Those performers interviewed after the show, were understandably exhilarated after their experience and each had a particular moment in their show, which was special:



When I did a monologue for my phobias... it sent shivers down my whole body... I had to feel it, let my body take over.

The end when we're all blowing out the lights. 'Cause we know it's over then. Because we know it's going to end and you feel like welling up.

The routine where we constantly keep dropping. Because it was such a great energy, a great flow with it, I thoroughly enjoyed it. Just the energy of it, the music.

There was a moment where I got to pause. I watched Callum and someone else and something happened. It just connected with me.



The project is called Ignition, what has been ignited in you?



I think a passion for just theatre itself and the whole acting industry itself. It makes me think I would love to do physical theatre in the future.

Devising and getting really creative ideas... Basically creating a play out of nothing. So, having a devising mind on me now.

I want to do more physical theatre. I had never done any before, and I really want to carry on doing it. It is absolutely fantastic.

Having this platform to go out into the theatre world. With this behind my back, with a great group of mates, good skills from it, a relationship with Frantic. It's just a great platform and something I'm going to cherish.

4. Post-show thoughts from audiences

The audiences' responses were captured on camera straight afterwards. Their comments reflect their enjoyment of the production, that they found it stimulating, moving, sometimes provocative, exciting to watch. Many commented on how unusual/ impressive/ powerful it is to see an all male ensemble performing this kind of work. They also commented on the professional standard of the work, the commitment of the performers and Frantic Assembly to the highest production values, and that such quality work had been created in *only four days!* The people whose comments were captured are a broad mixture of parents and friends – many new to Frantic's work, many not regular theatre goers plus Frantic friends and arts professionals.

The Fear



They were scared of the box. I was scared of the box. I was gripping onto the edge of my seat. It took me. I was lost for words.

It was really nice to see a group of lads that age work so well together and get such enjoyment out of it.

How awesome was that? I was seriously impressed and inexplicably moved. So heart warming to see so much talent and warmth. So fabulously unpretentious. I loved it, congratulations.

It's about really finding your talent and they (Frantic) are so unique in bringing that out in people, and now they are passing it on to the generation before the next generation. They have absolutely found the key.

An utterly compelling show! Loved it! So satisfying to see new talent being developed.

Last night I was on the West End, but this place has more energy and truth than my fancy ticket gave me yesterday. Fabulous! Keep going.

I'm visiting a friend this evening so I was a 'virgin' to this type of production and the whole 'theatre world'. I can honestly say I was blown away. What you and the twelve boys achieved in four days is outstanding and a credit to your team and your own talents as Artistic Directors. As a teacher myself in a challenging school, achieving what you have with 12 young males can only be commended and you are providing them with invaluable skills.

Dead Kids



It was really, really expressive, really beautiful to watch.

I haven't seen an all male performance before. I enjoyed the music and the energy.

I've never seen anything like it. I had no idea what to expect, it was an eye opener.

You could see that they had learnt to fall, how to lift. My favourite bit was in the disco.

What made it really real was that they weren't playing characters, they were playing themselves and that was actually quite upsetting.

The Believers

“ It really was incredible to see how much could be achieved in such a short space of time. It was also wonderful to see a young male cast approach the subject matter of spirituality and religion with just the right amount of sensitivity, humour and trust – some beautiful moments. Congratulations on another successful Ignition. It's a fantastic project.

Lucy Murray, Arts Council England

What an extraordinary achievement in such a short rehearsal time. It is such a joy to see that kind of commitment from young men of that age. You should all be hugely proud.

Anne Henderson, Casting Director, National Theatre Scotland

Fascinating and a lot of the images have stayed with me.

Toni Racklin, Head of Theatre, Barbican

I am on such a high after seeing The Believers. That was Fenomenal with a capital F! Moving, funny, honest, skilled, thematically current and evocative. A fantastic physical ensemble piece that needs to be seen again. One of the best pieces of physical theatre I have seen in a long time!

60 Hugs

“ Refined, finished, polished.
Moments to laugh, moments to think.
A platform for talent in the area.
I was astonished by the openness of the young men.
They've brought the whole place alive this week.
They're such good male role models.
It wasn't what I expected, but in a good way.

“ *Obviously everyone enjoyed it, but they couldn't have enjoyed it as much as we did.*
Ignition cast member

X. Revisiting aims and objectives

To briefly summarise, the analysis and interpretation of the evidence illustrate:

- Frantic Assembly's success in providing **an environment rich in possibilities for creative learning, personal development and vocational experience.**
- The participants' experience of **physical, intellectual and emotional change**, which they ascribe to the Ignition process. The Frantic Assembly and partner teams and the Evaluator also observe some of these changes.
- That the participants have demonstrably **learned approaches and techniques** that enable them to work imaginatively as individuals and in collaboration with their peers and theatre professionals.
- That they **presented a performance** to high theatre industry standards and production values in a professional space to an invited audience that was appreciated, enjoyed and admired.

ALWAYS FORWARD

PART TWO

This section uses information analysed from the monitoring and evaluation data, company documentation and interviews to report on key, relevant aspects of the project management and the value added through the partnerships.

They relate to objectives identified by Frantic Assembly:

- To raise the profile of Ignition through the marketing and recruitment process
- To recruit young men from diverse backgrounds and those with less access to the arts for social, geographic or economic reasons
- To enhance the partners' offer to young people and/or their programme
- To provide ongoing support, advice and signposts to participants beyond the project

I. Marketing

A well thought out marketing strategy tailored to the needs of young men in each location

Frantic Assembly delivered a well thought out marketing strategy tailored to the needs of young men in each location. To ensure the widest range of young men found out about Ignition and signed up to the Tasters and Trials, the company worked with local organisations and teachers to spread the word. The marketing material was attractive, well-designed and clear. The participants commented on the images and text:



*Professional, clean cut, eye catching, made me want to do it!
It made me want to be in 'that' company.
The workshop was going to be energetic, fast and exciting.
Excitement – the logo was good.
It looked a bit crazy and manic but still interesting.
Appeals to young men, simple layout and easy to obtain info.*



Marketing tools included: postcard flyers and e-flyers circulated to Frantic and partner mailing lists, promotion on Frantic Assembly's website, partner websites, Facebook groups and adverts in e-newsletters and local press. There were visits to schools, colleges, sports centres/groups, asylum seeker support groups, word of mouth and street promotion.

