

MICHA: The Future of Theater Reports

Making Theatre Accessible: Reaching Across Fields of Study to Engage a Wider Audience

Charles Alexander, 8 July 2014

Charles Alexander

Making Theatre Accessible: Reaching Across Fields of Study to Engage a Wider Audience

Session 3, 4:30-5

Participants: Charlie Alexander, Andrea Meister, Sean Cackoski, Kara Diana Gonzalez, Leah Walton , Jean Luc, Kara, Shireen

This session discussed ways to engage community organizations, academic departments etcetera in order to build partnerships and engaged audience.

Charlie began the discussion by describing past partnerships. One was a community production that utilized a local colleges art department to create an installation art gallery in which the show could be performed as well as a school production of a Spanish play that what translated into English by the Language department.

Andrea spoke about a production Romeo and Juliet in which several characters were portrayed as drag queens. The producers reached out to LGBT organizations, however, those organizations did not respond. However, when the same production reached out to local businesses those businesses were happy to be a part.

Andrea also spoke about a one woman show about autism that had successfully reached out to community centers for touring.

Leah spoke about her work with children with cerebral palsy and brought up the point that successful partnerships often come when theatres reach out to communities who don't have voices of their own. She continued to discuss the potential of using theatre as a way to bridge the gap between communities and theatre's potential responsibility to seek out voiceless communities because of the works ability to transform and empower.

Shireen built off this idea by pointing out that any number of organizations already existed that were doing this sort of work and they would be useful starting points for partnership building. She mentioned the work of Sherman Alexi, and Mike Lew. The potential of piggybacking on preexisting partnerships.

Charlie spoke about a theatre group that was approached by a failing Church as a way to tell its story in order to reinvigorate.

The Theatre in Sacred Spaces Program was brought up. This is a group that houses theatre troupes in churches in order to keep them utilized.

Andrea spoke about a Detroit housing project in which multiple types of organizations were given space as a way of encouraging urban renewal. This led the group into a discussion about gentrification in general and the pattern in which a community in despair is often first reinhabited by artists and becomes the first building block for renewal.

We spoke for a bit about how these partnerships often benefit us, or make us feel good and so seem somehow selfish. Leah mentioned “If you do a mitzah for yourself...it’s still a mitzah.”

Andrea brought up the importance of reputation in theatre. Partnerships can only be successful when the reputation of the participants is healthy.

Shireen brought up the idea we often tell stories with little meaning in theatre...leading to the questions: what stories are told? What stories need to be told? Who needs help telling their story.

Gabriel followed up on this talking about the idea that “community is a story of us as a collective, it is bigger than ourselves” he continued on to describe stories as sentient, asking, “which stories want to be told?” this was followed up by the group asking, Can those stories be heard?

Gabe continued with the observation that he thought stories that were particularly powerful at this time seemed to be about renewal. “we are at the end of winter going into spring”

He went on to describe how making things accessible necessitated listening to what is asking to be accessed.

Shireen brought up a misconception about theatre. That as a community it is often thought to be for the privileged when on the flipside it was really transformative. Charlie spoke about the difference in theatre and drama play. Drama play being largely thought of as very beneficial for personal development in our youth but not

necessarily supported as an art form.

Kara brought up the MFA program in Public Discourse at her school which tended to pick shows based on social themes, reaching out to those communities and creating original work that was largely unsuccessful because they were too focused on the message of the work. We then spoke about not sacrificing the quality of the work in order to build partnerships. Partnerships do not need to be driven by message. Kara brought up the thought that it may be more beneficial to consider how preexisting work bounced back to the audience and connected with them. We spent some time on how direction concepts on a show can be dangerous and leave the audience feeling preached to. What is the line between concept and self indulgence?

We moved onto the importance of inviting community with whom you want to create partnerships into the process rather than just being a recipient of a production's message. In fact these partnerships can be beneficial in unexpected ways. Andrea spoke about the R&J production again citing an actor who based his physicality off one of the business owners that entered into a partnership with the show.

We began to speak about the importance of creating networking webs in order to create partnerships, reaching out to people and letting them know they could be important to your process, being clear how they can fit in to the work. The importance of being vocal about your work, advocating for yourself and your project was the final point of discussion.

Tags:

partnerships, Theatre, transform, empower, Transform, networking, voice, THEATRE, community engagement, theatre, Networking

Portrait of an Artist

Mara Radulovic, 8 July 2014

Lionel and Michael – Note takers

Stage Right – Location

Videos interviewing artist/teachers

Videos eventually will be available online, but Mara will have to review the videos and get feedback before they go up.

Questions:

- 1) What draws you to this kind of work – MC work?
- 2) What sustains you as an artist? What are the things that you need to do as an artist to stay nourished/alive?
- 3) Reflection on key moments in life that shaped path
- 4) What do you wish for your future as an artist?

Lionel ■

- Introduced to “Psychological Gesture” in a show but he was playing with imaginary bodies all throughout his childhood
- Came to the first MICHA conference and since then his life and method of teaching and directing has been transformed. He is now training other actors and he’s directing and teaching at his University
- Most recently interested in “fantastic realism” (Vakhtaargov Exercises)

We won’t go into detail about each interview because you can watch the interviews but

this is one example to see what we discussed during the interview and what the process was like.

ACTION PLAN:

Editing "Portrait of an Artist" – Mara, (12:30 – 2, THE ARBOR)

- Mara will edit in iMovie
- VIMEO account is set up and Mara will share with everyone.

Tags:

interview, portrait, Art, Artists, reflection, artists, art, future of theatre

How Should the Actor of the Future Train and are There Some Differences between US and Europe?

Bernadette Wintsch-Heinen, 7 July 2014

Bernadette and Mani

Session 3

The Bench

Chekhov is looking for theater of future and we think he's looking for an inspired and alive theater. We would like to train the actors to be alive and inspired on stage. How can we get there?

- The actor has to find their authority.
- Ensemble work without director can be a possibility to achieve this.

