



*From us to you: 19 stories from leading playwrights for
people across the UK to record*

BEING HUMAN

By Timberlake Wertenbaker

Cast size: Any

This play is suitable for: One Person, Group, Family Friendly, Under 16's

STEP 1: REHEARSE

- Make sure you have enough people for each part or maybe you could play multiple parts.
- Try to learn all your character's lines, if possible.
- If you're looking for some guidance, check out our [How To... videos](#). We've brought together a bunch of the best actors and directors to give you their tips and advice on how to make the best film you can.

STEP 2: RECORD

- Use a phone to film your performance or record directly on your Zoom or video chat platform.
- Record your performance in well-lit spaces so we can see you clearly but avoid standing right in front of a window on sunny day, and remember to keep private items out of view.
- Try to cut out all background noise by closing windows and doors.

STEP 3: UPLOAD

- We would love to see your performance. To upload your recording to us, click [here](#).
- Please **do not share** your recording on YouTube or other similar platforms. This is so we can keep all the recordings in the same place and to respect and honour our writers' copyright and publication permissions.
- We will be creating a film of each script from the videos submitted.
- We want this to be something everyone can take part in so please do get in touch if you have any access requirements or if there is anything else we might be able to help with.
- If you are having difficulty uploading your recording, please get in touch with us via email: admin@theatre-centre.co.uk or phone: 020 7729 3066.

HELP US SPREAD THE WORD

- Recommend to a friend by inviting those you know to rehearse, record and upload their own performance.
- Encourage others by using [#ImagiNation19](#) on your social platforms. State what play you have performed but remember to not share your recording publicly.
- Thank you for being part of ImagiNation.

BEING HUMAN

BY

TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

This text can be performed by anyone of any age, shape, colour, mobility or gender. As I've always been fascinated by sign language I would really love it if someone felt like doing that.

The premise is this: a bee is acting a human. We have all seen animals or insects on stage and film: there are different ways of doing it and some are better than others. The actor can be as good or hopeless at being human as they want but the endeavour must be serious. Make up, costume, props can be used or not. Movement can be used or not. The words, however, must not be changed, the punctuation needs to be followed and it needs to be a truthful attempt, however successful or unsuccessful.

A beat indicates a short stop. A pause is only slightly longer than a beat.

THE BEE/HUMAN

How am I doing?

A BEAT

Can you see me? Do you recognize me?

A BEAT

Am I convincing?

As you, I mean.

A BEAT

Because when you do us, I have to say, you're pretty hopeless. For example: ZZZZZZ. That's not actually the sound we make. And then you often make us black and white, and striped. There is no such thing as a black and white striped bee. And you never get our hair right. But never mind. You try. I'm trying.

A BEAT

So: am I a convincing human? The look of me, I mean. We'll get to the humanity of me later.

I've studied you, like any good actor preparing a role. Your movements. Your speech. Do I sound like you?

More or less?

Anyway, you don't all sound the same. Just as we don't. As long as I'm sounding more or less human, I'm happy. Am I? I mean sounding more or less human. I'm not asking if I'm happy, that seems very complicated as a human.

But now I need some help, what you call acting notes. On being human. So that I can convincingly be you. There are some things I still don't understand.

A BEAT

I know that as well as looking more or less alike you're all different. The way we're all different.

A BEAT

Although from the way you portray us I don't think you know much about us.

Let me explain:

There are bees who live in hives, sort of like your apartment blocks, and produce honey, a bit like factory or office workers.

And there are solitary bees, who are a bit more individualistic and live in gardens and hedges and nest underground.

But basically all of us-

honey, bumble, mason, mining, carpenter, hairy footed, mourning, sweat, squash, blueberry, leafcutter, or long horned-

pollinate everything, which means that as we go about our business, the planet keeps going and is healthy.

I could tell you a lot more but that's not my purpose since I am you.

A PAUSE

The thing is, I can't figure out exactly what you do. That is, how you keep the planet going, which is what every living thing does.

A PAUSE

For example. As a bee, I look for flowers. So I fly with a purpose: I search, I hover.

