ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE 2

PERFORMANCE FOCUS:
Focus Questions/Ideas to think about:
- What is it like to be threatened by a bushfire?
- What are some of the stories of survival?
- How can you educate the audience in what to do if a bushfire threatened their home?
- What is bravery? How can you represent it as a symbol?

STIMULUS MATERIAL:
- Script excerpt from Embers by Campion Decent
- Images of bushfires in Victoria
- Newspaper article about surviving Black Saturday Bushfire

PERFORMANCE STYLE: Non-Naturalism

CONVENTIONS: (Choose 6 for your ensemble)
- Mime (Slow Motion, Synchronised movement/action)
- Tableaux
- Exaggeration of body language, gesture and facial expression
- Transformation of character/object and place
- Narration or other forms of direct address
- Flash backs and flash forwards
- Transitions and scene changes without blackouts
- Playing objects not just people
- Stillness and Silence

ELEMENTS OF DRAMA:
- Role and character - identification and portrayal of a person’s values and attitudes, intentions and actions as imagined relationships, situations and ideas in dramatic action
- Relationships - the connections and interactions between people that affect the dramatic action
- Situation - the setting and circumstances of the characters/roles actions
- Focus - directing and intensifying attention and framing moments of dramatic action
- Tension - Sense of anticipation or conflict within characters or character relationships or problems, surprise and mystery in stories and ideas to propel dramatic action and create audience engagement.
- Mood and Atmosphere - The feeling or tone of physical space and the dramatic action created by or emerging from the performance.

STAGECRAFT:
- Use of music/sound effects (music to have no lyrics)
- Costume items like a hat, a coat etc – no complete costumes, Theatre Blacks to be worn
- You may use props as necessary and should consider use of fabric, boxes, masks etc... as needed
- Minimalistic – focus on skills of actors to communicate meaning

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT - YOUR TASK:
- Research – Select the areas to be researched and share them out amongst your group. Use various sources such as the Library, interviews with family and friends as well as Internet searches and YouTube.
- Brainstorm – Ideas for your ensemble using the performance focus and stimulus material.
- Improvise – Get up and play with your script, how will you stage it? How will the characters move around the stage?
- Scripting – Is there anything you don’t understand in the script?
- Editing – How will you break up the dialogue for the different characters?
- Rehearse – What works? What needs to be changed? Get some feedback from others to help.
- Refining – Perform what you have for another group or your Drama teacher. What can they see that works? What needs polishing or fixing?

Ensemble Performances: Tues 10th June

Changed lives written by Ian Munro. Published: February 6, 2010

FIVE hours after the black smoke appeared high overhead, the flames arrived, and with them, the dark. A spot fire struck first, then the fire front. Ron and Anne Sorraghan had dressed to confront the blaze outside their St Andrews home, but unable to breathe or see, they retreated inside. They had 150 metres of cleared ground in front of the house, and maybe 20 metres of visibility.

The land was peppered with clumps of trees that lit up like beacons in the smoke-blackened afternoon. Then they dimmed, and the dark returned. Moments later, they lit up again. It was eerie, like watching slowly pulsing neon lights. The Sorraghans reasoned this was a fire burning with an intensity that had near exhausted its own supply of oxygen. Then the trees reignedited with the fierce wind.

For some, the Black Saturday fire front passed in minutes. The Sorraghans lived with it for an hour, moving from room to room as smoke consumed their home around them. A year later, like many others, the couple plan to re-establish their lives in the fire zone. Not for one moment did they consider abandoning their property. It is their life. But something has changed. Not just for the Sorraghans but for Victoria and, indeed, all Australia.

But like others burnt out last year — who say they well knew the risks and prepared for the worst — he never envisaged what would unfold on February 7, 2009. That much is evident in the toll of 173 lives lost and more than 2000 homes destroyed.

Stuart Morgan, who lost his home in St Andrews, speaks for many of the survivors when he says nobody expected a fire of such intensity. "We knew we lived in a fire-prone area, but this particular fire was not one we had been told about." For some, it was a choking black cloud. For others it heralded its arrival with the rich scent of vaporising eucalyptus. It threw spot fires like advance scouts. It burst through treetops and rippled over the ground like running water. And it stole the air from your lungs.

