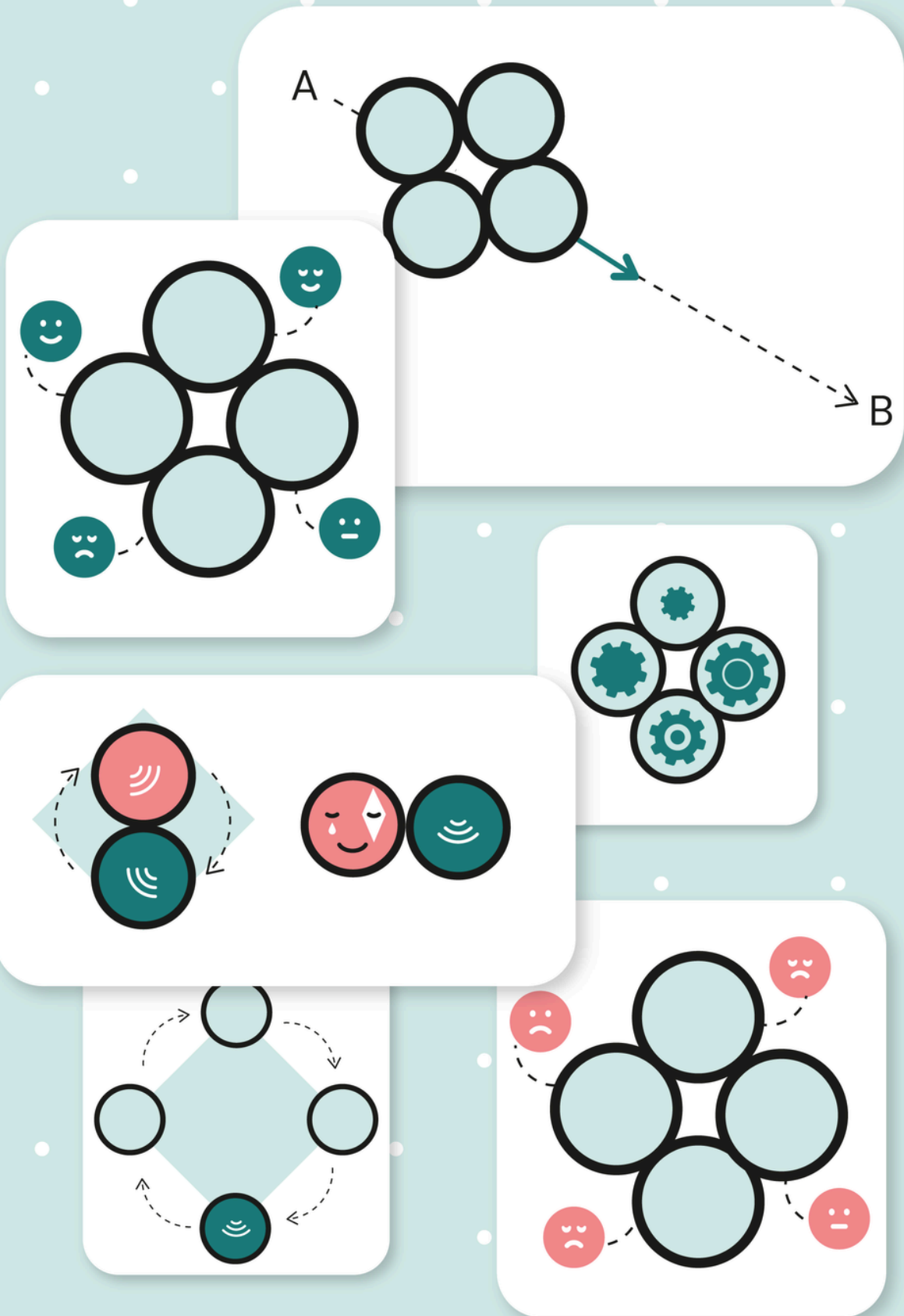


# TECHNICAL REPertoire



*The purpose of this document is to help promote Playback Theatre and to serve as a useful teaching resource. Feel free to share it and use it in your projects as long as it serves this aim.*

**Gráficos:** Miriam Prieto Marban

**Texto:** Darío Gómez González

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# TECHNICAL REPERTOIRE

This is the technical repertoire of **Teatro Playback Galicia**, intended as a teaching reference. It is not exhaustive of all existing Playback Theatre techniques, nor is it a canonical representation of the forms and methods most commonly used by the international community. It is our own unique approach, different from what other companies and schools do.

The diagrams schematically represent the spatial arrangement of the cast on stage for each technique. Each diagram is accompanied by a written explanation.

At the end of the document, you will find a **frequently asked questions** section that may help clarify concepts.