The targets were local contacts, including local authorities, local theatres, community centres, youth centres, uniformed youth organisations, dance schools, karate, skating and parkour clubs, local schools and colleges, pupil referral units, national dance associations, other arts organisations, youth sports teams and street recruitment.

There were options to sign up by text, phone, email, online through Frantic's website or by post. The Peer Mentors assisted with contacting all registered participants by phone in advance of activities to talk through what to expect and respond to any questions or concerns. The Peer Mentors were the first point of contact at all activities and helped to ensure the young men felt at ease before and during the activities.

Email and text reminders were very effective methods of communication with participants. The company considered reducing the recruitment administration by using just these two means to communicate with registered participants. However, feedback throughout suggested that, depending on the age of the young men and inconsistent or erratic access to the internet or a mobile phone, it was important to continue contacting everyone by letter, email, phone and text. They felt it was also a really good way for participants to get to know the company prior to attending an activity. The General Manager and Peer Mentors were able to give them more encouragement and motivation to turn up and this helped to reduce the drop out rate. It was also more successful when the Peer Mentors were involved in the reminder phone calls, as they were able to excite and encourage those who had any doubts about turning up.

Following the Intensive, the performers were encouraged to keep in touch with one another via Facebook. Many of the participants have since worked on other projects with each other as a result. The Ignition Facebook group is also regularly updated by Frantic Assembly, signposting members to news and opportunities taking place across the country.

Table 1

How did you find out about Ignition?	London 09 %	Plymouth %	London 10 %	Corby %
Frantic website / newsletter	16	2	18	11
Frantic Practitioner	8		7	6
Arts organisation (inc. partners)	5	14	1	9
Teacher	56	64	59	58
Friend	4	15	14	
Street Promotion	8			
Other (inc. Facebook / word of mouth)	3	5	2	16

II. Recruitment

The unique number of participants indicates healthy recruitment to all the projects

Recruiting 410 young men to the Tasters, 274 of whom actually attended, adequately met the company's stated target of 270. The partners, who were involved for different reasons, all agree that the Ignition programme was a highly attractive offer to their networks of potential participants and arts/community partners. There is variation either side between target figures and actual figures but the totals for the unique number of participants indicate healthy recruitment to all the projects. The Tasters were held in schools, colleges, at partner theatre venues.

The performances all attracted an audience of family, friends and Frantic Assembly fans and colleagues. The smaller audience figure in Plymouth reflects the location of the venue TR2, which is not in the centre of town, and to some extent that the organisation underestimated the professional level of the work when promoting to their networks.

Table 2

Ignition	London 2009	target	Plymouth 2010	target	London 2010	target	Corby 2011	target	Total
Tasters	50	75	56	60	106	75	62	60	274
Trials	54	45	29	36	72	45	29	36	184
Intensive	12	12	10	12	12	12	12	12	46
Total Unique participants	78		56		118		76		328
Audience	210		84		176		226		696

In London the targeted **age group** was 16-20 years, although by offering Taster workshops at local schools some 15 year-olds took part. In Plymouth and Corby the age bracket was broadened to 15-22 years due to a smaller overall age group cohort compared to London. Very few 15 year-old participants made it through to the Intensive as the content of the Ignition performances required a mature and focussed approach from the Ignition company members. However, by opening up the Tasters and Trials to 15 year olds Frantic are also laying the ground for future projects in these locations. The breakdown of ages is shown in Table 3:

Table 3

Age	London 2009		Plymouth		London 2010		Corby	
	Tasters %	Intensive %	Tasters %	Intensive %	Tasters %	Intensive %	Tasters %	Intensive %
15			18	10	6		30	25
16	17	17	27		13	17	16	17
17	56	33	21	40	29	17	25	25
18	12	42	13	10	28	25	16	
19	9		13	20	11	8	2	8
20	6	8	3	10	10	33	10	25
21					3		2	
22			5	10				

In terms of engaging an **ethnically diverse group** of young men, the company's equal opportunities data demonstrates significant success in London, although the majority of participants in every Ignition were white. Given the demographic makeup of the regional projects (predominantly white working class) the company were pleased that some diversity was achieved in Plymouth and Corby. The ethnic background of participants is indicated in Tabel 4:

Table 4

Ethnicity	London 2009		Plymouth		London 2010		Corby	
	Tasters %	Intensive %	Tasters %	Intensive %	Tasters %	Intensive %	Tasters %	Intensive %
White British	60	50	86	90	46	42	67	67
White Other	9	17	4	0	8	8	7	8
Black	20	8	8	10	33	17	7	
Asian	3	0	0	0	4	17	13	17

The area where the company say they repeatedly fell down was in engaging **participants with disabilities**. In the process they have generated sound links with a number of reputable disability organisations and still feel there is more work that should be done to demonstrate to disabled young people that the arts are inclusive and indeed physical theatre is for them. These companies include Graeae, Deafinitely Theatre and Shape. Just seven of the young men considered themselves to be disabled, across the full four projects. None of these required additional access support. 15-20% of participants across the full four projects described themselves as dyslexic. The company did contact Dyslexia Action for advice and this enabled them to give maximum support to these young men who were all comfortable with asking for help.

Table 5

	London 2009		Plymouth		London 2010		Corby	
Employment status	Tasters %	Intensive %	Tasters %	Intensive %	Tasters %	Intensive %	Tasters %	Intensive %
In education	83	83	76	90	86	83	95	83
In employment	3		18	10	11	8	5	17
NEET	14	17	6		3	8		

The majority of participants across the four projects are in **part time or full time education**. This seems to be due to advocacy from teachers in secondary schools and colleges. There was less access to young people in employment during the recruitment for Ignition and this could be an area for development in the future. The first London project attracted the highest number of young men who are “neither in employment, education or training” (NEET).

Other background information

In addition to monitoring data, conversations with individuals and their personal statements in the applications yielded further information about an individual’s circumstances and background that it isn’t possible to interrogate through formal questionnaires. This helped the company to gauge that participants were from a range of social and economic backgrounds and that more than 65% had limited access to the arts outside of formal education and very little past experience of working with professional artists. School and college teachers were the chief advocates for encouraging young men to sign up to Ignition. A good example of a successful approach via a non-arts route is the Taster held with the BSix College basketball team in London. 13 boys attended and nine of them went on to take part in the Trial.