- How long should the actor work? There are different possibilities ranging from six week to three years.
- There is a wish that the actor that the actor can create their own play and also can act in the given play.
- In the actor's reality, it's not easy to stay energized through the process of finding their own authority.
- In school, the actors must work a lot to awaken their imagination and their souls.

- They have to do homework, and there is a wish to find more directors they can collaborate with rather than being told what to do.

- How can the actor or student allow themselves to work without asking for permission?
DO IT!

- Ragnar: put the discipline at the right places, and find out what they are. Don't put the discipline in places that need to be free, but do not put the freedom in places that need structure.

- The school has to be a place where you do not have to be good but willing to learn and to work.

- The actor does not have to be good but has to know what they do.

- The teachers interest in the student's work gives students encouragement and courage and they develop their own authority

- How can the teacher act more as a partner and collaborator than an authority figure?

Tags:

acting, Acting, authority, Collaboration, teacher, inspiration, student, imagination, collaboration

Creating Documentaries about the Theatre of the Future

Rob Homer-Drummond, 8 July 2014

I facilitated a listening session about an idea that I have been having a hard time dismissing. I want to see about writing a grant to create a documentary (documentaries) about the the directions in which the theatre is moving in North America now. We know what happened that was revolutionary in the beginning of the 20th Century. Stanislvski blew the minds of a small group of theatre artists in NYC. They found a kind of theatre that excited them on a very deep level—that excited their imaginations. They formed the Group. The Group experimented, formed and played and birthed deeply committed actors, directors and teachers.

What are we doing now—at the start of the 21st Century—perhaps even in the new millennium that excites us? What inspires the young people of today to attend the theatre. What “shows” do they come out of with a feeling that they have been transformed forever? In the era of Netflix, Youtube and facebook s there enough theatre of this type to keep our communal tradition alive?

Here are some of the thoughts that came out of this listening session:

A documentary may be an important way of informing the public about some of the exciting trends in theatre. Some people who might not normally go to the theatre might view a documentary about new forms of theatre and decide to try a live experience.

There is a dichotomy between contemporary playwriting and contemporary acting training. Much contemporary playwriting is moving in the direction of the fantastic/the spiritual/the magical. Much contemporary acting training continues to be training for “kitchen sink drama.” We need training that addresses theatre that excites the spirit and the imagination. Perhaps the Chekhov training can help to fill this gap? What are the other techniques that can do this? Laban? Viewpoints?

The early 70’s were the era of extreme realism—of the docudrama—the page has turned and we yearn again for more of a theatre of the fantastic. Of course, these things come in waves. It is not new. Strindberg dealt with this. Beckett, Grotowski etc.

Kinds of theatre that are exciting new audiences/young people:

Devised Theatre—theatre that helps people to tell their own stories, stories perhaps of the problems that this generation faces—problems that may have been brought upon them by the current generation?

Drag Theatre—Drag is moving more in the direction of Commedia/Mime. More in the direction of the grotesque and away from the “Beauty Queen” model. It is becoming more counter-culture. Commenting on society. There is an “underground clown community” in Drag.

Applied Theatre—Theatre that gets us away from “the Cinderella story” and moves us into the real world to deal with real problems. That doesn’t mean that the theatre itself is realistic, but that is applied to particular problems in the society.

Physicalized Theatre—Theatre with a particularized form or structure, but one that still connects with the contemporary audience, i.e. a new Commedia piece Truffaldino Says No! Truffaldino takes off his mask and refuses his character, but he finds that the modern world is inherited by characters that are just as grotesque as those in Commedia.

Immediate Classical Theatre—By this I mean a reinterpretation of the classics that brings them home in a palpable, tangible sense to a modern audience. They must be exciting and filled with conflict. Shakespeare that makes the language live. Vankhtangov said, “The feeling of today was necessary in a play.”

Site-Specific Theatre—The famous example is Sleep No More in NYC, but there are many other examples? Why not Ibsen’s Lady of the Sea on the seashore or partially in the ocean?

What kind of theatre is not exciting new audiences/young people?

Issue Driven Theatre/Propoganda Theatre—theatre that seems too PC

Traditional theatre that does not engage their world/their problems

What do we fear?

We are moving into a generation that will control the money, but will not value theatre.

Will regional theatres continue to exist with the availability of so many forms of

media/entertainment.

Many Thanks to Lionel and Arthur! Please feel free to contribute your thoughts as well.
My e-mail address is rhomerd@andersonuniversity.edu

Tags:

documentaries, Technology, contemporary playwriting, the Group, Steinberg, film,
Future, technology, future, applied theatre, Film

How Can We Make a Show at MICHA?

Lionel Walsh, 7 July 2014

How Can We Make a Show at MICHA

Conveners: Laura Standley and Lionel Walsh

Note Taker: Sean Cackoski

4:00 – 5:30, Day 1, The Tree

First Question: should we do a show?

Desire among participants to do so.

Concern expressed that it would be a lot of work in addition to participating in workshops

Others felt they could handle it if conditions were correct

Possibilities:

1. participants opt for The Pause and use the time to rehearse a short play (30 – 40 minutes).
2. possible to use 10 minute plays that would require minimal rehearsal

3. possible to use 2 minute plays from “Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind” by the Neo-Futurists. This way, it would not require people to take The Pause. They could simply use breaks and evenings to rehearse

4. possible to create a devised piece

5. possible to look at the stories of Anton Chekhov as a source for a play:

www.eldritchpress.org: 201 stories by Anton Chekhov

6. possible play is Afterplay by Brian Friel. It is 40 minutes long. Could look also at The Lady with Lapdog

A director could ask individuals s/he is interested in casting in a show they have chosen

An actor or group of actor could ask someone to direct them in a play they are interested in doing

A public call could go out to membership of MICHA.

Yon: his concern is when will I be ready to use the technique? This would be a way to experiment with the technique with experienced people without the pressures of a show produced for a paying public audience

Laura also noted that her group (Blue) felt they got to a place where they would have been willing to share the work but also felt a little intimidated at the prospect.

Craig mentioned that in the past there has been sharing of the work done in class and it was a lovely experience.

