



Monologues

A project for creating monologues

Outline A seven lesson scheme of work that guides participants through the creation of a monologue and the skills and techniques in both creating and delivering a monologue.

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Session 1

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand and be able to use the concepts of thought tracking and narration through thought tracking.
2. To use freeze frames successfully
3. To use freeze frames to create a narrative
4. To develop performance skills of spontaneous improvisation.

FREEZE FRAME

When you create an image with your bodies that tells a story or narrative. The narrative is told through clear body language, facial expressions and the use of space between actors.

THOUGHT TRACKING

Thought tracking is when all the characters on stage freeze at once and then proceed to say out loud what they are thinking at that moment in time. It helps both the actors and the audience understand what is taking place in the characters minds and offers an insight into their feelings, emotions and motives about the action taking place on stage.

Starter (5mins)

A quick introduction to the focus for the unit for monologues and for this session. This session is going to be looking at creating simple monologues through thought tracking and narration through monologues.

Activity 1 - Storyboarding (10mins)

This game is all about looking at creating and communicating meaning through still image. It requires the participants to read what is taking place on stage already and to then create a meaning that develops the story. One person is asked to strike a pose on the stage. Two more people join the still image to create a narrative or moment of action. Each member of the group is then asked in turn to replace one of the three performers and change their pose slightly to show progression in the story.

TAG: Narrative – Imagination.

Activity 2 - All in (10mins)

Instead of asking people to take the place of someone else, this time people enter the image and add to the image until the picture is full and complete. Ask each member of the group in the image to then thought track what each of the characters is thinking. Start with the main protagonist (normally the one who started the image) to set the tone and details of the story. Each thought track must be in relation to the main protagonist (i.e. “I don’t know the person, I was just walking past but I thought there was something odd going on” or “He is my son and I wish we didn’t argue so much, especially in public”)

Activity 3 (10mins)

Bring the class back into a circle and ask one person to enter the stage area and ask them to strike a pose entitled “waiting for a bus”. Ask another person to enter the scene and take on a character and a pose that makes them obviously related to the first character (e.g. Mother, daughter, grandmother etc...)

Ask a third person to enter the image as a potential to cause conflict (an angry member of the public, an old friend who they don’t like etc...)

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SPONTANEOUS IMPROVISATION

Spontaneous Improvisation is when action takes place without any prior rehearsal or preparation taking place. What happens on stage is literally spontaneous.

Add two more people, one playing a relative of the person causing conflict and a witness / passer by who is observing the action.

Ask for the scene to take action and watch the story unfold for a few minutes before stopping the scene and asking them to return to the original still image.

Recap on the story that unfolded in the spontaneous improvisation. Ask someone to write down the story as a log of what happened.

The actors are then going to re-enact the performance, but instead of having dialogue like the initial spontaneous improvisation did, the actors are going to describe what is happened through narrative monologues. (i.e. "I am Tom, I'm waiting for a bus", acts it out, "I am Tony, Tom's boss, we recently has an argument over a pay rise, I go up to him to tell him he can't have one" and acts it out...)

Activity 4 (15mins)

Split the group up into smaller groups. Run the same exercise again, but with each group creating something different. Make sure that as a facilitator, you go through the same stages and don't just let the groups create it for themselves, it is important for them to understand the process of creation rather than just skipping to create the end product.

Plenary (5mins)

I think that it is important to reflect on every lesson and start the group thinking about setting targets for themselves. For assessment it is important to keep a log book of activities, so ask the students to write a reflective log for this lesson.

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Session 2

OBJECTIVES

1. To be using scripted work.
2. To analyse scripts for emotional content and sub text
3. To understand the concept of Unit of Action.

UNITS OF ACTION

A unit is a discrete piece of action in a play-text, marked by a significant change in action or emotion.

Starter (5mins)

This session is going to be analysing an existing monologue in terms of its emotional sub-text and how that can be used to prepare it for performance.

Activity 1 - Shielded from the Bomb (5mins)

This is a game that really gets students active – ask the students to find a space in the room away from others. Ask them to choose someone else in the room who is going to be a bomb and another person who is going to be a shield. Once they've chosen (but not told anyone) the game can begin. They must get into a position where the shield person is always between them and the bomb. That is actually very difficult!

