The Next Stage
Notes: Week Two

What we covered

1. Warm-up
   Fruit Bowl (to get moving, building concentration, adapting to changed circumstances)

2. Vocal Warm-up
   See vocal warm-up sheet (I’ll add it to the Facebook page)

3. Improvisation
   - Park Bench
   - Dubbed Movie
   - Remote Control
   (All working on creativity, imagination, responding to what is happening on stage, improvisation and play)

4. Monologues
   - We worked on identifying monologues for each other
   - We had a simple read through while moving about the room
   - We added simple movements and basic awareness of the space along with reading the monologue and moving about the room (note that once we added basic movement the volume increased)
   - We began performing our monologues in front of each other and giving feedback

5. Reminder of our plans
   - Working each week on developing skills with a focus on voice and movement exercises and plenty of improvisation to develop creativity and get us working as a group and collaborating to build stories.
   - Focus on monologues this term with a view to developing a performance out of those monologues at the end of the 10 weeks. Seeing what comes out of our work on monologues over the next few weeks to find a focus/theme for that performance.
   - Developing monologues has a two-fold purpose: 1) to put together a performance at the end of the first 10 weeks; 2) to give everyone a repertoire of monologues for use in auditions etc.
   - We will work on building the strengths of the group and finding our niche so that we can take on bigger projects (like a play) after our monologue performances.

Tasks for next week

1. Observation
   I think people were a bit confused about this task – so I’ll try to explain it a little better. Basically, what we are trying to do is pay attention to how different people move in order to build characters out of real experience and observation. Eventually we will try to build stories with those characters or find character traits that might inform our own monologues.
   I’m still working out plans for how we use this but I’m thinking next week we might pair everybody up and those pairs would show each other their ‘character’ and then as a pair we might work off a basic script with those characters (something like ‘Hi’, ‘How are you?’, ‘Fine’).
   Then we might show the group (in our pairs). And over the course of the next few weeks develop the characters more and more with more detailed scripts, or some improv, and add costume and props.
   We will play games with changing the status of the character - figuring out how to act high status or low status and what sort of things we might do in order to change the status of a character – so that we learn the importance of that for our own monologues and scene work.
   I picked commuting or waiting because it seems the most obviously accessible. But just observe anyone you find interesting for whatever reason.
   - Observe someone during the week.
   - Choose someone different to you, so that you get a chance to embody a different character and break out of your own habits a little (different age, different gender, different personality).
Pay attention to their physicality:
  o how they hold themselves
  o where they put their weight
  o what they do with their hands, head
  o how they walk, talk (do they drag their one leg slightly, what is their posture like, do they swing their arms, do they look up or down, are they paying attention to what is going on around them or lost in their thoughts or just focussed on the destination)
  o how they interact with others (people they know and strangers)

Take notes, draw pictures, practice in front of a mirror or a friend.

Try to make it real, not over-the-top acting but actually trying to embody a real person.

2. Monologues

Try to settle on your first monologue. Start to prepare it before next Thursday with a view to doing a first read through next week.

You don’t have to learn it off (but great if you can).

The more worked out it is the better, but if all you do is a simple read for the group that is fine too.

You can bring simple props/costume if you want.

Don’t worry too much about accents.

And trust your own instincts with the monologue (rather than looking at other performers on YouTube). The monologue was chosen for you after all...

If you have questions or are confused about how to say a line – that’s what the group is for – write your questions down and bring them along.

3. Group Monologue task

This task is for Thursday 24th October

Each group will work together to find a monologue for each member of that group.

The monologues should be from new/contemporary Irish plays (they can be set in the past, but written recently).

We want to look at what other successful Irish theatre companies are doing, we are trying to get a feel for what is going on in Irish theatre now (instead of reusing the same old plays).

For ideas look at the websites of current theatre companies and see what have been their award winning plays over the last few years, or look at the Irish Theatre Awards and what new plays have been successful as part of that. Or maybe a play you have seen recently (someone mentioned ‘Drum Belly’ which is perfect).

Ask each other for help sourcing scripts, for instance I know I have a copy of ‘Silent’ which I bought after I saw it in Smock Alley in January.