Tags:

collaboration, membership, Membership, technique, casting, Casting, short plays, Collaboration, play writing, MICHA

Stand Up Poetry

Michael Mulligan, 8 July 2014

Called by Michael

Attending Pat, Gabriel, Shireen

Michael shared about his experience of performing poetry at open-mics, and ideas experienced during earlier sessions that felt connected or important to introduce – particularly discussion in the What is the Actor of the Future session, and the concept, or symbol of the Actor-Poet. The discussion of this archetype was particularly raised as a response to the problem of how to have a healthy power of influence of what, where and how work is staged, and how the actor can secure a place as an artist, and auteur – have autonomy, and self determination. Having some of this self determination come from the writing and staging of one's own work was suggested.

Also the concept of Devised Theatre was mentioned.

Gabriel discussed having the impulse to write, and to perform it – but feeling very insecure about this, in contrast to performing things written by others. Pat also mention feeling very secure in performing others' words and acting in a play. Michael offered that his experience is the opposite, and that the he is secure about writing and reading his own work aloud, but insecure about characterizing a play, or performing movement.

So the question Gabriel raised was, what is between him and his genuine impulse to go to open mics, what was the inhibition about?

Michael offered an experience of struggling against the idea of categorization as an

artist – like, I am an actor, I am a writer, I am a page poet, I am a performance poet – and a feeling a person must define as one thing—but isn't it a continuum. Also offered as an example of trying to find a place where poetry and playwriting and acting and poetry performance crossed, Samuel Beckett's ROCKABY.

The perspective was offered that the poet principally finds motivation in the writing, and the actor in performing. The standup poet in defining their self by writing their own thing, and then performing it and expressing 'This is me. This is mine' – I am not a character.

Michael offered that his experience, or in reflection after a series of performances, one conception of what is happening in poetry performance (at least in his style, of usually reading from the page, even if memorized, and Embodying the words), when most connected, he feels a deep still moment internally that from a Chekhov perspective, that feels like pure radiation. That through embodying the voice of the poem, one is seeking to communicate a pure atmosphere.

Pat offered a concept from Lorca – the Poetic Event, and Duende – which is Inspiration. The thing that bypasses intellect and goes direct to the gut. And offered that this is the point of the Chekhov Technique, to put Inspiration into performance—and To do a 'Giving Out'

He discussed the 'Blooming Moment' of performance, in Noh drama, described by Zeami Motokiyo as 'If you have grace, you'll become the flower. Comparing this to the state of expansion in meditation. He further described this, and the moment of pure radiation as the slowing down of the physical body while allowing the internal to continue motion.

The idea of writing from gestures was discussed. And that when inspired words come, one feels this in the body. Michael mentioned that the poet Frank Bidart discussed this about his process.

The action of asking for a sense of ease when writing was mentioned.

Michael discussed his process of writing in public places, cafes and bar – where the writing was in a sense performance and that a ‘implicit response’ from the people surrounding becomes involved in the process.

Also mentioned was –

In working in poems –

A single line is a unit of atmosphere.

The participants gathered at different spot and shared a reading of their some of their writing.

I made notes of these lines:

Light enough to spar
with the dark

I pick a mouth

And enter.

I believe it not because I see it
holding back the flood of blood and bones

So many easy shards of terminology
my confusion of hands.

Tags:

Performance, Creativity, spoken word, creativity, performance, voice, poetry,
atmosphere, style, gesturing

Sharing and Playing Games

Cara Rawlings, 7 July 2014

Cara Rawlings

Playing/Sharing Games to Create a Sense of Play in Rehearsal or the Classroom
Sunday 10:30-12:00PM in the Arbor

Participants: Gianluca/ Rena/Cara/Mara/Gina

Rena offers:

(As preparation for exercise, you may want to do the David Zinder work of moving through the room changing directions, expanding/contracting the space, etc.)

1) Actors stand in two lines facing each other (staggered) with a good amount of space between the lines of people:

A B C D E

K

J

F G H I

2) Actors focus on a space between the people in the opposite line.

3) Send your Imag. Body into the space until you are compelled to move forward.

4) Do this several times.

5) Then repeat steps 2 & 3 walking backward.

6) Then all close eyes. Repeat walking forward then backward.

7) Then add two people walking through the middle space perpendicular to the two lines. Each walking in opposite directions. (J and K both cross the space moving through center to get to the other side) All begin moving at the same time. Forward and Backward. Then repeat with eyes closed.

Cara offers: "Groucho & Harpo" (Marx Bros.)

1) All move through the space doing Groucho walk (In pli , reach heels out in front of

you as you walk. Let non-dominant hand swing in opposition. See Marx Bros. films!) holding an imaginary cigar saying "Hello Sweetheart" to each other.

2) Someone shouts "Harpo!"

3) All rush to find a partner. One partner throws his/her leg into the other partner's arms, and one arm across the back of the partner's shoulders, looks the partner in the eye and says "Honk, Honk!" as he/she honks an imaginary horn with the other hand (see Harpo fall in love with women in the films!).

4) There should always be an odd man out so teacher might have to play as well.

5) The odd man out does a Harpo Hop. Hops up and down on one leg as he/she turns in a circle saying "Honk, Honk, Honk..."

6) Then odd man calls "Groucho!"

7) Go back to step 1

Everyone discussed this and wanted to add the other Marx Bros. or do it based on the Three Stooges, or even Commedia characters as variations.

Gianluca offers:

1) In a circle.

2) 1 Person calls a name in the group.

3) Named person crosses the space to touch another person on the shoulder.

4) Person who is touched says another name in the group.

5) Named person crosses the space to touch another person on the shoulder.

6) And so on...

7) Variation: Person saying name may look at someone and say someone else's name making everyone really listen. Or person saying name may look away from

person he/she is naming.

Gianluca offers: "YES"

- 1) In a circle.
- 2) Partner A points to someone in the circle (Partner B)
- 3) B nods and A crosses to take B's spot.
- 4) B Points to someone else (Partner C)
- 5) C nods and B crosses circle to take C's spot.
- 6) And so on...