We hope this content has educational and informative value and helps to clarify how Playback Theatre works and what its key elements are.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

You can write to us at [info@playbackgalicia.com](mailto:info@playbackgalicia.com).



# REPERTOIRE OVERVIEW

## Introductory Forms

- Initial Form
- Berkeley Fluid

## Short Forms

- Fluid Sculpture
- Fluid in Transformation
- Machine
- Pairs
- Transformation

## Medium Forms

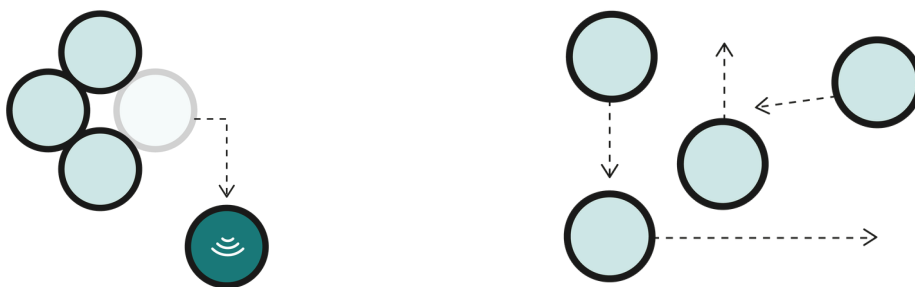
- Narrative V
- Story and its Fog
- Story in Three Parts
- Rhombus
- Echo
- Amoeba Chorus

## Long Form

## Closing Forms

- Collage

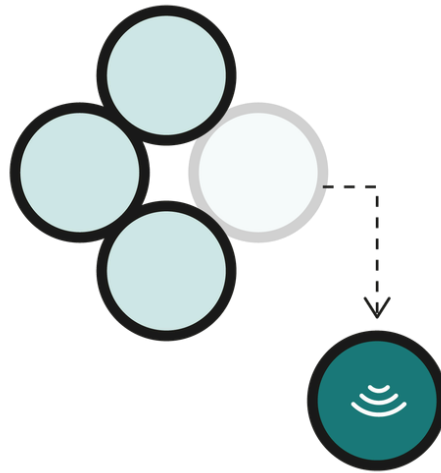
# INTRODUCTORY FORMS



These are the techniques used to **start** a performance. They serve to introduce the company, outline the theme of the performance, and initiate the interaction between the audience and the Playback Theater format.

In our repertoire, we use **two introductory forms**: the Initial Form and the Berkeley Fluid.

# Initial Form

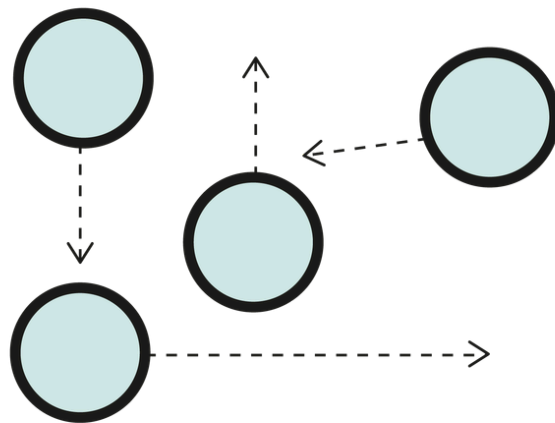


Its purpose is to **introduce** the company and the theme of the day.

In this exercise, the actors enter the stage one by one, striking a pose that conveys an aspect of the theme to be explored. Each time an actor joins the group, they must make physical contact with the cast members already on stage.

Then, each actor takes turns coming forward to say their name and share a brief personal story related to the theme. The group briefly acts out this scene and freezes into another organic whole. This process is repeated until the entire stage crew, including musicians and the conductor, has come forward to tell their story.