III. Partnerships

The Partners are unanimous in their praise for Ignition – the concept, delivery and quality of the work.

Artsadmin was an operational partner that provided facilities for workshops and performances in London and support with promoting Ignition. The **National Youth Theatre** supported the delivery of the accredited Open College Network module Level 3 Performing Physical Theatre and also supported the promotion. **Theatre Royal Plymouth** and **The Core** were the two regional delivery partners who provided premises and recruitment support.

The **National Youth Theatre** (NYT) were impressed by how much was achieved in four days with the Ignition companies. Paul Edwards, the OCN module moderator, said that he and NYT staff who came to the London show were impressed by the spontaneity and power of the performances from the first moment. He thought that the “daring simplicity of the strong structural formula”, developed over the four projects enabled the performers to flourish and excel. Paul shares Frantic Assembly’s high expectations of what can be achieved with young people and appreciated their transparency and helpfulness regarding the moderation process.

The company were much more dependent on the regional partners to ensure the success of the project.



It was fantastic to have a company of that calibre working with us in this way. It was a treat.

Jane Pawson, Young People’s Producer, Theatre Royal Plymouth

Frantic Assembly appointed a local practitioner, Clare Parker, to support the project management at **Theatre Royal Plymouth** (TRP). The Young People’s Producer was relatively new in her post and this support was appreciated. The Theatre has several youth theatres, a youth and community programme, a schools programme and a history of presenting Frantic Assembly’s productions. Reflecting on the Ignition experience, Jane identified several benefits to her organisation. Only two of the twelve Ignition recruits had been involved in previous projects, so the project did attract new faces to TRP. *“It was good to be able to offer something to this particular age group. Usually visiting companies work with schools, delivering education packages. It is rare for a company to offer something to participants out of school hours and to come and spend that amount of time with a group. Taking into account the location of the venue, it was a real boost to the Young People’s programme,”* says Jane. Since the project, some of the young men have joined their youth theatre, two receive paid work as directors/drama practitioners and one is volunteering as a drama practitioner.

The Ignition Company was invited to take part in the A Night Less Ordinary scheme and Jane has spotted several at various theatre events. She felt that it was the right time for the project to happen and that it was artistically a high quality piece.

However, Frantic Assembly were disappointed that perhaps the ambition for the project was not assimilated by the wider TRP team whose presence was missed on the night of the performance, in sharp contrast to the other partners who brought their colleagues out in force for a justly anticipated great night out at the theatre in London and Corby.

As a new organisation **The Core**⁸ met the challenges and opportunities offered by the partnership, wanting to make the most of the immediate local and wider strategic benefits it could bring. Chris Sudworth, Creative Director and Lisa Byrne, Creative Projects Manager were pro-active in promoting the project in schools and in the wider community, and they have the shared aim of engaging young people who wouldn't normally access theatre and their space because of psychological and practical barriers to participation. This fits with the wider ambition of this new venue in Corby. They were delighted that participants had been attracted from neighbouring towns and from further afield. They are justifiably proud of their stunning new underground theatre. They have built on Frantic Assembly's relationship with Corby, hometown to both Scott Graham and Neil Bettles, and their old school, The Kingswood School, where the company have made regular visits. This was an opportunity to open up the experience to a wider cohort and they have seized it. Furthermore, The Core is committed to developing emerging professional artists and is part of the Urban Arts Network (Contact Theatre/ The Albany/ Hat Factory) that aims to distribute their work. Continuing support and opportunities will be available to all Ignition participants. A number of boys have already been involved in projects and one is now assisting the childrens youth theatre.

Both Chris and Lisa had high expectations for *60 Hugs*. Lisa is familiar with Frantic's work, had seen the previous Ignition in London and thought it was of the same standard as one of their productions with a professional company. The meet and greet that Frantic Assembly organised at each venue was enthusiastically taken up at the theatre where representatives from all the departments were present. The Core are now making this a regular feature for all the young emerging companies they host.

The Partners are unanimous in their praise for Ignition, the concept, delivery and quality of the process and final production. They each identify clear strategic benefits for their own organisations that are immediate and longer-term and appear to exceed their initial expectations. For the regional partners hosting a residency by a company of Frantic Assembly's national and international renown was a significant statement, by the company and for the hosts and a rare opportunity. For Frantic, the contacts and networks for marketing and recruitment were essential as is their continuing role as hubs for creative activity and signposting other regional opportunities.

IV. Pastoral support and professional development

Finely tuned to the needs of the participants

Pastoral support for participants was led and guided by the General Manager, Laura Sutton. She was advised and supported by the Directors, the Creative Associate and by a Peer Mentor recruited for each project. The company's detailed effort and dedication to good communication and the inclusion and welfare of all the participants was impressive. At all stages from recruitment through to post-production the company endeavoured to be accessible and finely tuned to the needs of the participants, in particular to any practical barriers they might be experiencing to participation⁹. Where appropriate, these were addressed with sensitivity and discretion, e.g. ensuring certain individuals didn't miss out on opportunities due to illness, distance from venues and financial constraints. Three of the Ignition projects benefited from the support of Peer Mentors who had previous experience of the project and this was particularly effective during the Intensive.

The approach to communications and commitment to accessibility was constantly reviewed and refined. Once engaged with Frantic Assembly, all Ignition participants become part of the Ignition 'family'. They continue to receive updates about the company's work and further opportunities to engage with Ignition projects and are offered free places at Frantic public workshops. The Facebook group has 322 members and is an active forum for communicating a range of relevant opportunities via Frantic and between members. During the period 2008-11 several individuals were invited to take on other roles in subsequent Ignition projects, e.g. Peer Mentors, documentation by film and photography and support with evaluation interviews. One is now employed as the Frantic Assembly Administrator.

⁸ The project transferred to The Core after discussion with the nearby original partner Royal and Derngate Theatre, Northampton. The Core would be a better fit to host Ignition, given that it had recently opened in an area that has been historically lacking in arts provision.

⁹ There was a daily payment of £7.50 for all Intensive participants towards travel/lunch.