Important Notes:

- The gesture of the point must be filled with the desire to move toward the other person.
- The person receiving the point must say "YES" through a clear, definite NON-VERBAL gesture BEFORE the pointer is allowed to move.
- Game becomes quick so that the space is available for the pointer to fill before he/she gets to it.

Gianluca offers: "Balancing the Plateau" (Lecoq exercise)

- 1) Imagine the working space floor is a horizontal plane balanced on a single point in the center. Players are standing on the perimeter of the plane in readiness.
- 2) First person steps in and moves to the center.
- 3) Then person 1 moves to another space. Someone from the perimeter moves in at

the right time and tempo to balance the plane.

- 4) Both actors make eye contact.
- 5) Second person who entered moves first. Other person responds.
- 6) A third person may enter.... And so on. (it is very complex to describe)

Cara offers: "Red Light, Green Light"

- 1) Play by regular rules. See internet or personal childhood experience for details.
- 2) After a round or two, people are encouraged to find new ways to achieve their objectives. People often use the architecture of the room or form alliances.
- 3) Everyone must play the loss when they are sent back to the beginning.
- 4) The winner of each round must celebrate his/her win.

Cara offers: "Shouting Ninjas"

- 1) All stand ready in a circle.
- 2) Person A puts palms together above his/her own head
- 3) Person A steps forward and w/ cutting action (as if cutting vertically with a katana) and throws energy to another person (B) in the circle with the verbalization "HI-YA!"
- 4) Person B receives (catches) energy (cut) by stepping back, raising hands above his/her head in the same gesture (palms together, arms extended as if arms and hands are the katana) and shouting, "HI-YA!"
- 5) People on either side of Person B shout "HI-YA!" and "cut" B by sending (palm to palm) hands toward B's center, stopping the gesture a couple of inches from B's stomach.

6) Person B shifts weight forward as he/she throws to someone else.

Notes:

- Rhythm should be a quick $\frac{3}{4}$.
- You can make the game an elimination game and raise the stakes. (Cara does)
- If someone falters/hesitates/doesn't commit, the teacher (ref) call's "Out"
- That person then goes to the center of the circle, sits down, and begins an action (beating the floor, waving arms, whatever.)
- As people join the person in the center, they begin a follow-the-leader game, mirroring the person that initiates the movement. The initiator changes every time someone is "out" following the order in which they are out.
- As the group in the center grows, the teacher moves those people to the outside of the circle to continue a traveling follow-the-leader around the circle.
- When the number of players is 5 or 6, those on the outside are encouraged to choose their champion and stand behind that person (teacher ensures everyone has fans who cheer).
- The crowd begins cheering and the Ninjas begin the game. When someone is out, all must celebrate the win or the loss.
- Two people will ultimately win the game.
- Gianluca suggests losing happily on a scale of 1 to 4. Teacher can help people lose happily by using number values.

Gina offers: "BUH"

- 1) All begin in a circle
- 2) Person A sends energy and a vocal "BUH" to someone (B)
- 3) Person B may send the "BUH" in the same direction or send it back or across the

circle.

4) The person who has received the energy may throw it to the center saying “SCHLOP!”

5) Anyone may take the energy from the middle saying “ZORT!” and then send it on with a “BUH”

Tags:

Sharing, energy, circle, Exercises, movement, direction, sharing, Games, vocal, Movement, games, exercises

What Stories To Tell

Laura Standley, 8 July 2014

Laura started by sharing a story of going to see Animal Crackers, the Marx Brothers show at Williamstown Theatre Festival. It had been marketed as a “family show” and was getting good reviews. She was excited because as a child she had loved the Marx Brothers. They were her father's favorite comedians and she had fond memories of growing up with their slapstick humor. In the director's notes he said his intention had been to, “pay tribute to the Marx Brother's humor.” Watching the show, she experienced a feeling of increasing discomfort. She hadn't remembered that Marx Brothers stories are about a group of guys who come to a new community and play mean spirited, sometimes violent tricks on women, who flee in terror. The various brothers chase the women, with Harpo honking and grabbing at their rear ends or breasts. With many young children in the audience, Laura couldn't help but be extremely uncomfortable with the message these young minds were receiving from the theatre before them. She almost left at intermission, but decided to stay. As suspected, things only got worse. At one point, an older woman was tied up with a

rope, dragged around the stage, whipped with a riding crop, and then thrown offstage in triumph. Somewhat stunned, Laura walked away from the play with an uncomfortable feeling in her heart.. And couldn't stop asking the question: why are we choosing these plays?

Laura then read from Anne Bogart's new book, *What's the Story: Essays About Art, Theater and Storytelling*.

-“It is not enough to tell stories. There must be someone there to listen.”

“We are telling stories all the time. Our body tells a story. Our posture, our smile, our liveliness or fatigue, our stomach, our blank stare, our fitness, all speak, all tell a story. How we walk into a room tells a story. Our actions relate to multiple stories. We invest our own energies into stories. Deprived of energy, stories die.”

-It is natural to adopt other people's stories to help create our identities and to fill the gaps in our own experience or intelligence. This can be helpful up to a point, but it is easy to get stuck in other people's narrative structures. Stories become easily cemented and rendered inflexible, developing into assumptions upon which a life is lived. Without vigilance, stories simply become documented history and form, and their origins are forgotten.“

-“Can we begin to think of ourselves, rather than stagers of plays, as orchestrators of social interactions in which performance is a part?“

-“Jean Paul Sarte wrote that there are two ways to go into the gas chamber: free or not free. We choose. The stories that we tell determine nothing less than our personal

destiny... We write the histories... We are the inheritors of a myriad of stories. We are marked by the stories that we receive. They impress upon us their lessons structures that in turn change the neural structures of our brains.“

-Don't we have a responsibility to the stories we tell? What is the dialogue we want to have with our audience? What kind of social interactions do we want to have with them? How do we increase the quality of the conversation?”