# Berkeley Fluid

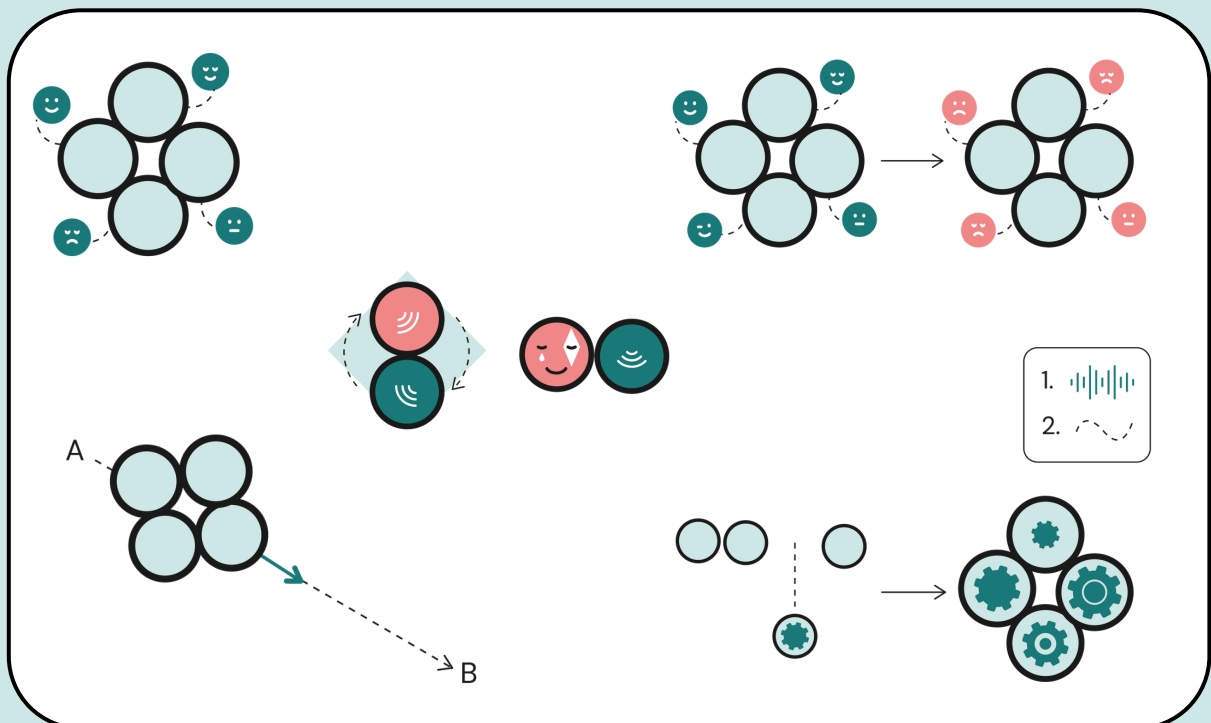


This technique is designed to **start warming up the relationship with the audience** in a fun and low-pressure way.

To perform it, the cast, in a neutral stance, walks around the space in all directions. Meanwhile, the facilitator asks the audience for a word. The company briefly acts out that word and then returns to walking in a neutral stance.

When the facilitator asks for **one last word**, that is the signal for the actors to know that the technique is over, and after that final performance, the blank slate should be formed.

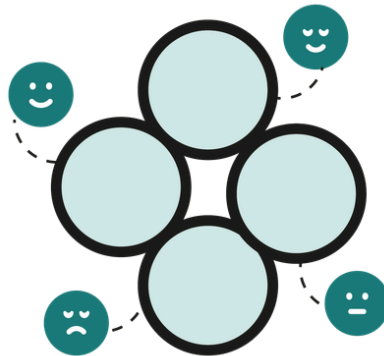
# SHORT FORMS



These are **brief**, generally **non-narrative** techniques used to closely examine specific aspects of a story or situation.

We use **five short forms**: Fluid Sculpture, Fluid in Transformation, The Machine, Pairs, and Transformation.

# Fluid Sculpture



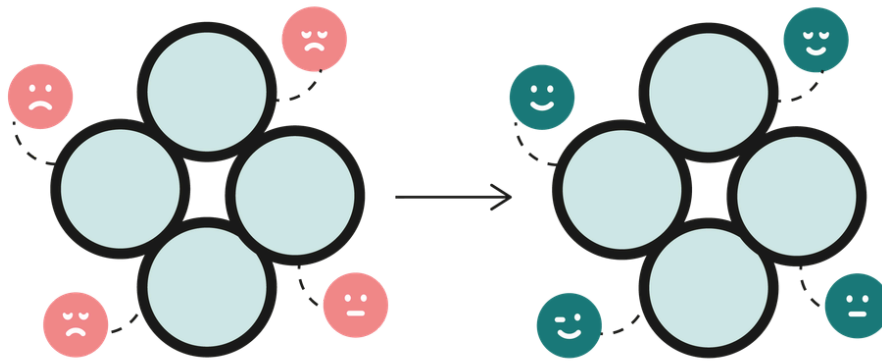
The **fluid sculpture** is the most iconic short form.

Its purpose is to represent the different facets of a static event—usually from the narrator’s **inner world**—such as a complex emotion.

To perform it, the acting ensemble must form an **organic whole** at the center of the stage. Each performer represents a dimension of the event being portrayed. It is recommended that they position themselves at different heights and orient themselves at different angles to enhance the expressive quality.

Generally, the fluid sculpture unfolds in an intuitive rhythm resembling a loop or a full breath, which is repeated until the company spontaneously decides to freeze the sculpture into a **statue**.