In the late afternoon Toni-anne Collins walked her horse to a neighbour to be driven to safety. The fire was still 10 minutes away when she made to return home in Ninks Road, St Andrews. "I couldn't breathe and there was no air," she says. "There was no sound. It was still. There was no smoke. "Petrified pieces of tree, entire leaves but they were black, were falling out of the sky but they weren't alight. They were dead. It was confusing. It didn't match anything you'd ever learnt."

She lost her home and marvels at her own cavalier departure, fleeing to safety in a soft-top convertible. Today she lives in a shed on the property and is trying to finalise arrangements with a builder. Collins' fire plan had been to leave, and leave early. She is now redefining "early". IT WAS a day that rendered fire plans redundant, but at least those with plans had the advantage of awareness. "We did not think we were going to make it at one stage," recalls Neil Minett, who, with his wife, Lisa, saved his Strathewen house while everything else around burned.

For two hours they fended off the fire, draining their swimming pool into a sprinkler system that washed over the house while the blaze stalled and started around them. "You would think it was gone, and suddenly it would whip up," he says. They will continue coming to terms with their experiences, a task that, like Australia's experience with fire, will be forever unfinished.

For help dealing with bushfire trauma, contact Lifeline's 24-hour service on 131 114. Details of support forums can be found at www.lifelin-eonline.org.au.

This story was found at: http://www.theage.com.au/national/changed-lives-20100205-nitb.html
ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE 2

Some Playbuilding Steps

Questions

1. What factors should be considered when selecting a story for narrative playbuilding?
2. Why is research important to playbuilders? Consider the reasons given in the text and add some ideas of your own.
3. Why is it important to decide on the message to be conveyed in a narrative play before developing the play?
4. Why are the structure and setting of a narrative play important?
5. What factors affect the way a story is broken into scenes?
6. What are important details to remember when selecting and developing characters for a narrative play?
7. Why is it important to improvise the events in a story before the main work of rehearsing begins?
8. What factors affect the way scenes are selected and edited? Consider your own ideas as well as the ideas given in the text.
9. What factors need to be considered while a narrative play is being rehearsed?
10. Why do you think it is important not to write down the dialogue until the end of the rehearsal process?

Workshop

Building your own narrative play

Exercise 1 Select the story
- Select a story to build into a play.
- If you completed the Introductory Exercise, you might already have some good ideas for a story you would like to build into a play. If you did not complete the Introductory Exercise, do so now.
- When everyone in your group has a list of story ideas, compare them to see if there has been any overlap; this may help your group select a story.
- Give your group a time limit for selecting a story; otherwise the selection process can go on for too long.

Exercise 2 Research
- Once you have decided on a story, select areas to be researched and share them out amongst your group.
- Use the library and other sources to research your story. Once the research is complete, share your discoveries with your group.

Exercise 3 Decide on the meaning of the story
- Choose the main issue, or theme, of your play. Remember that engaging your audience must always be your prime objective; it is only after you have obtained the audience's attention that they will be interested in the themes of your play.
- Decide what aspects of your story relate best to the main themes. Write a sentence that clarifies the purpose, or premise, of the work.

Exercise 4 Establish the setting and structure
- Decide when your play is set, in time and place.
- Work out the structure of the play. Clarify the main conflict. This involves deciding what is the climax, how you will build up to that and how you will resolve it. Often the story itself solves many of these problems for you.
- What complications occur? What is the main conflict? Will there be other conflicts? What is the climax? How will the situation be resolved?
Exercise 5 Create a scene breakdown
- Divide your group into two, and then in your smaller groups break the story into scenes. Use changes in location and significant events to choose logical breaks.
- Come together again as one group and decide which is the best scene breakdown, or whether the two can be combined. Remember that the way the scenes are organised can help to emphasise your main issues. Consider using the dramatic devices of monologue or flashback if you think they may help to achieve your aim.

Exercise 6 Explore the characters
- Decide what characters you need.
- Allocate characters to members of the group.
- Remember that to have the necessary conflict and tension in the play, you must be sure that there are characters with conflicting objectives and actions. How are you going to manifest that? Think in terms of your character's voice and movement and develop the idiosyncrasies, or particular characteristics and behaviour, that will distinguish your character from the others.

Exercise 7 Improvise the main events
- You have selected the main events when you worked on the scene breakdown, so now it is time to improvise the scenes one by one.
- Try to develop links between the scenes so that the narrative has a natural flow and does not stop and start.
- Avoid the temptation to interrupt improvisations to comment on what you have done or to suggest changes.