TAG: Warm Up – Physical – Energy

Activity 2 - Mirrors (10mins)

In pairs, stand opposite each other as A and B. A is going to copy every movement that B makes as if A were the mirror of B. Swap over. Then do the same exercises but A and B must always be in constant eye-contact. Swap over. Finally do the activity without anyone leading. It sounds impossible, but if the pair stay in eye contact and move slowly, both will lead at the same time.

TAG: Warm Up – Cooperation

Activity 3 (35mins)

Hand out to the class a monologue from a play such as *Shakers*, *Bouncers* or *Too Much Punch for Judy*. Before you give it to the students break it up into 4 or 5 units. Explain to the class the concept of Stanislavsky's Units of Action and that the monologue is broken up into what could possibly be called Units of Action.

Read through the monologue as a group. Discuss the monologue first, what is the piece about? What is the mood of the piece? What do you think the purpose behind the monologue is?

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Session 2

Ask the participants in pairs to write down, in each unit of action, what the character might be thinking. This is creating sub-text for the character.

In the same pairs, splitting the text equally between them, prepare to perform the piece, using the sub-text that they've just created as a guide for how to perform it.

Plenary (5mins)

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Session 3

OBJECTIVES

1. To perform.
2. To evaluate their own work and set targets for improvement
3. To evaluate the work of another and set targets for improvement.

Starter (5mins)

This session is going to be about performing the prepared monologues.

Activity 1 - In the driving seat (5mins)

In pairs, one person is the car and the other is the driver. The car is blindfolded and the driver stands directly behind the car in the driving seat. Instead of using words, the pair use an agreed system of touches (i.e., left shoulder = left, centre = stop) the driver drives the car around the room, keeping it safe from penalty points, speeding fines and crashes.

TAG: Warm Up – Group bonding

Activity 2 - Lets (10mins)

Bring the class together into a circle and two people enter the circle. One player starts by saying “Let’s go to the pictures”, the second player has to say “Yes lets” and then begin the scene. After a few moments, a third player enters the stage and says “Hi guys, let’s go fishing instead”, the other two players have to say “Yes lets” and the scene changes to them going fishing (or whatever the idea is). A new player is added each time until the whole group are taking part and it is a free for all to who says “Let’s do this...”

TAG: Narrative – Spontaneous Improv

Activity 3 – Rehearse and perform (35mins)

Give the students some time to prepare their performance. If there are any props or costumes or lighting available, you might want to discuss the options of using those and what they might bring to the performance. Make sure that the students are aware of how they are going to be and end the performance. If the participants are working towards a qualification, it might be a good idea to assess this piece. I like to get the other participants to assess each other using the same assessment scheme as the qualification.

Plenary (5mins)

I think that it is important to reflect on every lesson and start the group thinking about setting targets for themselves. Ask the students to evaluate their performance and the performance of another, setting targets for each.

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Session 4

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the concept of a conscience alley as a tool for discovering how other characters or those around the main protagonist feel about the protagonist.
2. To understand and use a role on the wall as a method of documenting that information for future use.

ROLE ON THE WALL

A role on the wall is a large drawing of an empty ginger bread man on a large piece of paper. On the inside of the drawing is written what the character thinks about themselves and those around them. On the outside of the drawing is written what other characters think about them.

Starter (5mins)

This session is going to be looking using conscience alleyways and role on the walls to find out information about characters.

Activity 1 - Blind leading the blind (10mins)

In pairs, one of the pair is blindfolded. The other is the leader. Partners begin at the same spot, but when one of them is blindfolded, the other partner has to find a new spot in the room and guide their blindfolded partner to them using only small sounds. The aim is not to trip your blindfolded partner up but to work with them to bring them towards you.

TAG: Group bonding – Warm Up

Activity 2 - Boxing (5mins)

In pairs, each couple has a boxing match! But there are rules! Each player has a move in slow motion, there must be no actual physical contact and the reactions to each punch must be unrealistically large!

TAG: Warm Up – Physical

Activity 3 – At the same time (5mins)

Everyone find a space in the room. Ask everyone to walk around the room, stopping and starting, but everyone must do so at the same time without there being a leader. Try it with the group sitting or moving backwards.

TAG: Warm Up – Physical

Activity 4 – Conscience Alley (10mins)

Begin with the group in a circle and recap on the main character from the monologue used to perform – perhaps reread the monologue to aid memories.