# Fluida en Transformación

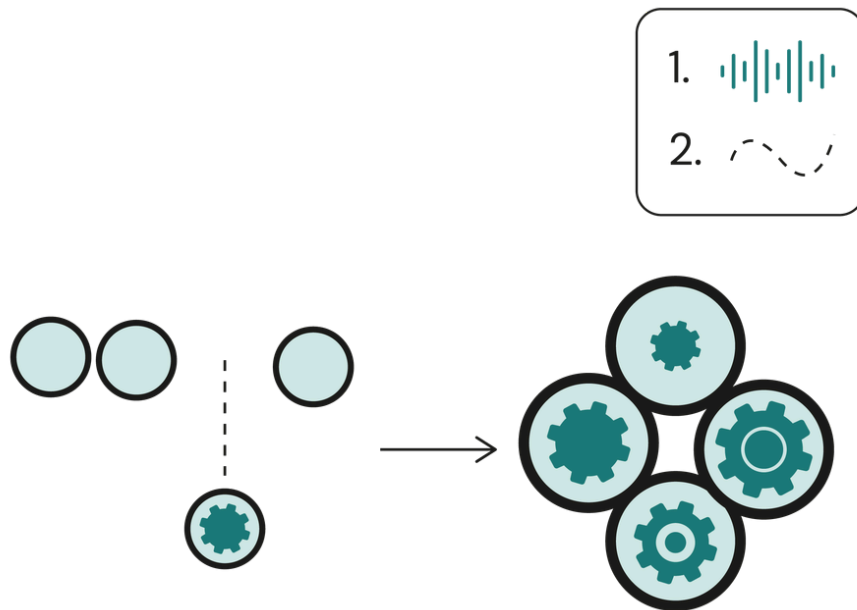


This is a variation of the **Fluid Sculpture** in which there are **two situations**: an initial one and a final one. This may be because the narrator has told a story about something that has changed, or that they hope or fear will change.

To perform it, execute a Fluid Sculpture representing the initial situation. Upon finishing, freeze very briefly so that, from the same spot in space, you can represent the final situation with another adjacent Fluid Sculpture. Upon finishing the latter, freeze definitively.

In short, to perform a Fluid in Transformation, you must perform **two Fluid Sculptures in succession**.

# Machine

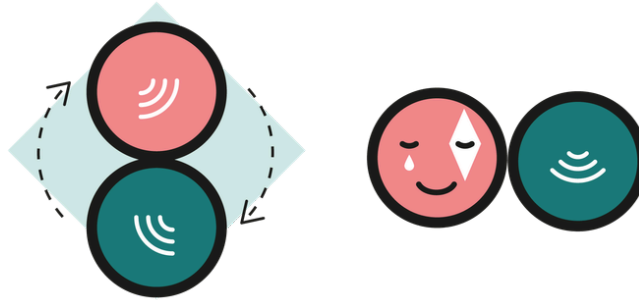


This is another variation of fluid sculpture, particularly suited for stories involving a **sense of repetition** or those with a strong element of **anger**.

In this form, the organic whole is constructed in phases. First, an actor enters and freezes into a statue; then the next one, and so on. Once the entire cast is in place, sound is added first, followed by movement.

You could say it is a mechanical fluid sculpture that is assembled in stages.

# Pairs

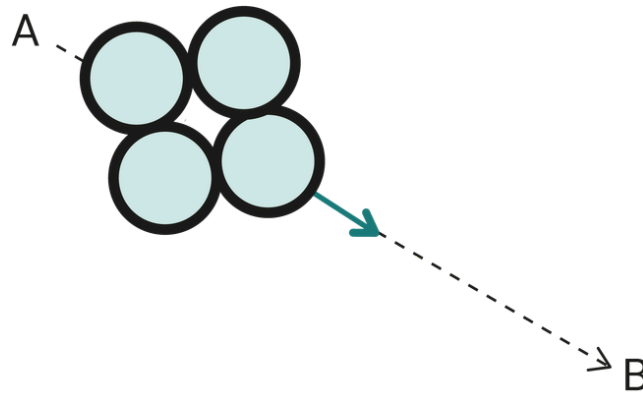


This technique is ideal for portraying **dualities**. These can be stories such as: “I don’t know whether to make this decision or that one” or “My head tells me one thing, but my body tells me another.”

To perform this exercise, the actors form **pairs** that create different types of dualities. There are three types of pairs:

- **Rotating:** Back-to-back, the actors rotate counterclockwise. The first actor to face the audience defends decision A, and the next defends decision B. They go around three times.
- **Saboteur:** One actor faces the audience and defends decision A. Another stands behind them and, using arguments for decision B, physically and mentally undermines them, sowing doubt. Finally, actor B takes control and steps forward, reversing the roles. This is repeated several times.
- **Mind-Body:** Two actors stand side by side. The one on the right, with completely neutral body language, articulates the dilemma as rationally as possible. The actor on the left reacts emotionally through body language and guttural sounds to what is being said.

