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STATEMENT

My forty-year career in film, television, and theater has taught me much about the entertainment industry and how it has changed over the past decades. However the environment may differ from one project to another, it has remained true that good craft always matters. As an instructor of Acting and Directing for Film, I aim to help each of my students develop the core of his or her craft.

Many student actors and directors spend too much time concerned with the trappings of performance and shot-making, relying on technical actions to create an impression. I ask students to get to the heart of compelling performance, employing straightforward techniques to distill scenes to their most basic, truthful, and human elements. We then build technical performance skills using the specific needs in a given scene. In my experience, this approach leads to a more grounded and deeper awareness in performance. This awareness bolsters the confidence of performers to balance the communication of human truth with the essential charge to entertain.

I have taught film classes for many years, including courses at higher learning institutions, private workshops for actors, and seminars and programs for directors on working effectively with actors. I have a deep passion for the instructing I have done, and the breadth of my professional experience gives me some wisdom and perspective that complement the techniques I teach. Many of the skills I have gained as an actor also assist me in teaching. Being focused, specific, open-eyed, and compassionate has helped me work effectively with students of varying experience levels. Most of the class periods proceed in a workshop format so that students work hard, gain real experience, and enjoy their pursuits. While I am pleased that students in my classes give consistently high marks on course evaluations, I am excited more by the marked improvement in skill and awareness shown by each student.

I believe that the classes I teach, while designed for film work, have important relevance to performers in all settings. Actors, directors, dancers, and other performers benefit from exploring the intimacy of film; it provides the opportunity for close examination of performance components. Good film work thrives on clarity, truthfulness, and subtlety. It encourages artists to trust their audience and to recognize when simplicity is not emptiness. In working to develop these skills, students gain experience that greatly enhances whatever performing they do.

Students in my film acting classes film scenes in a variety of arrangements, growing more comfortable allowing themselves to be seen by the camera. I work with them to emphasize the development of specificity, intention, drive, sincerity, and listening in their performances. Students also practice focusing their attention distinctly on their co-actors in order to generate the drive for effective scenework. While helping them refine their approaches to film acting, I also aim for students to develop an awareness of the needs that can exist in contemporary filmmaking.

In the classes I teach for film directors, students learn useful approaches to working successfully with actors. Rather than learning to give line readings or push emotions onto performances,

student directors develop confidence in stepping away from the screen monitor and getting involved directly with the performers. While it can be helpful for directors to have some acting experience themselves, I believe it is critical that they gain reliable communication skills as leaders on the set. This includes developing the self-assurance and sensitivity to shape the performances given by actors, who often bring a variety of approaches to their work, in collaborative ways. Students in my classes practice identifying what is needed to make a scene more truthful and compelling, making appropriate modifications in creative ways, and communicating these modifications quickly and effectively with actors. This preparation gives these young directors, I believe, a considerable advantage when reading a script or shooting a scene.

In developing these classes, I have drawn heavily from my own experiences, positive and negative, as a professional in the entertainment industry. The foundation for the techniques I use as an actor and as an instructor is derived from my study with Tony Barr. I am grateful that my approaches have been further informed by work with artists including Arthur Penn, Robert Aldrich, Michael Ritchie, Henry Hathaway, Arvin Brown, James Goldstone, Carl Reiner, Kim Stanley, Ben Gazzara, Bruce Davison, Lucien Ballard, Ernest Haller, Joseph Biroc, and my students.