I spot a flower.

I land on it.

And then I have a kind of dialogue. It might have been sprayed with a chemical, so it tells me immediately not to stay there, it could hurt me.

I quickly go to another flower. On that one, there could have been another bee just before me so it tells me, sorry, mate, you're too late.

And then eventually I find a flower and it's a good one and I stay there and collect whatever it has to give me. And as I do this, I spread a little pollen around so it's happy because that'll make more flowers.

The exact way living things reproduce is complex, and I won't go into it.

A BEAT

Whereas I've noticed that you humans do sex pretty simply.

A THOUGHT

No.

WAVES THE THOUGHT AWAY

I'm not going act human sex right now. Maybe another time.

A BEAT

OK: here I am, a human.

A PAUSE-CHECKING THE ACTING, TRYING HARD

Yes? Now I move. You seem to have a lot of ways of moving, sometimes with your long legs, and sometimes with your short legs and sometimes without legs, in rolling boxes.

I'm going to try legs.

So: I move.

WAVES ARMS ABOUT OR ANYTHING TO INDICATE MOVEMENT

But I seem to have no direction. There's a good flower right in front of me but I don't see it. Instead I go for that one over there.

It tells me it's full of chemicals and dangerous but I absolutely insist on feeding from it because it's more showy.

Why don't I, a human, know what's good for me?

And sometimes I see a bee, I mean a human, and I try to push it off.

ACTS AGRESSIVE

That's how you do threat, yes?

But why?

And sometimes I sort of whizz about, here and there, for no reason. I think you call it exercise? Jogging? You go in a straight line and miss all the flowers?

And sometimes you pile into one of your moving boxes, with your short legs at right angles.

IMITATES SOMEONE DRIVING

Like this, I think. Have I got it right?

What are you looking for from those boxes?

I think you call it motivation?

I'm really trying to get into my human character but there seems to be a lack of consistency. Or is there something I'm not getting?

Here I am doing actions, but I can't find their intention.

A PAUSE

And now, something else. When you see me, as a bee that is, when I'm not moving, I'm still. I watch. I'm alert. But you're often not moving but not still. Twitching.

A GESTURE OF HUMAN TWITCHING, MAYBE FIDDLING WITH HAIR, NAIL BITING, SMOKING, WHATEVER

Like this. Maybe it's grooming.

TRIES TO DO IT MORE CAREFULLY

We do grooming too, we clean our legs and our antennae a lot, but I don't notice you're much better afterwards and you haven't spread anything good around you, so I can't see the purpose.

Maybe it's evolutionary? Scaring off predators?

CONSIDERS THIS

You seem to be very frightened of something you call boredom. Maybe boredom is one of your worst predators.

That's it. Got it. I twitch to scare off my predator.

TRIES EVER MORE PURPOSEFUL TWITCHING. PAUSE

Does it work?

A BEAT

But back to purpose. How you find it. How you make yourself yourself. I think it's also called an objective. Or a use.

A BEAT

Why is it so difficult to find?

Acting is hard, acting human is really really hard.

A PAUSE

If I were a bee advising another bee on their purpose, or objective- I think you also call it a journey- I'd say, look for the flowers. They'll tell you everything.

A BEAT

Look for the flowers. What's that in human language?

A BEAT OR A PAUSE

You can use the movement you call walking or the one called being still. With both you find plants, good things that nourish you. Maybe you call them thoughts? Truths? Kindness?

Something that speaks to you.

And then, when you've found something good in that flower, you spread it around.

Finally, you tell others about it so they can make a bee line for it.

If I did that I'd be a happy human. I imagine it's even more of a challenge to play a happy human than a normal human but I'm going to try. I'll practice a bit on my own first.

It's been very tiring just being human, so I'm going to take a break now and be a bee for a while.

But thanks for watching.

And if you ever want advice on how to act like a bee, give me a ring.

END

ImagiNation is a co-production between Theatre Centre and Theatre503

Being Human © 2020 Timberlake Wertenbaker

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