Exercise 8 Select and edit ideas
- Consider each of the scenes you have just improvised.
  - What aspects of the improvisation worked well?
  - Which characters worked well?
  - Were there some aspects of the scene that were irrelevant to the drama?
  - Was there some dramatic tension? At what points did it occur?
  - Were there some effective contrasts in characters or moods?
  - Were there any periods of silence? Should there have been?
  - Was the scene funny? Should it have been?
- In light of your ideas, change, cut or expand scenes. Get rid of scenes or characters if you feel this is necessary.

Exercise 9 Rehearse
- Now rehearse all the scenes in your play.
- Try changing performers to see if anything new occurs.
- Try to keep your rehearsal and discussion time separate. Set yourself a goal within each rehearsal; be clear about what you want to achieve. Then rehearse the scenes one by one without any interruptions.
- Discuss how each scene went and then try the scene again, incorporating any changes you feel are necessary. Be careful to concentrate on improving your own contribution to the scene, and do not be too demanding in your expectations of others. If a section of the drama is not working try to solve your own problems rather than blame others.
Exercise 10 Write the script
- Using a tape recorder and your memory write out the dialogue in each scene.
- Each character should have its own way of speaking. Consider the speech rhythm and vernacular of each character. The vernacular is the characteristic vocabulary or speaking style of a particular place or people. A character may use jargon or speak in a dialect. For some of the characters, think in terms of establishing a speech idiom, which is a particular personal language style. For example, your character may have a favourite saying or repeated response, such as ‘Oh yes, yes, I see’. Perhaps your character has a love of long words, a stutter or a habit of repeating what someone else has just said.
- Add any essential stage directions to your script.

Exercise 11 Perform
- As a group decide how often you need to rehearse the whole play, or key scenes, before the final performance.
- Perform your play for the rest of the class or for an invited audience.

Exercise 12 Evaluate
- Remember to evaluate not just the performance, but also the way your group worked together, and what you learned at each stage of the play-building process.
- Consider the following questions.
  - What did you notice about the characters and ideas in your play?
  - Are you happy with the way your group worked together? What would you have changed?
  - What problems did you encounter in the preparation for the performance? How did you solve the problems?
  - How did you feel during the performance?
  - What did you like about the performance?
  - What was the most interesting part of the performance?
  - What unexpected things happened in the performance?
  - What problems did you encounter in the performance? How could you have solved these problems?
  - Does everyone in the group feel the same about the performance? If not, what are the differences?
  - How did the reaction of the audience to the performance affect you?
  - Ask the audience for their impressions of the performance and ideas about it. What did they like about the performance? What did they find the most interesting aspect of the performance?

Workbook

1. Write your own personal responses to the questions in Exercise 12 and add any other observations you think are relevant.
2. Think of an interesting character that you encountered during the play-building process. Write a brief biography for that character. One technique for building up a character is to write about a critical incident in that character’s life. What was the most significant or memorable incident in your character’s life at five years old, at ten, fifteen, twenty, and so on?

**Year 9 Drama**

**Ensemble Performance 2**

**Assessment Sheet**

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<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Not Shown</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretation of the Stimulus</strong></td>
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<td>Stimulus was interpreted in a creative and appropriate way to develop an engaging narrative and performance.</td>
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<td><strong>Use of Play Making Techniques</strong></td>
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<td>Demonstrated use of the playmaking steps - Research, Planning, Scripting, Editing, Rehearsal and Refining</td>
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<td><strong>Use of Mime &amp; Non-Naturalism Conventions</strong></td>
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<td>A variety of conventions were used effectively to convey a meaningful performance.</td>
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<td><strong>Gesture/Expression in Character</strong></td>
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<td>Exaggerated gesture, facial gestures and body language were used convincingly to help portray and enhance character/s and create meaning for the audience.</td>
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<td><strong>Use of Elements of Stagecraft</strong></td>
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<td>An effective and appropriate choice and use including minimalistic use of staging, costume and props.</td>
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<td><strong>Use of Elements of Drama</strong></td>
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<td>Understanding and use of the highlighted Elements of Drama to enhance performance.</td>
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<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
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<td>An ability to maintain focus throughout the performance was evident as well as having a focus for the audience within the performance.</td>
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**Teacher Feedback (including positives & areas for improvement):**