All 46 Ignition participants successfully obtained their **Level 3 Open College Network accreditation in Physical Theatre**. The project content did not need to be changed in order to fulfil the accreditation criteria. This accreditation was useful for some of the young men and appreciated as a bonus by most, although it did not feature as a key reason for value. The whole experience and/or the status of working so closely with such a high profile and reputable company was perceived as the more vocationally useful.

Another benefit for the Ignition Company members was a professionally shot **portfolio portrait** by Eric Richmond. This special feature enhanced the company's aim to give participants' insight into the professional theatre world. In each location a professional backscreen and lighting was set up. The photographer was chosen for his experience of working with young people. It was a pleasure to observe how he put his subjects at ease, helped them look their best through gentle and specific suggestions about posture, releasing tension in a muscle, a facial expression. His approach was educational to observe and experience. The boys came in nervous and self-conscious and walked out tall.

The offer of twelve **free theatre tickets** was taken up by each Ignition Company. This was enhanced at each venue by pre or post-show opportunities to meet the cast, and in one instance, take part in a company warm-up (National Theatre of Scotland's *Black Watch* at the Barbican, London. Steven Hoggett was the Associate Director, Movement, on this show). The London 2009 cast went to see *Category B* starring Jimmy Akingbola who played the lead in Frantic's *Othello*. After the show they were able to talk to Jimmy, an eastender from a non-theatrical background, with whom they had so much in common, which was very inspiring and motivating. The Core and Theatre Royal Plymouth provided the tickets for shows at their venues and in London group booking deals were negotiated with Tricycle Theatre and The Barbican.

Ignition participants have also been offered **free auditions** for National Youth Theatre; free practice auditions with Central School of Speech and Drama; **free career talks** with a casting director who works for National Theatre of Scotland and Drama Centre London; the opportunity to take part in **radio and newspaper interviews** (Corby); **further performance opportunities** with Frantic Assembly in community projects and the company ThickSkin, run by Neil Bettles.

Most significant for the company was the offer of a **free place on a Frantic Assembly workshop**. This programme of public training workshops runs throughout the year aimed at students and professionals who want to develop skills in physical theatre. There have always been significantly more women than men registering to take part. In 2007 Frantic Assembly delivered a two-day site-specific workshop in London and no men applied to take part! The company had to invite two of its male Creative Practitioners to participate to help address the gender imbalance.



It was at this point that we realised we needed do more than just complain about the shortage of men training as physical performers. We needed to help bridge the gap... and so came Ignition.
Laura Sutton, General Manager

Since launching Ignition as a pilot in 2008 the company has made a conscious effort to raise the profile of training for male physical performers across all of its work. Subsequently they have seen a steady increase in participation amongst male performers in the public workshop activities from an increase of 16% in Spring 2008, steadily rising to 43% Autumn 2010 and sustained into bookings for 2011. Since 2009 a total of 21/46 Ignition participants have taken up free places on the public workshops, to the date of this report.

V. Peer Mentors

A distinctive enhancement and benefit to Ignition at every stage



We are close in age with the guys, but not part of the process, so we can stand back and look at what is going on. We get to know them as individuals.
Ryan, Peer Mentor

The Peer Mentors for three projects were recruited from a previous Ignition, including the Brighton pilot. Ollie Kaderbhai supported London 2009; Jonnie Riordan and Dritan Kastrati worked on London 2010; Jonnie also worked with a Peer Mentor, Jevael Holgate, appointed by The Core, and Plymouth appointed its own Peer Mentor, Ryan Penny, from its youth theatre membership as part of their professional development strategy for young people.

The Peer Mentors were supported with ongoing mentoring from the company, in particular Laura Sutton and Neil Bettles. They were involved from the Tasters through to the Intensive.

During the interviews with them, Ryan, Jonnie and Dritan are very clear about the boundaries for their role, *“there’s a limit to what we can and should do”* said Jonnie, *“The guys need space to work out things for themselves, the Peer Mentors need to stand back and let them do this.”* They support the guys in keeping focus when they’re flagging, they help maintain the momentum by joining in, being encouraging, offering praise and reassurance.

The Peer Mentors all spoke about how they operate with a light touch, they’re careful to *“not be too much on their case”*, it can be a small gesture across the room, eye contact, a nod, putting their arm around them, a pat on the back, a *“wow”*. *“We keep up morale and energy and maintain an informal atmosphere in the breaks”* (Jonnie).

The mentors also felt that the all-male nature of the opportunity was valuable, it helped to accelerate trust, minimise competition and support emotional honesty. The Intensive is:



A space to have certain sorts of conversations. In the scene about wanting to know how the girls this – boys don’t talk about that in the pub.

Ryan, Peer Mentor

They do open up more because it’s all male, naturally yes, if it was mixed they’d be trying to impress the girls!

Dritan, Peer Mentor

The level of honesty they’re prepared to offer is amazing. It’s not just the physical space, it’s the psychological space that’s amazing.

Ollie, Peer Mentor

I wondered if it was difficult for former Ignition members to be back in the rehearsal studio, not taking part as performers. However they enjoyed being in the position where they can closely observe how Scott and Steven operate, how they create the work.



They don’t talk a lot, they set a task, mix it up with the guys, then dress it. They don’t overload you with words. They don’t tell you the whole story, you trust them and it happens, Voila!

Dritan, Peer Mentor

Jevael, who was recruited by The Core was in a different position and did not have a theatre background:



I made challenges for myself, trying to get behind Neil’s process, the deep side of it, the music, the thinking. This experience has opened up my eyes. I feel part of Frantic Assembly and Ignition companies. I’ll stay in touch. This project has not just helped me with my role at The Core, it’s helped me, Jevael.

Jevael, Peer Mentor

The Peer Mentors who had come through Ignition were conscious of their role model status and advised their peers to persevere during and after the Intensive, to keep in touch, show interest, and be ready to take up future opportunities.

This strand of the project is very successful – for the mentors themselves, the company and the participants. The mentors with previous Ignition experience were the most empowered in their role. Perhaps when working with partner organisations that want to develop their own young people, the model would be to ‘buddy’ an Ignition graduate. Whilst the staff teams’ support of young people is of a high quality and professionally indispensable, the Peer Mentors bring distinctive enhancement and benefit to Ignition at every stage from recruitment to performance.