# Transformación



A technique used to depict a **change** or **evolution** in a situation or in a person's character. It can represent something that has already happened or an aspiration.

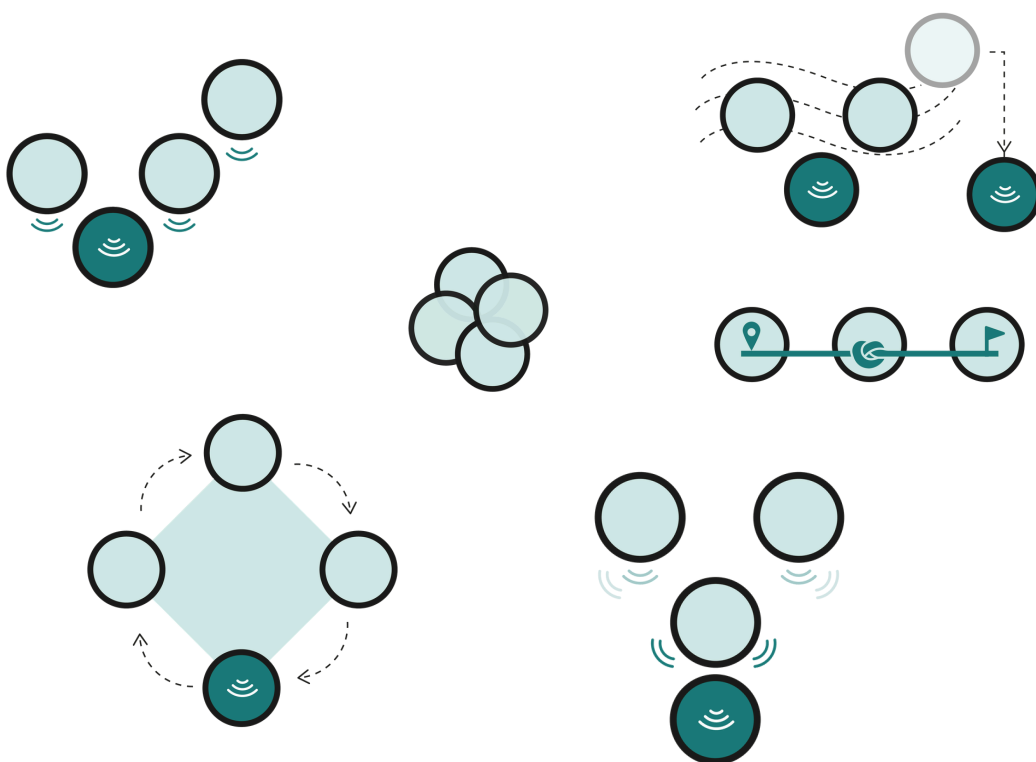
To perform this, the cast forms a **cohesive whole** at point A (the back left corner of the stage).

The group **moves diagonally** across the stage toward point B (the front right corner). While the group is at point A, it should represent the initial situation before the transformation. Once it has reached point B, the final situation should be represented.

**Any movement forward** in the space must be accompanied by a **change in expressiveness** that suggests something has progressed toward the transformation. Small setbacks in the transformation may be represented and must be consistently accompanied by corresponding movements backward in the space.



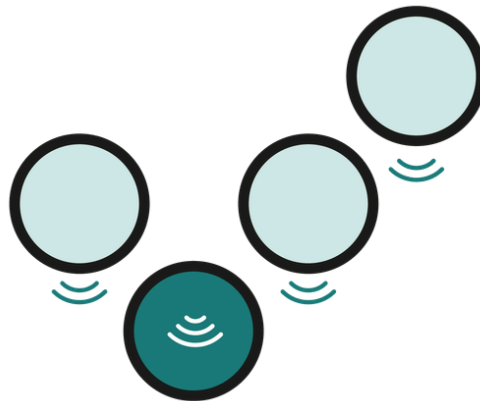
# MEDIUM FORMS



These are **medium-depth** techniques used to represent **narrative content**. They are used for stories with substantial development.

We use **six medium forms**: the Narrative V, the Story and Its Mist, the Three-Part Story, the Rhombus, the Echo, and the Amoeba Chorus.

# Narrative V

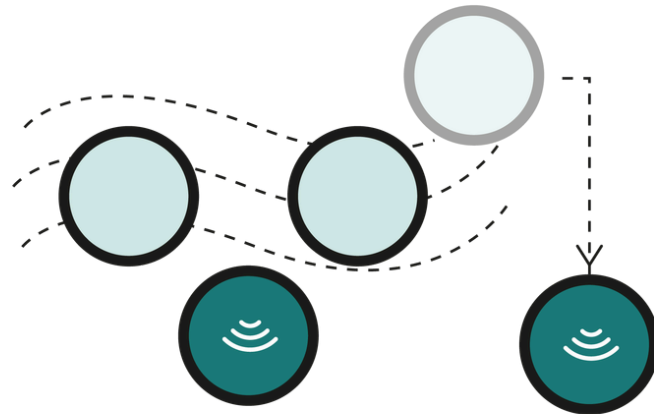


The **Narrative V** is the most emblematic of the medium forms.

