

I offer a number of classes based on the vocational acting courses I have developed, or taught on, when working in vocational drama schools in the UK between 1983 and 2005, as well as drama schools and departments in the USA, Russia, and Belgium. The content is influenced by the teaching of Stanislavski and Michael Chekhov, and my own experience as a professional actor. Classes include:

Imaging and improvisation

The actors develop a character based on a living person which is developed by on going improvisation with other 'characters'. In the process a character's past and present history (circumstances) are explored through a series of scenarios. The first section of a class involves 'seeing' the character in the mind's eye, as he or she prepares and works through the circumstances and actions within a scene. The actor 'observes' the impact of any emotional state the character may be experiencing and the ensuing actions and how these may impact on a character's overall physicality. Stanislavski's interrogatives are utilised as appropriate - when, where, what, who? and so on - to inform the process. The success of the exercises depends not only on imaginative work, but also on an actor's ability to allow a character to 'listen' as it 'lives' through the circumstances of a scene for the 'first time'. This in turns impacts on characters' thinking time and the tempo rhythm of a scene.

Text and scene study

Exercises abstracted from the above work are used to explore and understand text, to flesh out and understand a character and its relationship to other characters in a play, and supply information that may be hinted at by the writer. What happened to a particular character, or set of characters, before the play began and how does it influence present and future behaviour and actions?

Camera Work

Short sequences from television or film scripts are worked on in a similar manner prior to and during filming. The aim is to enable the character to communicate by 'thinking', 'looking and seeing' and 'listening and responding'. Inner thoughts and dialogue that support the characterisation are identified when work is viewed and feedback given.

Period Styles

Plays or scenes are read and worked on to consider character within the context of a particular period, taking into account style, manners and etiquette and how these might impact on relationships and enhance the narrative.

Audition and Role Preparation

Actors are taken through the storyline of a play, or musical, to note its super objective, character objectives and obstacles, in order to begin the preparation of a role for an audition, or rehearsal leading to performance.

Production

In addition to professional productions, I have worked on some forty to fifty staged student productions, including musical theatre productions. Productions have been invited from the UK to the USA, Belgium, Hong Kong and Russia, where I also directed Russian students studying in Moscow at the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts (GITIS) in Godspell, which remained in the repertoire for two years. Productions have included plays by Shakespeare, Shaw, Congreve, Dickens (adaptation), Sheridan, Wilder, Pinero, Shaffer, Ayckbourn, Wesker, Coward, Orton, Gurney, Storey, Bolt, Bennett, etc. and staging has included proscenium, thrust, in the round and promenade.