VI. Monitoring, evaluation and documentation

All bases covered

Systems to capture data were implemented at each stage of the project, capturing a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data about reasons for wanting to be part of Ignition.

Questionnaires were recorded and transcribed with all participants for the Taster Workshop, Day 1 and Day 4 of the Intensive. Some interviews were recorded after the Trials. Four boys from each project gave additional interviews mid-week and post-show. For three projects the Evaluator also used a participant generated questionnaire, asking them to create questions they would like to be asked. These were then randomly selected by their peers.

The whole company was interviewed prior to the first project in 2009 to capture individual roles, their plans and expectations for Ignition. The Directors and Creative Associate were interviewed at each stage. The three main delivery Partners were interviewed in person at the time of the project and by telephone in 2011. The General Manager maintained regular communication with the Evaluator to provide information, check facts and to support the analysis and interpretation of monitoring data.

The workshops and performances were well documented photographically and on video which has been edited to produce promotional clips for website use. Frantic Assembly submitted an analysis of the marketing, recruitment, partnerships and content as part of an interim report to Esmée Fairbairn Foundation in April 2011.

VII. Project management recommendations

Marketing and recruitment

1. Target sports organisations and groups working with **disabled young people** as these are already engaged in overcoming barriers to physical activity.
2. Work with partners to explore how to **effectively promote Ignition to businesses** who employ young men in the target group, often on a part-time/casual basis, e.g. fast food chains, supermarkets, sports merchandisers.
3. Given the importance of the advocacy of teachers it is worth investing in **targeting other significant adults**, 'gatekeepers', who might encourage young men with poor access to the arts to take part in Ignition, e.g. sports and fitness leaders, youth and community workers, uniformed youth organisations.
4. To invest resources in **communicating the value of Ignition to 'non-arts' gatekeepers** in order to address any negative pre-conceptions they may hold about theatre and the arts.
5. **Build on the network of Ignition participants** in each region and maximise their peer to peer influence as ambassadors for Ignition and other opportunities for participation in the performing arts.

Peer Mentors

6. Recruit Peer Mentors who have experienced Ignition themselves. These can work effectively with Peer Mentors identified by host partners.
7. Identify a suitable OCN or Arts Award for the Peer Mentor role.

Dissemination and advocacy

8. **Continue to promote Ignition online** using video content and peer advocacy on Frantic Assembly and partner websites and popular social media .
9. **Disseminate Evaluation Report** to arts, education and community partners, strategic performing arts and education institutions and individuals.
10. **Host regional seminars** to share insights, offer inspiration, identify future action with existing professional partners, associates and new allies/ advocates.



CREDITS

A Frantic Assembly project

In collaboration with Theatre Royal Plymouth, The Core at Corby Cube, National Youth Theatre, Artsadmin, and City and Islington College.

Supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Big Lottery Fund (London 2009).

Frantic Assembly would like to thank the following organisations and people for their assistance:

The Barbican Theatre, Plymouth
Brooke House Sixth Form College
City College Plymouth
Graeae
George Green's School
The Kingswood School
Lodge Park Technology College

Newham Sixth Form College
The Robert Smyth School
Royal & Derngate Northampton
Tamarside Community College
Tresham College
The University of Plymouth

Jimmy Akingbola
Victoria Allen
Angela Anson
Derek Bardowell
Lisa Burne
Rachel Bagshaw
Raidene Carter
Natasha Chivers
Peter Collins
Katie Coyne
Chief Dawethi
Andrew Dawson
Susannah Day
Paul Edwards
Inua Ellams
Esther Field
Shelley Firth
David Gilbert
Fiona Gregory
Claire Gordon
Helen Heaslip

Anne Henderson
Liz Holmes
John Hunter
Ollie Kaderbhai
Dritan Kastrati
Sarah Kerrigan
Michelle Kettle
Siobhan McGrath
Victoria Meager
Robert Nicholson
Clare Parker
Jane Pawson
Ryan Penny
Andy Purves
Eric Richmond
Jonnie Riordan
Naomi Said
David M Saunders
Rachel Shipp
Chris Sudworth

Special thanks to Creative Associate Neil Bettles for his considerable contribution towards the artistic success of all four Ignition projects and to former Frantic Assembly General Manager Laura Sutton whose passion, talent and determination helped to bring Ignition to life and kept it moving forward throughout.

Frantic Assembly

Co-Artistic Director	Scott Graham
Co-Artistic Director	Steven Hoggett
Executive Producer	Lisa Maguire
Learn & Train Manager	Inga Hirst
Administrator	Alex Turner

IMAGES by Eric Richmond, John Hunter, Scott Graham and Jonnie Riordan

IGNITION COMPANY 2009 – 2011

Luke Addison
Suneil Bolton
Sebastian Charles
Matthew Churcher
Adam Crawford
Philip Croft
Andrew Cunningham
Courtney Dale Senior
David Delves
Luke Dickinson
Stephen Finney
Craig Fletcher
Zachariah Fletcher
Jared Garfield
Lewis Steven Griffiths
Calum Gulvin
Zack Harris
Dritan Kastrati
Danny Kearns
Lucas Kelly
Akshay Kumar
Joe Layton
Anthony Lowery
Julian Mack
Callum MacIver
Connor Mayes
Ross McCall
John Mehr
Stephen Monaco
Jack Nelson
Tom Nicholas
Alex O'Leary
Jordan Olpherts
Jamie O'Sullivan
Sam Perry
Jonnie Riordan
Shyam Savani
Sunny Savani
Luke Seidel-Haas
Jack Sterne
Alex Stupple-Harris
Kyle Taylor
Sean Wall
Simon Webster
Elan James Weedon
Nathan Wharton



APPENDIX

Synopses of Ignition performances 2009 – 2011

Taster and Intensive Feedback Questions

The Fear programme

Dead Kids programme

The Believers programme

60 Hugs programme



Synopses of Ignition performances 2009 – 2011

The Fear, 30 October 2009, 7.30pm at Toynbee Theatre, London

The devising process began with exploring the things that scare us most, everything from the fear of clowns to the fear of death and growing old. The performers generated text from their own life experiences and the directors researched the physical impact of our fears – shaking, sweating, increased heart rate. The instinct to either run or face your fears was a common element within the piece. *The Fear* enabled the performers to tackle both physical and emotional aspects of themselves as young men, capable of sharing vulnerability and strength with an audience.