It is used to represent any story with narrative content, especially if it is a clear situation that does not require emphasizing any particular aspect.

In this form, the narrator chooses an actor to play the lead role. This actor stands at the front of the stage and performs a monologue depicting the story. The rest of the cast stands in a **V-shape** behind the lead actor and mimics their body language, amplifying the emotional impact and adding guttural voices.

# The Story and its Fog



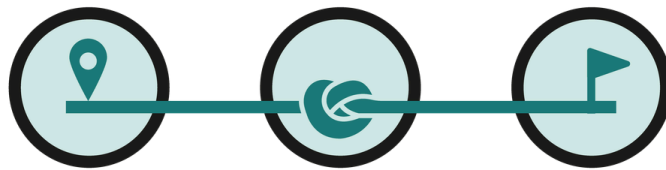
A variation of the **Narrative V** that allows the latent elements of a story to take center stage.

**Latent elements** are those aspects of the story that are not entirely explicit and that the narrator pushes into the background or does not even mention, but which may be vitally important to portray and reveal in order to understand the story in depth.

In this technique, the protagonist performs a solo in the same way as in the Narrative V. The rest of the cast continues to form a V, but this time they emulate **mists** with their expressiveness. These mists react to the emotional intensity of the narration.

At some point, each of the mists will step to the front of the stage, while the rest of the actors freeze. This mist will portray one of those latent elements in a **brief solo**, then return to its position so the formation can continue. Typically, each of the mists performs a solo.

# Three-Part Story

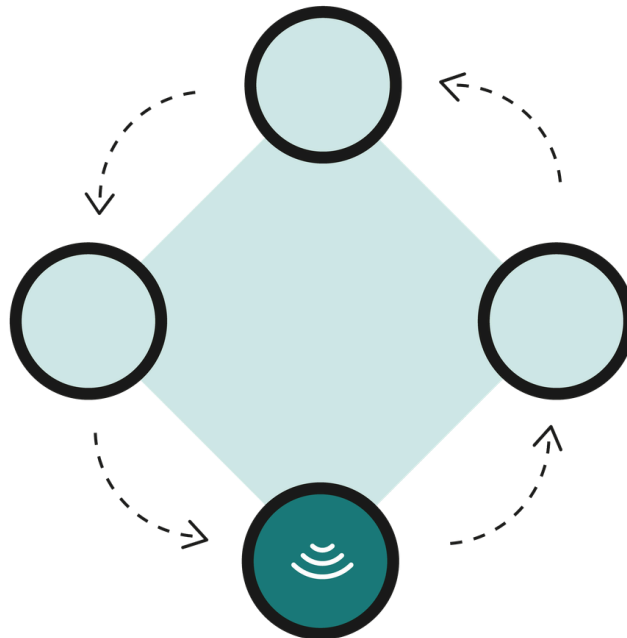


This form features **three performers** who begin with a statue and then perform three **solos** corresponding to the introduction, climax, and resolution of each story. At the end of each solo, they freeze into a statue that symbolizes the part they are portraying.

The **introduction** depicts how things were before the key narrative element that triggers the transformation of events. The **climax** is the central turning point where the most significant events occur. The **resolution** is the new normal that emerges after the most impactful events.

In each of the solos, a **central emotion** must predominate, clearly distinct from those of the other actors.

# Rhombus

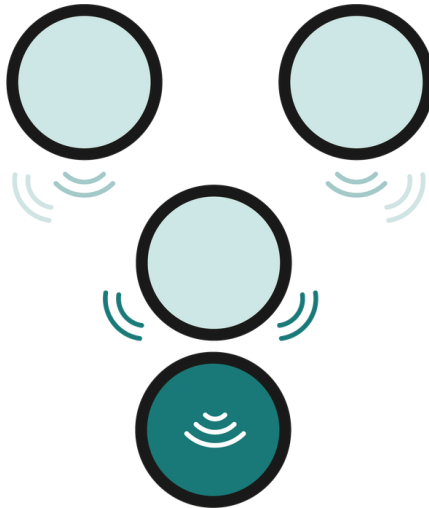


An ideal technique for representing the **multiplicity of elements** and dimensions in a story.