DHARMA ART LETTER, written by Chogyum Trungpa Rinpoche

In talking about Dharma Art here, we do not mean art, which necessarily depicts Buddhist symbols or ideas, but rather art which springs from a certain state of mind on the part of the artists. We can call this the meditative state: an attitude of directness and unselfconsciousness in one's creative work.

The basic problem of artistic endeavor is the tendency to split the artists from the 'audience,' trying to send a message from one to the other. When this happens, art becomes exhibitionism: the person who gets some tremendous flash of inspiration, then rushes to 'put it down on paper' to impress or excite others; or the very deliberate artist who strategizes each step of his work to produce certain effects on his viewers. No matter how well intentioned or how technically accomplished, these approaches inevitably become clumsy and aggressive, towards others and toward oneself.

In 'meditative' art, the artist embodies the viewer as well as the creator as he works.

Vision is not separate from operation, and there is no fear of being clumsy or failing to achieve his aspiration: he simply makes his painting, poem, piece of music, whatever.

In this sense, a complete novice could pick up a brush and, with the right state of mind, produce a masterpiece. This is possible. But it is a very hit-and-miss approach. In art, as in life generally, we need to study our craft, develop our skills, and absorb the knowledge and insight passed down by tradition.

But whether we have the attitude of a student, who could still become more proficient in handling his materials, or the attitude of an accomplished master, when we are actually creating a work of art there is a sense of total confidence; our message is simply appreciating the nature of things as they are and expressing it without any struggle of thoughts and fears. We give up aggression, either toward ourselves – that we have to make a special effort to impress people; or toward others – that we can put something over them. Genuine art – Dharma Art- is simply the activity of non-aggression.

Tags:

stories, accomplished, genuine, sharing, voice, insight, expressing, attitude, Sharing, skills

Meisner/Chekhov Integration: Laban, Steiner, et al

Liz Shipman, 7 July 2014

Liz, psycho-physical acting technique specialist – integrates Laban+Chekhov+++
Has recently started the Meisner/Chekhov Integrated Training Studio in San Diego
Has particular interest in connection between Laban, Steiner and Chekhov most

IMMEDIATE interest, is the flow through and integration of the Meisner and Chekhov techniques.

Intros – see why people are in this session? What is their connection to the topic of the session?

Everyone shared why they were there and each person has connection to Meisner or Chekhov, so on.

Participants: Liz, Gabriel, Kim, Anthony, Yan, Rob, Craig, Rena

Gabriel – on going search for a connection between Meisner and Chekhov

Kim– looking for a new training system for actors and dancers in Taiwan

Anthony – integrating music into his acting and finds the Chekhov work very helpful

Yan – Using Chekhov to enrich what he is doing on camera

Craig – Hugh O’Gorman is translating the gesture and placing it in his eyes for camera work

Liz – placing the gesture in the ideal center and other areas of the body (really using images and the technique as totally inner objects)

Craig – acknowledges some of the possible limitations of the Meisner work when the actor transitions into activity work

Discussion about failure and the need to create an atmosphere as a teacher or practitioner that is accepting of the fact that actors are never 100% “successful.” And how to use failure as a way to step forward.

- o The atmosphere created in the room is important

- o Instead of saying no that’s wrong, using phrases like, “you’re in the ballpark”

- o Specifying where they were successful and posing questions like, “Did you consider

xyz...”

Rena – recalled horror stories from HB Studios and it took her years to understand that she could both drop in and expand (and the Chekhov technique has helped her with that!)

Question raised: As teachers, what tools do you give to help students deal with rejection or failure?

- flying back over is useful
- must find the little victories – come at it with a feeling of gratitude
- there's 20% you can't control, DON'T LIVE THERE!
- inner teacher who knows that there is no such thing as failure unless you name it as such – make your goal your process
- Liz's studio grew out of failure!

Questions raised in the group about the value of the Meisner work and this was acknowledged by other people that work with Meisner

Liz – had a negative perspective at first but then worked with another person who worked from an open, receptive, artistic place and that made all the difference. Overtime working with techniques, she found that they very much complement one another.

Questions were asked about the strength of the Meisner work

- the importance of imagination, day dreaming, focus on the partner, sense of truth, moment to moment, actual doing,

Rena says, Truth messed me up... what is truth?

Liz - If I'm really in my body, what comes out is truthful

Craig – truth frees him from acting. You don't have to self-generate. Meisner said to me, "You should do Chekhov next."

Rena says, "The same place you aim for as an actor, is the same place you go for as a teacher – to listen, receive, to give and take, to sense when a change happens, and respond.

Liz says, "That's Meisner. And that's Chekhov."

Meisner = what humans do // Chekhov = what the universe does

Perhaps a perfect technique would bring the two together, otherwise acting is a one legged animal.

Craig – Meisner = Prose, Chekhov = Poetry

Where my body meets the universe is what Chekhov has tapped into.

The Meisner can take you deeply to the interior space – the Chekhov helps you find the outside target.

Can my gesture be caused by the other person? Can it be inspired by the relationship? YES!

Gianluca – Searching as an actor/teacher, how can I play? Chekhov met anthroposophy – was able to create space for the mystical and the spiritual. When we dream, the astral body, the imaginary spiritual goes somewhere. I don't know where! But the genius of Chekhov is that I can play with that reality in the material world. I get help from the imagination – my spiritual body. This helps me in my life too.

Gabriel – a story is a living being that doesn't have a physical body. The actor is giving

it flesh!

Rena – when I studied at HB studios, I longed for that mystical connection. I wish all the smaller technical aspects of acting could be combined with that.

Liz – Akido, as she understands it, receives energy, transforms it and sends it back to the other and there is an Akido affect, in acting. This is what we look for in both Meisner and Chekhov. Quoted from Lionel Walsh, “that ensemble and what were are doing as actors is working through the union of our life bodies.”

