

Michael Chekhov's 'Theater of the Future' -- what does it have to do with you? Reports

How Do You Not Burn Out As An Artist/Creator/Administrator and Bring Joy?

Lauren Dobbie, 15 July 2012

How Do You Not Burn Out As An Artist/Creator/Administrator?

Convened By Llyandra Jones

Merged with Bringing Joy to the Process

Convened by Peter Tedeschi

Commenced at 10:10am, Sunday July 15th, 2012

In attendance: Llyandra Jones, Margaret Evraire, Jared Bishop, Lauren Dobbie, Peter Tedeschi, Jorg Andrees, Kristine Gilreath

Llyandra began the session, mentioning that she intended to merge our group with Hugo's or Peter's, as both were relevant to what we were discussing/exploring.

Llyandra expressed her experience as Artistic Director of Docket Theatre (a Toronto based, independent, non-profit theatre company... <http://dockettheatre.com>) - Playing the roles of Artistic Director and Director, she found it was sometimes difficult to let go of one role in the midst of fulfilling another

Spoke of a THRESHOLD that must be crossed in order to drop extraneous business in the head and to be present

Peter Tedeschi then joined the group

- Mentioned that **when you start a company, usually 2 people are doing 90% of the work**
- Companies need to be willing to grow slowly
- Roles must be clearly defined in order to achieve harmonious productivity

We realized that defining roles is crucial when working professionally amongst friends

Jorg Andrees joined our group

We shared how we personally go about quieting our mind/preparing ourselves to be present

- Lauren does this by creating a dialogue with herself, usually lying quietly with herself - addressing her sensations and thoughts as honestly as possible
- Margaret does this by taking the time to physically express herself in a spontaneous, cathartic way (ex. running, jumping, laughing, crying, etc)

Peter touched on the “burning out” that comes from daily life (critiques, rejection, call backs, etc). This can be physically and mentally exhausting and can make people

miserable. He made a point...

“If I'm going to let what I do make me miserable, I might as well make millions on Wall St.”

Acting is a *privilege*! If we can find the joy and energy to do it, we are the blessed.

Jorg contributed to this:

- It starts with concentration
- One must separate, clarify and create a structure for their process
- **Exercise your focus/concentration so you can atleast somewhat let go of outside “junk” (if not 100%, maybe then 50% at least**

Peter asked Jorg what specific exercises might work best for this. Jorg answered:

- **4 stages of concentration**
- **Transformation exercise with a visible object**

(both Chekhov exercises)

Lauren brought up the subject of “midnight exhaustion”... when you are *physically*

burnt out. What do you do?

- Llyandra: **"I don't check in, I just go, go, go and get it done until I can eventually crash"**
- Margaret: **"You need to set boundaries. An Equity show would never work like that"**
- Peter: **"You can't do it all. You need to make choices. Sometimes you have to close off other options"**

Exercises and Activities

Jorg contributed with an exercise:

- **Give yourself a time (ex. 10am)**
- **Every morning at 10am, imagine an existing object (ex. a chair) for as long as you can. Play with your imagination, but sustain the image**
- **After one week of doing this everyday at the same time with the same object, this structure and concentration will leave you feeling fulfilled and accomplished**
- **Make plans today for the training you will do tomorrow**

- **Give yourself the time you need and be honest... Maybe 15 minutes of work is enough. Maybe you'll need more. Maybe less.**
- **Create a personal warm-up for yourself, and make two versions of it. A 3 minute “pocket version”, and the full 30-60 minute version**

We 6 have resolved to do this everyday for a week

Jared shared a quote:

“Even when not on stage, dancers are constantly practicing. Musicians practice everyday, whether there's an audience or not. When actors aren't acting... they're waiting for their phones to ring”

Lauren brought up something she'd wanted to convene a session on... “Chekhov on-the-go. Can it be practiced in everyday life, on the streets or in the subway, amongst friends and strangers?”