To perform this, the actors form a **rhombus** or **pentagon**, and the actor positioned at the front of the stage performs a short solo depicting a fragment of the story. Upon finishing this segment, the actor makes a spiral turn, and the entire cast shifts their positions counterclockwise. The actors in the back rows mimic the body language and emotional expression of the actor in front, as in the Narrative V.

This process is repeated several times until one actor decides to end their performance by freezing into a statue.

# Echo

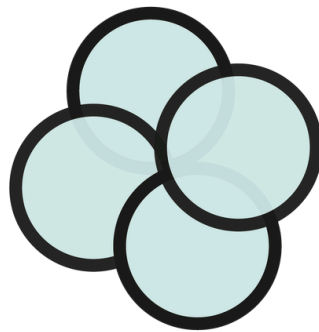


This technique is used to explore associations beyond what the narrator is telling. In this technique, **echoes** of stories and elements are introduced that are increasingly distant from the original story. It is a way of opening the story up to new **possibilities** and **related narratives**.

To perform it, the actors stand in a **Y-shape** or a **T-shape**, as shown in the figure, in a neutral position. The first actor performs a solo representing the narrated story and, upon finishing, crouches down. At that moment, the second actor's solo begins, interpreting associations close to the main story, also crouching down when finished.

Third, the back row begins to act, with several simultaneous solos, in a somewhat chaotic manner, representing **associations distant from the story**: remote possibilities, improbable consequences, ideas outside the narrator's frame of thought, etc.

# Coro Ameba



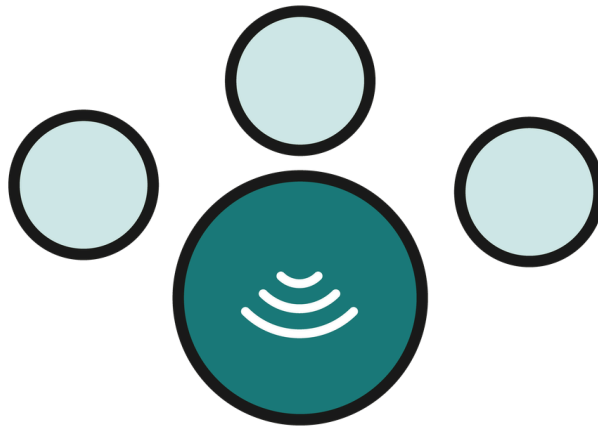
Particularly well-suited for **highly chaotic stories** with many angles, disordered elements, or a lack of internal coherence.

To perform it, the actors form a **cluster of bodies** that mingles in a disorganized manner, from which bursts of expressiveness emerge, reflecting different angles of the story.

If an expressive idea resonates particularly strongly with the group, the rest of the actors can accompany it as a **brief chorus** until its imminent collapse into the chaos of the amoeba.



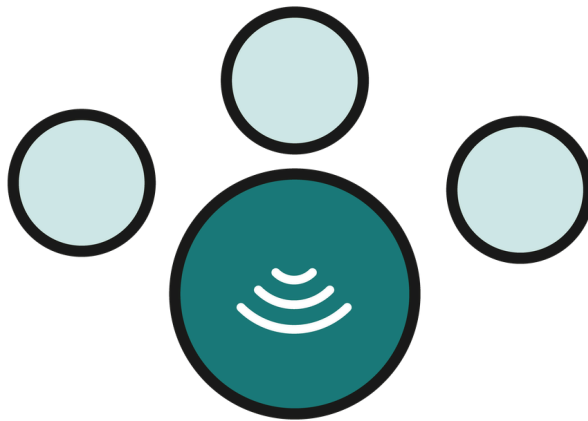
# LONG FORM



The long form is a unique technique with **no predefined structure**. The structure of the long form is **the story itself**. It offers the cast the greatest freedom for expression and creativity, but it is also the greatest challenge.

It is used when no other technique clearly fits, or for multidimensional stories that are highly detailed and profound.

# Forma Larga



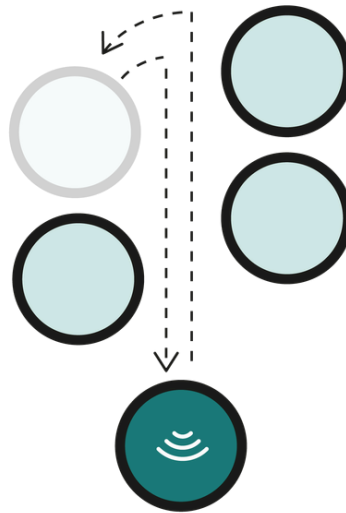
To perform a **Long Form**, the teller is asked to choose an actor to serve as the **protagonist** who represents them.

When the scene begins, the protagonist weaves the narrative events together while the rest of the cast acts as **supporting characters** who assist the protagonist. They can take on different roles: another character, elements of the protagonist's inner world, neutral figures who create interludes for shifts in space or time, etc.