Tags:

Meisner, integration, Laban, Chekhov, meisner, chekhov, Exercises, Steiner, Integration

MEISNER/CHEKHOV INTEGRATION FOLLOW-UP

Liz Shipman, 8 July 2014

Session Called by: Liz Shipman, Rob Hmer-Drummond & Craig Mathers

Participants: Craig, Rob, Liz, Kim, Rena, Diane, Yan, K.D., Mani, Bernadette, Anthony, Renee

Session Began with a group warm-up with Balls—starting with one and adding balls until four balls were in play. We then added sound as the ball was released and in the moment of the catch—“Sending & Receiving Sound”. Then we shifted to “Sound Repetition”—I send a sound with the ball and the receiver repeats that sound at the

moment of the catch. Throughout the group was encouraged to open themselves to their partner(s), to the space around them as they tracked the journeys of the balls and felt the ensemble play.

Explorations: First, Craig, Liz and Rob gave a quick description and demonstration of Meisner Repetition Work.

- We divided into pairs and engaged in tossing the ball w/o words.
- Then we began with simple observation repetition work w/o the ball toss.
- Then we added the ball toss to the repetition—the text released as the ball was released. This naturally began to elicit Point of View repetition.
- Next we explored releasing a line of text with the ball with partner repeating the line in response. At this point, there was a discussion of “reaching into the back space” to find the response. There were varying experiences when one took to ball around over the head into the backspace as opposed to through the lower route... Curious and to be played with...
- Craig then introduced the following adaptation of Meisner Repetition. It’s called “The Whittling Exercise” and can be used as an alternative to Meisner’s Provocative Question. Craig describes it as being the work that carves out moment after moment after moment. I, Liz, also think it could be extremely useful in the Meisner Progression in tandem with Open-Ended Scenes and Relationship work... Here’s the exercise in a nutshell...

This is a form of Repetition where you do not repeat the same phrase. Both actors are asked to put their attention on the other and on impulse, one assesses the other’s state of being.

A: You're angry.

B is asked to assess A.

B: You're judging me.

A is asked to assess B and so on...

A: You're defensive.

B: You're pushy.

A: You're self-righteous.

(And so on....)

2 Guidelines:

1) In this exercise, actors are requested NOT to repeat the same phrase, as in,

A: You're defensive.

B: You're defensive.

i.e. NO REPETITION ALLOWED, because then it leads to a logjam or 'pissing contest'.

2) Each partner needs to take in the offer and respond to it from the point of view it elicits with openness; otherwise, the exercise gets protective and territorial.

Final thoughts and Intentions:

Liz, Rob and Craig will be exchanging emails occasionally throughout the year, sharing exercises and experiences, integrating Meisner and Chekhov. If you would like to be included in our email exchange, please contact one of us and share!

Liz Shipman: LizMoves@juno.com

Craig Mathers: craigorsamsa@gmail.com

Rob Homer-Drummond: rhomer-drummond@andersonuniversity.edu

Tags:

Meisner, exercises, Games, integration, games, Chekhov, meisner, chekhov, repetition work, Exercises, Integration

ACTION PLAN: Making a Play at MICHA

Laura Standley, 8 July 2014

Making a Play – Action Session – Laura and Lionel, (12:30 – 2, THE BENCH)

- Keep in touch with Jessica or whoever from MICHA to organize
- Laura will look at 2 min plays and send 5-10 to Lionel and Lionel will give comments about which ones might be good
- Lionel will look at longer plays and then Laura will give feedback
- Brainstorm casts and ask people if they are interested in working on this in the pause – if yes, then they would come PREPARED!
- 2 unscheduled nights during MICHA week to share performances – PAUSE AND PLAY!
- Jessica will raise the question to the faculty, “Can somebody come to the Pause who has never been to a MICHA workshop?”

Tags:

MICHA, play writes, Pause and Play, short plays

ACTION PLAN: Activation of the Actor Poet: Collaborative Writing and Performance

Michael Mulligan, 10 July 2014

Activation of the Actor Poet: Collaborative Writing and Performance – Mike, (12:30 – 2, THE TREE)

- Will film up at THE TREE
- KD will start a FB Group for our group
- Potential Poetry Slam at MICHA
- Potentially making it available for Open Space participants on VIMEO
- Making VIMEO account available on MICHA page

Exploring/Sharing Theatre Activities for Youth and Upward

Leah Walton, 8 July 2014

Notes and Facilitator: Leah

Present: Charlie, Paul, Renee, Joanna, Gina, Laura

12:30-2:00, The Green

We discussed using the Michael Chekhov Technique in classrooms with youth, including the principles of:

Qualities of Movement (in order to explain these qualities use concrete images, for example “Clay” for “Moulding”)

Stick-Ball-Veil

Ball Throwing

The Elements

Games we explored:

“Yes”: Point across circle to another person, they say “yes,” you can move to their space. They cannot move until they point to another person who says “yes”

“Zip, Zap, Zop”: In a circle you pass, with a clap, the sounds “zip,” “zap,” “zop”

(in that order)

“Zoom, Zap, Shazzam”: With an imaginary “energy” ball, you pass the sound “zoom” to your right. With an arm/fist block you say “zap” to change the direction of the “zoom”
With an imaginary energy ball you pass the sound “shazzam” across the circle.

Experiments with Exercises in Fantastic Realism

Lionel Walsh, 8 July 2014

Convener: Lionel Walsh

Note-taker: Sean Cackoski

10:30 – 12:00, Sunday, 6 July 2014

1. Sending Energy into Your Partner's Centre (Andrea and Charlie)

Andrea noted that her Radiating of Energy increased once she started Receiving at the same time

Charlie noted that when the lines flowed it allowed for more spontaneous Radiating/Receiving

Andrea: the connection was stronger when we weren't sure what we were doing and were OK with not being sure

Lionel: that is the moment when the subconscious takes over and your conscious mind is no longer interfering. The audience could see the connection in your bodies and the movement between you

2. Charlie and Lionel (same exercise)

Charlie: felt an aggressive penetration before L began speaking; once L began speaking it drove right through him

Lionel: felt my body just begin working with impulse and the lines

3. Pouring Colours: Andrea and Charlie

Notes: allow whatever reaction you have to heighten; embrace it

Eventually, the colours just happened without having to do it consciously

Lionel: if we want to get to Vakhtangov's 'subconscious route to the subconscious, we have to find a way to activate the subconscious at the beginning. I think one way is to begin by Receiving your partner and allowing the first colour to come from that

Andrea: eventually, the connection was more important than the colours

Charlie: after the first couple of exchanges, I was allowing the colours to just come. It was like a touch.