Ask for one person to play the role of the monologue character and the rest to form two lines with space for someone to walk through.

The person taking the role of the monologue character is going to walk down between the two lines – or the alleyway.

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As they do so, those forming the alley way are going to say aloud what other people might think of them. Ask those people forming the alleyway to think about ways of delivering the line, not just saying it, but using different tones of voice or volume to add depth to what is being said.

Discuss as a class what was said and how the central character felt about it.

Activity 5 – Role on the wall (15mins)

In small groups, using a pre-prepared role on the wall blown up to A3 paper, write down around the outside everything that everyone thinks about the central character and on the inside write down all the things that the central character thinks about everyone else.

Plenary (10mins)

Bring the class together to discuss the findings from the Role on the wall and make a list of single words or phrases that come from the discussions.

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Session 5

OBJECTIVES

1. To use stimuli to create a still image based performance.
2. To use still image and thought tracking to create a character.
3. To work independently to write facts about a character they have created.

Starter (5mins)

This session is going to be looking at create simple characters using stimuli that can be developed into more complex characters to use to create monologues.

Activity 1 - Moods (10mins)

The class begin in a circle and one person enters the stage, acting out a clear and easily readable mood, such as anger or sadness. A second person enters the stage, the acknowledge each other with glances, gestures or routines but do not talk to each other. The second person takes the on the mood of the first. A third person enters the space with a different mood and goes about slowly changing the mood of the other two actors. Once the mood has changed, the first person exits and a fourth enters the space, again with a different mood and goes about slowly changing the mood of the others and so on and so forth until everyone has had a go.

TAG: Warm Up – Physical

Activity 2 – Still Images (15mins)

Ask the participants to get into groups of about 4 or 5. Call out one of the words or phrases written down from the role on the wall exercise in the last lesson as a stimulus to create a still image. Give the group about a minute to create the image before watching them and doing another word. Select about 5 or 6 of the best words.

Activity 3 (15mins)

Ask each group to then select their favourite image and recreate that image with the characters then coming forward and performing a monologue about who they are and how they are related to the central character (i.e. “my name is Rosie, I feel isolated from my friends because I don’t fit in” “my name is Charlie, I hate Rosie, she doesn’t belong here with us, she has no fashion sense what-so-ever”)

Activity 4 (15mins)

Ask the participants to then sit down and write for 15 minutes as much as they can about that character they’ve just created.

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Session 6

OBJECTIVES

1. To create a monologue for performance.

Starter (5mins)

This session is going to be looking at developing our monologues for performance.

Activity 1 - Group Count (10mins)

Everyone standing in a circle with their backs to the centre so no one can see anyone else. The object of the game is to count up to the number of people in the group, with numbers following on from each other and no number said at the same time. If this happens, the group has to start again.

TAG: Narrative – Group bonding

Activity 2 – Writing / Rehearsals (40mins)

Ask the participants to review the notes from the last session and they are going to create a monologue in which their character tells the audience a little bit about themselves, their past experiences and their emotional state.

This can be done in two ways or a combination of both. The first is to simply write it down first. The second is to get up, start improvising the monologue and write down what comes out afterwards. It is really about whatever works for the individual participant.

Plenary (5mins)

The participants are going to perform their monologues in the next session so they need to prepare for that by sourcing any costumes or props they want to use and by learning their lines.

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Session 7

OBJECTIVES

1. To perform monologue for performance.

Starter (5mins)

The monologues will be performed in this session.

Activity 1 - Reactions (10mins)

With the group standing in a circle. Two people enter the circle, A & B. A has a fantastic piece of news to give to B, such as they have just won the lottery! B has to react without thought with as much energy as they can. A exits the stage and C enters. B then gives C a new piece of news, C reacts, B exits and D enters and onwards until everyone has had a go.

TAG: Spontaneous Improv – Warm Up

Activity 2 –Rehearsals / Performances (40mins)

Give the students some time to rehearse the monologue before performing it to the rest of the group.

If this is an assessed unit or the students are working towards a qualification, it is a good idea for them to be assessed on this performance. It is also a good idea for the participants themselves to assess each other.

Plenary (5mins)

Give the students opportunity to reflect on their performances and set targets to improve when they complete their next performance.