Dead Kids, 4 June 2010, 7.00pm at TR2 Plymouth

The devising process took as its starting point the idea of a group of young men being held in type of heavenly holding pen. On the night of their deaths they await admission at heaven's entrance. From this vantage point they were able to communicate all the things they wanted to, but didn't or couldn't, during their time on earth. Content was generated through material written by the cast. For example, letters to people back on earth and material extracted from questionnaires that elicited the boys' reflections on life experiences, lost loves, unrequited revenge, secrets, confessions and declarations. The final performance was a detailed, unique and heartfelt exploration of what it might mean to reflect on a whole lifetime and the people who were part of it. Scenes ranged from delicate physical and spoken confessionals to raucous dynamic movement sequences, irreverent disco dancing, complex gesture work and intimate monologues.

The Believers, 29 October 2010, 7.30pm at Toynbee Theatre, London

Starting with the subject of belief systems, the Ignition company explored ideas about spirituality, how as individuals they related to organised religions and what they felt were the needs and fulfilments underlying a belief in a higher being. This process engaged the performers with issues of morality on a both a micro and macro level. They thought about how they live their lives and how others might judge them. Many of these ideas were explored through an integration of choreography and text delivered directly to the audience.

60 Hugs, 25 February 2011, 7pm at The Core at Corby Cube

In this production the directors wanted to explore how men show their emotions, looking at what they love and how they show it. From the love of a football team to the love of crowd surfing, girls, music and mothers, the Ignition company looked at the barriers that prevent young men from expressing their emotions and from talking about them. The boys were encouraged to be not only physically courageous but also emotionally brave with their words. For example, text was generated through writing Lonely Hearts ads for ideal partners and about themselves. Confessional/ confidential monologues and ensemble scenes conveyed a rare platform for young men to express intimacy, vulnerability and tenderness.

FRANTIC ASSEMBLY'S IGNITION - Taster and Intensive feedback questions

to camera		written questionnaire		to camera interviews		to camera interviews	
Q	Taster	Day 1	End of Day 2	Day 4	Post-show		
1	Best thing about the workshop?	What promotional material did you receive about <i>IGNITION</i> , if any? (i.e. flyer, poster, email)	What are you enjoying most about the physical aspects of the sessions	How's the week been so far?	How do you feel now?		
2	Worst thing?	What was your first impression of the logo and publicity design?	What are you enjoying most about the creative process	Do you feel that the taster workshop and audition prepared you for the 3 Day Intensive? How?	What was your personal highlight during the performance? Or what's a special moment in the show for you?		
3	Different from expected?	Were the confirmation details that you received about the workshops, auditions and intensive clear and informative?	Why are physical warm ups important?	Can you tell us 2 things you've learned about working safely as a physical performer?	Could you tell me how you felt at the end?		
4	Will this workshop help you in future?	Did you prefer to receive the information by post, phone, email or text? Why?	What do you think you could improve on in terms of your physical skills?	What new techniques/styles have you learned this week?	What do you know after this performance tonight?		
5	One thing you have learnt	How did you feel about the Audition process?	What do you think you could improve on in terms of your team work skills?	What could you improve on?	What surprised you tonight?		
6	Other comments	How did you feel when you were chosen to join the <i>IGNITION</i> Theatre Company? Why?		How important has it been for the company to work as a team and trust each other?	What do you want to do now more than anything else now?		
7		Do you know any of the other people who've got through to the Intensive?		What did you enjoy most about the ideas and themes you are working on?	This project is called Ignition, what's been ignited in you?		
8		What do you hope to get out of this week?		You've all worked together to devise new material. What contribution have you made that you feel proud of?	Is there a final message to your company? To your mates?		
9		What will be your greatest challenge?		Frantic's work is known for being daring and risk-taking. On a personal level, what was the greatest risk for you this week? Emotionally or physically.			
10				What kind of emotions does your performance require you to experience through the piece?			
11				Tell us one thing you have learnt about yourself this week.			
13				Which moment in the performance do you especially like and why?			
14				What's been the highlight of the week?			
15				Is there anything you would change about <i>IGNITION</i> (workshops/auditions/intensive)? What & why?			
16				Would you recommend <i>IGNITION</i> to other people? Why?			



30th October 2009
 Toynbee Studios

Ignition Theatre Company presents

THE FEAR

Frantic Assembly is thrilled to present **IGNITION 2009**: a unique training initiative of free activities for **young men aged 16 - 20**, supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Big Lottery Fund.

The *IGNITION* project was set up by Frantic Assembly to confront the lack of skilled, male, physical performers in the theatre industry. Through years of casting for male roles and delivering training activities for adults, we realised that there is a huge training gap for young men looking to progress as professional performers.

Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett are the founding Artistic Directors of Frantic Assembly. As students studying English Literature they had never planned a career in theatre. When Volcano Theatre Company came to work with their student drama society the experience opened their eyes to a new way of working and a style of theatre they did not know existed. This was a highly physical, visceral and visual world.

The experience of working with Volcano was absolutely crucial to the creation of Frantic Assembly and it is this unique opportunity that we have aimed to emulate through *IGNITION*. Frantic Assembly wants to introduce its distinctive way of working to young men who possess the crossover skills, energy and potential to be physical performers. *IGNITION* has tapped into what we believe is a hidden pool of talent; the young men you will see perform tonight.

During London *IGNITION* 2009 Frantic Assembly worked with over 75 young men at City and Islington College and Toynbee Studios through a series of free taster workshops. Following this we held auditions for those wishing to take part in the 4 Day Intensive Training. The Intensive offered a one-off opportunity to work with Frantic's Artistic Directors and Creative Associate to create a unique piece of physical theatre which premieres this evening.

The Fear has been devised by the 12 members of Ignition Theatre Company, and directed and choreographed by Scott Graham, Steven Hoggett and Neil Bettles.