It is a space for **free improvisation** where it is possible to draw on **elements from other techniques**, such as fog or statues, which can serve as stage props. It is common for mature groups to eventually develop their own stage props for Long Forms.

The Long Form tends to be the **longest-running** technique, but it can also be performed briefly if required. The facilitator may ask the company for a short Long Form.

# CLOSING FORMS

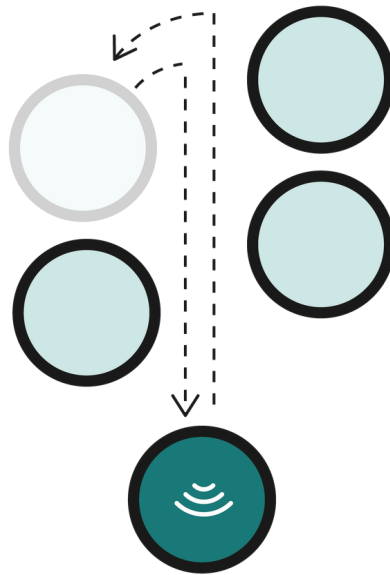


Closing forms are used to **conclude** a Playback Theater performance.

Generally, the goal is to shift away from the dramatic weight of the stories and **ease** the emotional intensity by moving toward a more lighthearted, anecdotal tone, where humor and lightness are interwoven. It also serves as a way to bid **farewell** to the audience.

At Teatro Playback Galicia, we use only one closing form: **the Collage**.

# Collage



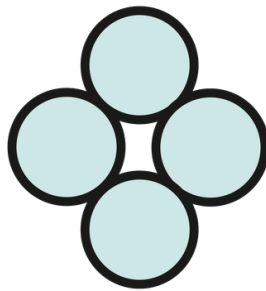
In this technique, the cast stands in **two alternating rows**, like a **zipper**, leaving an **aisle** in the center. The actors look down at their feet and allow the stories from the session to come to mind.

Each of them walks down the aisle several times to recall **small fragments** of the stories. Ideally, every story from the session should be mentioned at least once.

When the actors remain silent for a long time because they can't think of anything else, they step forward one last time to offer a **personal comment** on the session.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is an organic whole?



This is a figure that frequently appears in various techniques. It consists of a single large, mobile, and expressive statue formed by several actors. It depicts various nuances or dimensions of a single entity. It requires physical contact between the actors who make it up. It is as if it were

## What does neutral position mean?

The neutral position is a way of holding the body that conveys no particular emotion or attitude.

To perform this position, keep your body upright, with your spine straight and your shoulder blades relaxed, letting your arms hang naturally at your sides.

There should be no facial expressions, nor should there be any inward or outward tilt in the three core areas of the body (pelvis, chest, and head).

## **What is a blank sheet?**

The blank sheet is the standard formation for the cast while listening to stories.

To form a blank sheet, the actors must assume a neutral position, at equal distances, in the center of the stage and slightly toward the back. They should form a line that curves slightly into a C-shape at the ends, so that when looking straight ahead, everyone can see each other out of the corner of their eyes.

During the blank sheet, the actors must focus on maintaining their composure and listening intently to the narrator.

## **What is a conductor?**

The conductor is the person who serves as the link between the audience and the company.

This person is responsible for introducing the project, presenting the company, explaining how the session works, inviting the audience to share their stories, supporting the storytellers, selecting the techniques to be used, and ensuring that the session runs smoothly.

## **What is a statue? And what does freezing mean?**

A statue is an expressive, motionless pose that an actor strikes. Most techniques end with statues that are held while the host speaks with the narrator.

Freezing is the act of transitioning from expressive movement to expressive stillness, forming a statue.



## **What is the “freeze” command?**

“Freeze” is a command that the director uses during rehearsals to get the entire cast to stop moving immediately.

It is used to make corrections, suggest ideas, or highlight an aspect that needs further work.

## **What is a narrator?**

It is the audience member who shares their story, which we then act out.

This person is the central figure of Playback Theater; by generously sharing important stories from their life, they make the performances possible.

The company’s duty is to remain true to the spirit of their story and to treat it with warmth, respect, and sensitivity.

## **What is a solo?**

It is a performance by a single actor in which the performer uses all of their expressive abilities—both verbal and nonverbal—to portray a story or an aspect of it.

They can be very long, as in the case of Narrative V, or The Story and its Fog, or very short, as in the case of the solos at Rhombus.

## **What is the protagonist?**

The protagonist is the actor who plays the narrator within the scene.

He assumes this role when a narrator chooses him to play the narrator in techniques that require this, such as Narrative V, The Story and Its Fog, or the Long Form.

The Transformation may optionally have a protagonist.





**TEATRO PLAYBACK  
GALICIA**