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SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Acting for Film from the Actor's Viewpoint: A Workshop with Kim Darby

The approach to acting taught in this course focuses on developing the actor's craft to convey thoughts and emotions for the particular needs of the camera. Both experienced and young actors learn to proceed within a scene from one discreet moment to the next, developing an awareness of all the stimuli which affect the responses, both emotional and physical, that influence performance. From identifying the bottom line of a scene to outlining a potential stimulus-response series, students practice analyzing scenes for simplicity and truth. Students then perform scenes in front of the camera in a workshop format, using good preparation as a foundation for exploration. Performances are guided by the instructor to improve awareness, commitment, intensity and clarity of thought, fidelity to circumstances, and, most importantly, listening deeply with all senses. Emphasis is placed on being active and positive in pursuing the needs of a scene, locating both the answers and obstacles primarily in co-actors. Performance elements (e.g. focus changes, rhythm, blocking) are based on the unfolding of that pursuit. Lectures, scene work, and critiques lay the foundation for students to perform and discuss in detail their videotaped performances. In-class guest lecturers have included professional film actors, casting directors, and producers.

1. Introduction. Course Overview. (Needs, obstacles, stimulus-response, eyes and heart, and listening to implication.) Bottom-lining a Scene. Being truthful to circumstances: Good Morning Exercise. Assign Scenes and Partners for Scene #1. *Assignment: Bottom-Line Scene #1. Memorize and prepare for performance. (Do not rehearse with partner). Find 3 tangible and active props; bring them to next class.*
2. Perform Scene #1. Getting off the page: Prop Exercise and Nonsense Exercise. *Reading Assignment: Acting for the Camera.*
3. Working with your co-actor, putting the obstacle firmly on your co-actor. What do you hear? How does it make you feel? What's your own response? Assign Scenes and Partners for Scene #2. *Assignment: Bottom-Line Scene #2. Memorize it for taping.*
4. Record Scene #2. Work from the Bottom Line. *Reading Assignment: Audition.*
5. Watch, Review, and Analyze Scene #1. *Assignment: Memorize monologue for taping. Do not prepare it as a performance. Monologue should be less than 1 minute long.*
6. Monologue Talk-Back Exercise. Emphasize sizing off of the other person. Tape Monologue. Deal with the obstacle. Review bracketing. (Each monologue will be shorter than 1 minute.) *Reading Assignment.*

7. Watch, Review, and Analyze taped Monologues. Assign partners for Scene #3 and for Final Project. Bracketing. Confrontational scenes and lighter negatives in comedic scenes. *Assignment: Bottom-line Scene #3. Memorize for taping.*
8. Record Scene #3. *Reading Assignment. Highlight a scene; work through to the end of the scene.*
9. Watch, Review, and Analyze Scene #3. Introduce Final Project Writing Assignment. *Reading Assignment: Find Final Project Scenes #1 and #2.*
10. Understanding your quality, not playing it: Essence Exercise. Aligning yourself with the role. Discuss Final Project. *Assignment: Bottom-Line Final Project Scene #1. Memorize, prepare, and rehearse for taping.*
11. Record Final Project Scene #1. *Reading Assignment. Final Project Writing Assignment.*
12. Watch, Review, and Analyze Final Project Scene #1. Using adjustments and notes to prepare for Scene #2. *Assignment: Bottom-Line Final Project Scene #2. Memorize, prepare, and rehearse for taping.*
13. Record Final Project Scene #2. Turn in bottom-lined Final Project Scenes and Writing Assignment. *Reading Assignment.*
14. Watch, Review, and Analyze Final Project Scene #2. Discuss analyzed scenes and Writing Projects.

Texts:

Barr, Tony. *Acting for the Camera*
Lumet, Sidney. *Making Movies*
Mamet, David. *On Directing Film*
Mamet, David. *Three Uses of the Knife: On the Nature and Purpose of Drama*
Mamet, David. *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor*
Shurtleff, Michael. *Audition*

Films and Television:

Coming Home
The Door in the Floor
Fatal Attraction
Glengarry Glen Ross
The Insider
Law & Order: Criminal Intent
Looking for Bobby Fisher
The Miracle Worker (1962)
Mystic River
The Professional
Ordinary People
Ray
They Don't Shoot Horses, Do They?
Training Day
Unforgiven

Vera Drake
When Harry Met Sally