The IGNITION Theatre Company

Andrew Cunnington
 David Delves
 Jared Garfield
 Zack Harris
 Dritan Kastrati
 Joe Layton
 Connor Mayes
 Stephen Monaco
 Jordan Olpherts
 Jonnie Riordan
 Courtney Dale Senior
 Elan James Weedon

Frantic Assembly Creative Team

Co-Artistic Director
 Co-Artistic Director
 Creative Associate - Ignition
 Lighting Designer
 Lighting Mentor

Scott Graham
 Steven Hoggett
 Neil Bettles
 Angela Anson
 Natasha Chivers

Frantic Assembly Production Team

Executive Producer
 General Manager
 Administrator
 Peer Mentor
 Sound Technician

Lisa Maguire
 Laura Sutton
 Fiona Gregory
 Ollie Kaderbhai
 David M Saunders

A Frantic Assembly project in collaboration with National Youth Theatre, Artsadmin and City and Islington College. Supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Big Lottery Fund.

Frantic Assembly would like to thank Raidene Carter, Peter Collins, Inua Ellams, Liz Holmes, Michelle Kettle, Elizabeth Lynch, Vicky Meager and Eric Richmond.



THE BELIEVERS

29th October 2010
Toynee Studios, 7.30pm

Frantic Assembly is thrilled to present **IGNITION 2010**: a unique programme of free training activities for young men aged 16 - 20, generously supported by **Esmée Fairbairn Foundation**.

CONTACT

If you would like to stay in touch with Frantic Assembly **SUBSCRIBE** to our e-newsletter at franticassembly.co.uk/subscribe/

OR for more info about Ignition checkout www.franticassembly.co.uk/ignition/
Find us on Facebook - www.facebook.com/frantic.ignition

THANKS

Frantic Assembly would like to thank Graeae, BSix College, NewVic College, George Greens School, Katie Coyne, Inua Ellams, Claire Gordon, Helen Heaslip, Anne Henderson, Liz Holmes, John Hunter, Sarah Kerrigan, Michelle Kettle, Elizabeth Lynch, Robert Nicholson, Eric Richmond and Naomi Said.

A project by

franticassembly

In collaboration with

national
youth
theatre
creative learning

ARTS
ADMIN.

Supported by

ef Esmée
Fairbairn
FOUNDATION

ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

Supported by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

ABOUT IGNITION

The **IGNITION** project was set up by Frantic Assembly to harness the varied skills and talents of young men aged 16-20.

Through years of casting for male roles and delivering training activities for adults, we realised that there is a huge training gap for young men looking to progress as professional performers.

Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett are the founding Artistic Directors of Frantic Assembly. As students studying English Literature they had never planned a career in theatre. When Volcano Theatre Company came to work with their student drama society the experience opened their eyes to a new way of working and a style of theatre they did not know existed. This was a highly physical, visceral and visual world.

The experience of working with Volcano was absolutely crucial to the creation of Frantic Assembly and it is this unique opportunity that we have aimed to emulate through **IGNITION**. Frantic Assembly wants to introduce its distinctive way of working to young men who possess the crossover skills, energy and potential to be physical performers. **IGNITION** has tapped into what we believe is a hidden pool of talent; the young men you will see perform tonight.

THE PROCESS

During **London IGNITION 2010** Frantic Assembly worked with over **140 young men** across East London in a series of free Taster Workshops. Following this we held Trials for those wishing to take part in the 4 Day Intensive.

The Intensive offered a one-off opportunity to work with Frantic's Artistic Directors and Creative Associate to create a unique piece of physical theatre which premieres this evening.

Following on from Ignition, Frantic Assembly has a commitment to the continued professional development of it's performers. Some past performers have gone on to work as Peer Mentors and Workshop Assistants with the company.

DIRECTORS' NOTES

Four days ago this show did not exist. The reason we have anything at all is because of the extraordinary energy and commitment that our 12 performers have given us. We are incredibly proud of what they have created and the way they have achieved this.

The process we have used in the week relies on the company demonstrating an immediate sense of trust and support. They have achieved this, and so much more. The work you see on stage tonight is the result of 12 young men with an inspiring capacity for making theatre.

CREATIVE TEAM

Co-Directors	Scott Graham Steven Hoggett Neil Bettles
Lighting Designer	Andy Purves
Media Designer	Jonnie Riordan
Peer Mentor	Dritan Kastrati

PRODUCTION TEAM

Executive Producer	Lisa Maguire
General Manager	Laura Sutton
Ignition Project Assistant	Susannah Day
Production Manager	Rachel Shipp
Sound Technician	David M Saunders
Administrator	Fiona Gregory
Administrative Intern	Siobhan McGrath

THE CAST

AKSHAY KUMAR

Ignition has been a great opportunity to work as a professional company. It's funny how you walk away from it feeling as if you've known these guys for ages. You need to be fearless and prepared for bruises.

ANTHONY LOWERY

After Ignition I'll keep up the training. I love sport, but I've never experienced anything as physically demanding as this. It's a whole different level of fitness.

CALUM GULVIN

I've learnt lots of different practical techniques this week. It surprised me how much we've achieved and how great the feedback has been from the Directors.

CRAIG FLETCHER

Ignition has shown me a style of devising that I've never experienced before. It's open and trusting. We just experiment. We do what feels right, and if it works it works and if it doesn't we try something new.

DANNY KEARNS

We're all quite close now, after the four days. Everyone is individual and we learn from each other's strengths. We push each other past any weaknesses.

JAMIE O'SULLIVAN

An Ignition performer is someone who doesn't give up, who keeps going even when they don't get it right first time, or when they're tired and their muscles ache. Someone who's not scared to try new things.

JOHN MEHR

Ignition has given me a chance to share my skills and learn from others. We need to be individual and an ensemble at the same time. It's like sport - you have to work as a team.

JULIAN MACK

You can throw yourself into a lift or fall and trust someone will be there to catch you. Ignition is about encouraging your team mates and not letting each other down.

LUCAS KELLY

It's been so rapid. I never expected to make something spectacular this quickly. It's a skill that will help us get ahead in the industry.

STEPHEN FINNEY

I feel I've contributed this week sharing my ideas and trying out other people's ideas. By allowing myself to be free and fearless. We just go for it.

SUNEIL BOLTON

Through the process we've found out each other's views on stuff. When we are in the rehearsal room we work as a unit. There's a great team ethic.