Andrea: I felt resistance when I tried to change the colour too quickly

Charlie: I like that colours mix. It is like you have a pallet to blend with.

I would like to do this with a scene.

Lionel: let's play with lines.

Charlie: what if you combine colours with directions.

There was more flow with push and pull; the colour is a key in to the piece.

Lionel: I could see that the Receiving was more visceral

Lionel briefly outlined the experiments he has done with an exercise he is calling The 104 Degrees. The idea is to be fed by something fantastic even though the scene is realism. It is also helpful when there are elements of the fantastic in the scene.

Tags:

energy, connection, colours, receiving, radiating, fantastic realism

What Did Stan Say?

KD Gonzalez, 8 July 2014

“What Did Stan Say?” by Patrick (12:30-2pm Arbor)

imagination and psychology integrated – mind, will & heart all joined together

how an actor brings a character into being: the actor's soul is a dimension of a human

being that helps you sense the world – man's creation of art comes from the divinity of

God: trinity (mind, will & feeling) → God thinks of stars and wills them into being

“tvorchestvo” - the creative process /creativity; putting life into spirit

Stanislavski's first book is about an actor's work on himself within the creative sphere of himself

The second is about bringing embodiment into his body (creating a role)

It's not alive unless you feel it underneath

craft (external) & passion (internal)

experience vs representation

physical world and internal world

MIND constructs

SOUL wills into being (like the Holy Spirit)

HEART is the center of feeling

Soul is a trainable part of the system

you are always radiating and receiving from every object

*Patrick felt that, overall, a lot of what got translated from Russian into Western languages got miscommunicated. Including what I've written above (those are

the “truths” to what Stanislavski said), and also particularly the following things:

public solitude - The west created a fourth wall, but it was believed in Russia that there was a period where you radiate out to the audience and you feel their energy radiating back. There is no such thing as being completely alone because everything is radiating

to you with its own energy.

dynamism - is actually activeness

Western translations did not pick up on “mysticism” in Russian culture because it was being translated in a time where we viewed them as communist (but you can still detect the mysticism ‘underneath’/embedded within the communism)

You can do things that censors cannot get during the live performance (when compared to reading).

The idea of the ideal self → creating human spirit of the role

creation of the life of the spirit of the role and transmitting that life on the stage.

Gabriel's session about Earth (2:30-4pm, The Big Tree)

((I came in about 20 minutes into the discussion))

Yan suggests trying to find a way to capture an audience's attention for subjects, like how street performers capture pedestrians' attention

Joanna wondered what could be done through theatre to make the difference

We asked, how do we talk about "The Earth is angry" as a story? → KD said that this is a similar process as trying to find a psychological gesture. The story is the body and "the Earth is angry" becomes the gesture.

How can we speak for things that cannot speak our human language to tell its story?

But then Peter pointed out that we, as humans, ARE part of the story because we are connected to the Earth.

Patrick's discussion on those who studied under Stanislavski (4-5:30pm Arbor)

Stanislavski:

→ was an emblem of Soviet culture so he was not killed when Stalin came into power

→ gives up the Moscow Art Theatre because he no longer wanted to be under Soviet regulation and went to opera. (he kept developing his method, but the new Soviet Union wanted the old version)

→ Died of a heart attack

- Sulerzhitzski: Stan's "second in command"

- Vakhtangov: most talented, explored Stan's work - Fantastic realism

→ Carnival circus on stage ("theatricality")

- Tairov: naturalistic/realistic idea of the Moscow Art Theatre

- Meirhold: constructivism: modes & forms of machines to describe the world (had three centers in terms of machinery)

→ once Soviet realism became ideal, he continued to keep working and got

carded off by the gov (He uses Vershinon's line from Three Sisters to let his wife

know

that he will not be coming back because he knew that the gov had their eye on him)

- Chekhov: Stan gave him Moscow Art Theatre & introduced to Steiner (eurythmy)

->Chekhov goes "coo-coo for coconuts" (you mean "cocoa-puffs," Pat?) and

becomes an alcoholic. Stanislavski brings in psychologists for Chekhov, and they began

to get into hypnosis and mystical.

-Meisner was told by Stan to "create your own lesson" because he was American

post revolution -> 1919ish ->mystical era->late 1920s -> Chekhov leaves -> Stalin &

socialist revolution

**All techniques are psycho-physical and physical

"Everything you do on stage has to be a result of your imagination." - Stanislavski

Tags:

earth, psychological, Stanislavski, technique, anger, imagination, Earth, stories

Theatre Mall

Pratik Motwani, 8 July 2014

SESSION TITLE - THEATRE MALL: Brainstorm on the idea of using unused abandoned Shopping Malls and reclaiming/converting them into multiple black box spaces for Ensembles and Theatre companies. A market place for theatre.

SESSION MEMBERS: Pratik, Laura, Jessica, Martin, Cara

SESSION DISCUSSION :

1. Pratik started the discussion stating that on one hand there are so many very well trained talented and capable Actors/Theatre Makers out there whose talent is being completely wasted as they are caught in a very limited system of Auditioning for particular parts in particular productions that they have no control over and they are hungry and looking for resources and opportunities to employ themselves and explore and make use of what they are capable of.

On the other hand there are increasing number of Shopping Malls that are closing down and running out of business because of the emergence of e-shopping. Could these 2 things meet in any mutually beneficial way? Could there be a possibility of using these abandoned shopping mall space to create space for Theatre makers to practice, create and produce their work.

2. Several different ideas and questions were thrown in by the group. Some of them are :

Wether this Theatre Mall would be run as a collective of different companies/ensembles/visiting artists that use this space or wether it would be more

beneficial to have a dedicated organization that manages and runs the Mall?