ZACHARIAH FLETCHER

I feel proud that I've kept up with the others, they're a very talented group and I feel really honoured to be here. The whole experience is fast paced and everyone has been completely on it all the way.



4th June 2010
TR2

Ignition Theatre Company presents

DEAD KIDS

Frantic Assembly and Theatre Royal Plymouth are thrilled to present **IGNITION**: a unique training initiative of free activities for **young men aged 16 - 20**, supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

The **IGNITION** project was set up by Frantic Assembly to confront the lack of skilled, male, physical performers in the theatre industry. Through years of casting for male roles and delivering training activities for adults, we realised that there is a huge training gap for young men looking to progress as professional performers.

Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett are the founding Artistic Directors of Frantic Assembly. As students studying English Literature they had never planned a career in theatre. When Volcano Theatre Company came to work with their student drama society the experience opened their eyes to a new way of working and a style of theatre they did not know existed. This was a highly physical, visceral and visual world.

The experience of working with Volcano was absolutely crucial to the creation of Frantic Assembly and it is this unique opportunity that we have aimed to emulate through **IGNITION**. Frantic Assembly wants to introduce its distinctive way of working to young men who possess the crossover skills, energy and potential to be physical performers. **IGNITION** has tapped into what we believe is a hidden pool of talent; the young men you will see perform tonight.

During Plymouth **IGNITION** 2010 Frantic Assembly worked with over 50 young men across the city through a series of free taster workshops. Following this we held trials for those wishing to take part in the 4 Day Intensive Training. The Intensive offered a one-off opportunity to work with Frantic's co-Artistic Director and Creative Associate to create a unique piece of physical theatre which premieres this evening.

Dead Kids has been devised by the 10 members of Ignition Theatre Company, and directed and choreographed by Steven Hoggett and Neil Bettles.

The *IGNITION* Theatre Company

Adam Crawford
Philip Croft
Luke Dickinson
Callum MacIver
Tom Nicholas
T
Luke Seidel-Haas
Jack Sterne
Alex 'Plum' Stupple-Harris
Nathan Wharton

Frantic Assembly Staff

Artistic Director
Artistic Director
Creative Associate
Executive Producer
General Manager
Project Manager
Administrator

Steven Hoggett
Scott Graham
Neil Bettles
Lisa Maguire
Laura Sutton
Clare Parker
Fiona Gregory

Theatre Royal Plymouth

Artistic Director
Creative Learning Director
Young People's Programme Manager
Peer Mentor

Simon Stokes
Victoria Allen
Jane Pawson
Ryan Penny

*A Frantic Assembly project in collaboration with Theatre Royal Plymouth and National Youth Theatre.
Supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.*

Frantic Assembly would like to thank Barbican Theatre, City College Plymouth, University of Plymouth, Tamarside Community College, Elizabeth Lynch, Eric Richmond, all staff at Theatre Royal Plymouth.

THEATRE ROYAL | TR2 | DRUM THEATRE

PLYMOUTH THEATRES





25th February 2011
The Core at Corby Cube

Ignition Theatre Company presents

60 Hugs

Frantic Assembly and The Core at Corby Cube are thrilled to present **IGNITION Corby 2011**: a unique training initiative of free activities for **young men aged 15 - 20**, supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

IGNITION is a UK-wide project that was set up by Frantic Assembly to provide new ways for young men to become involved in the arts. Frantic Assembly is a multi-award winning theatre company, well known for attracting new and young audiences to the theatre. Through the Ignition project, Frantic Assembly wants to introduce its distinctive way of working to young men who might not have considered working in theatre, but possess the crossover skills, energy and potential to be physical performers. The company believes that the talent is out there, but needs to be discovered. For more info visit www.franticassembly.co.uk/ignition.

Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett are the founding Artistic Directors of Frantic Assembly. As students studying English Literature they had never planned a career in theatre. When Volcano Theatre Company came to work with their student drama society the experience opened their eyes to a new way of working and a style of theatre they did not know existed. This was a highly physical, visceral and visual world.

The experience of working with Volcano was absolutely crucial to the creation of Frantic Assembly and it is this unique opportunity that we have aimed to emulate through *IGNITION*. Frantic Assembly wants to introduce its distinctive way of working to young men who possess the crossover skills, energy and potential to be physical performers. *IGNITION* has tapped into what we believe is a hidden pool of talent; the young men you will see perform tonight.

During Corby *IGNITION* 2011 Frantic Assembly worked with over 75 young men across Corby and the surrounding areas through a series of free Taster Workshops. Following this we held Trials for those wishing to take part in the 4-Day Intensive Training. The Intensive offered 12 young men a one-off opportunity to work with members of Frantic Assembly to create a unique piece of physical theatre, which premieres this evening.

60 Hugs has been devised by the 12 members of Ignition Theatre Company, and directed and choreographed by Neil Bettles and Naomi Said

IGNITION Company

Jack Nelson
Kyle Taylor
Lewis Steven Griffiths
Luke Addison
Matthew Churcher
Ross McCall
Sam Perry
Sean Wall
Sebastian Charles
Shyam Savani
Sunny Savani
Simon Webster

Frantic Assembly

Artistic Director: Scott Graham
Artistic Director: Steven Hoggett
Executive Producer: Lisa Maguire
General Manager: Laura Sutton
Creative Associate: Neil Bettles
Creative Practitioner: Naomi Said
Administrator: Alex Turner
Administrative Intern: Shelley Firth

The Core at Corby Cube

Creative Director: Chris Sudworth
Creative Projects Manager: Lisa Byrne
General Manager: Lucinda Hill
Press and Marketing Officer: Kellie-Ann Sabin
Arts and Marketing Intern: Angela Mayers
Sales & Promotions Supervisor: James Broderick
Sales Advisors: Nicola Hunstone, Jacob Toye & Gillian Lockwood
Chief Technician: Adam Broom
Assistant Technician: Kate Shaw
Peer Mentor: Jevael Holgate

*A Frantic Assembly project in collaboration with The Core Corby and National Youth Theatre.
Generously supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.*

If you enjoyed this you should try ThickSkin's production of Blackout at The Core from 11th – 13th May.
www.thickskintheatre.co.uk

FRANTIC ASSEMBLY

IGNITION 2009 – 2011