Who will come to this Theatre Mall? will there be an audience for it? Will it be practically and economically viable?

Where would be an ideal place for such a Theatre Mall? Portland, OR was suggested as a possible option to research

Different Theatre collectives, companies and ensembles could be sent invitations to come to the site and allotted different spaces within the site to make a site specific piece of theatre. The opening of the Theatre Mall could be done with a site specific piece.

Jessica suggested to research Hotel Horraine in Philadelphia. They converted an old abandoned hotel into loft space for artists.

She also suggested to look into The Walker - Mineopolis

Laura suggested to look into Mass Mocha - North Adams. They converted abandoned mills into a similar space.

3. As the discussion moved forward the idea of an Artist Mall instead of just a Theatre Mall became central to the discussion. A Mall where local artists working in different and diverse fields would be given space to exercise their practice and also open galleries, theatres, music stores etc to engage an audience. The mall could potentially include anything and everything to do with art and artists. Art supply stores, music store, pottery store, restaurants, caffes, theatre, book store, graphic artists, visual

artists etc etc etc. The place would provide an environment and invite people to cross pollinate with each other and support each others business within the Theatre Mall. For eg: a graphic designer who has his space in the mall could design the Menu of the organic coffee shop and restaurant in the Mall. The actor that performs in the theatre in the mall in the evening could be a server in the restaurant during the day. The musician who makes banjos in the mall would be the sound designer for the theatre company's work. The discussion revolved around this idea in which different artists within the mall support and employ and nourish each other and The Mall works as one organism.

Tags:

Artist Space, Abandoned Mall, Free Theatre Space, Unemployed Actors, Theatre Mall

Making the Most of Your Time

Cara Rawlings, 7 July 2014

Games/ Activities that facilitate rapport and ensemble

Notes by Cara Rawlings

Convened by Peter Tedeschi

Participants: Peter, Cara, Diane, Bernadette, Mani, Gian Luca, Pratik.

Session 1

At the Tree

The premise is that rehearsal time is shortening. Directors tell actors there simply isn't time to explore as deeply as they would like because of the new standard of two week rehearsals in American theater. But two actors may play husband and wife, or brothers, or sisters, or parent and child, etc. In such a short time, what can actors do

or what can directors do to create familiarity, comfort, intimacy, rapport and/or a sense of ensemble among cast mates and scene partners.

Peter thought we'd explore exercises that can be done in 10 minutes, a small amount of time that everyone can work in the schedule, that can be effective in creating that level of comfort and familiarity.

Peter offers exercises:

10 minutes on the clock

Everyone finds a partner

1. Face each other and breathe together
2. Notice how much space both partners subconsciously leave between each other.
3. Begin with one point of contact. A hand or another body part from one partner must touch one body part of the other partner. It may be one's hand touches the other's shoulder, or elbows touch, or finger tips touch.
4. Tell the actors that they must always be in physical contact, that they may one be touching in one place, and that they must move.
5. As they begin to move and begin, tell the actors they may experiment with levels, tempo, rhythm, etc.
6. At 9 ½ minutes tell the actors to begin to find an end.

Once the ten minutes were up, each participant was surprised that the exercise took only ten minutes. They all acknowledged they could play characters more familiar with each other. Also, subconsciously everyone was touching then, standing close together, many hugged.

Mani offered a variation: One partner touches the other with a hand and notices the sensation, then says a line of text from that place. Next, the actor is touched by the hand of another actor, notices the sensation and speaks from that place.

Bernadette offers: For students who may be less open and harder to give in to such an exercise, maybe it's best to have them start with their eyes closed.

Patrik offers bringing weight into it, saying that weight sharing and partner balances can be important tools in ensemble building,

Bernadette also offers that there can be another variation. One goes in the middle of a circle, others help this person down to the ground. Once this person is on the ground, he or she tries to get up, but the others offer resistance to make the person work to get up. She says it's resistance not a block.

There was some talk that actors who are not open or unwilling to do such exercises might still find familiarity and ensemble in another way also within 10 minutes.

Peter offered an exercise on danger.

The danger comes from four directions: Up, Below, the Left and the Right. When the director or teacher class claps hands once, the danger comes from below; twice, the danger comes from above; three times, from the left and four times from the right.

Peter coaches the actors to be specific, create a very specific danger, it can be as concrete as swords hanging from the ceiling or as abstract as a mythological gaseous

form. The actors must be specific and creative, they must respond to the danger they create with specificity as well. There are times when they will work alone and times when they may perceive that their dangers are the same, even though they probably are not. They do not verbalize them. The tempo of changing the location of the dangers can vary. At 9 ½ minutes, the actors are told to find a way to vanquish each other their dangers and once that's done they can walk around the space.

In flying back over it, Pratik observed that the image was something that we were exploring together in real time.

Each found this experience powerful and ensemble building because of the challenge or fighting individual danger while also being aware of your castmates' various dangers.

Peter talked about Stanislavsky's "madman at the door," explaining that when students or actors are told to react to the threat of madman at the door, you must push them to react and respond in a believable way.

Mani offered an exercise based on Pina Bausch's work. The actors move through the room with their arms over their heads. They must always walk through the exact center of the room when they go from one point to another. As they meet, they can swirl around each other to avoid bumping into each other, they increase their speed, as it becomes almost a dance.

Peter offered "Instant choreography." Find a place on the stage. Call it 1. Then go to 2 (simply another place they like on the stage), then 3, then 4, then, then back to 1. Start to move from number to number without the director or teacher calling the numbers.

Feel when to move together, feel how to increase the tempo together, etc. Then reverse it, play with it.

The group concluded it was non-threatening, especially as it does not involve touch, but also can quickly create a sense of ensemble, moving on stage together and having fun as it became faster and faster. This one took only 5 minutes. Even after five minutes everyone agreed that it was enough time.

The group concluded that longer, deeper rehearsals are needed and wanted. But the group said that it is possible to find a sense of ensemble in shorter times.

Tags:

exercises, exploration, Games, variation, games, shorter time, Stanislavsky, rehearsals, Exercises