Peter's response

- Traded in his bed for a pullout couch and transformed his bedroom into a studio. Complete with glow in the dark stars on the ceiling for inspiration/joy/beauty/imagination
- In the city, he looks for colours to observe. ("I'm going to find *this* shade of red")

- Listening to other people's conversations and figuring out how he'd contribute/what vocal quality that might have

Games that challenge focus

- “Whatever you do... do NOT think of the giant pink elephant”... one cannot help but imagine it
- “I lost the game” - The point of this game is that when you are not thinking of the game, you're winning. As soon as you think of it, you lose
- “Don't think of the number 5”

Auditions

Peter: Some actors obsess about auditions 3 days after they've happened. I give myself 10 minutes to be human (angry, upset, annoyed, frustrated, etc.)

Jorg: **“You must tell yourself, ‘I am not going to an audition... I’m going to help them explore all my great possibilities”**

More on burning out...

Jorg: “If you had a meeting with the director, would you be on time?”

All: “Yes!”

Jorg: "What about if *you're* the director?"

A moment... all absorb this insight

Actor on the Go

Peter discusses his priorities - which sometimes stray more toward logistics than the actual art (He's more focused on the fact he made it on time to all his auditions that day, printed off his resumes, caught the bus in time... essentially, hit all the check marks. The actual audition (the ART) was maybe 20% of his journey that day).

Kristine Gilreath joined

With 15 minutes left, Llyandra asked Jorg if he'd be willing to lead a concentration exercise.

Jorg put a blue marker in the middle of a white piece of paper on the ground. We all sat around it and focused on it for 2 minutes.

We could hear things around us: the ticking sound of a golf cart trying to start, distant applause and laughter. A beetle scuttled across the paper and past the marker. We were able to acknowledge these things around us, without losing too much focus on the object. However, Jared mentioned that concentration is not the same as staring... For some, our mind would wander when we heard or saw things outside the marker. This "crossing" was the first stage of the exercise. The second stage ("opening and receiving") was to start again, but to let the image come to us.

After this, Jared admitted it was difficult not to have an inner dialogue. Llyandra said her senses were heightened, that she was able to receive other sounds and acknowledge them while still focusing

Jorg asked us how we felt in comparison to before the exercise. There was no denying that we felt more awake and alert

Jorg urged us to do this *everyday*, at the *same time*, with the *same object* in order to train our possibilities

And then it was over

Adjourned at 11:40pm

Tags:

rehearsal, Chekhov, process, Director, Sharing, Coping, Theatre, Burning out, Directing, Focus, Actor, Rehearsal, Process, Acting, Passion, Concentration, Exhaustion, chekhov, sharing, theatre, acting, passion, Joy, director, focus

I want to talk about SEX

Stacey Jack, 15 July 2012

A dialogue about sex- politics, religion and how to teach, healthy legal , sex in education and the theatre.

OR.. Sexual Politics in Theatre.

Name of Convener:

Stacey Jack

List of Participants:

Stacey Jack

Stephen Adly Guirgis

Not a big draw. I sat there for 30 minutes, alone. And with all this talk about baby making, and not one micha member. Bwah Bwah.

I wrote notes on how planned parenthood is being demonized and Breasts. Breast feeding and female nipples being illegal. What happens if we legalize our own body parts. In a world where women politicians are censured for saying the word vagina... But men politicians can be extra inappropriate and still be considered viable, political players in America.

So at one point I looked over at Stephen Adly Guirgis, who stopped by the table, and said "I don't get it, I thought sex would be a good draw".. Surprise!!! I was concerned that the topic introduced by a mysterious, and pleasant looking man, called. " MY senses are Tingling" got 6 or so people and I got no one.

We had a discussion about the history of fear and hatred around women, and also the lack of support from both men and women around the archetype of successful happy about sex women. And how the subject matter of feminism seems to turn people off. But if I were to ask the participants if it was because of the subject matter, that they decided to skip it, they'd probably say "no".

That this bias comes very insidiously, and just like other ethnic groups, they can tend to splinter into sub-sections that don't support each other. The oppressed turning on each other instead of supporting one another. In America this is very ingrained in our

society.

We opened a dialogue about personal experience say of auto biography, being rather indulgent if just for its own sake, but if the form is written of the self but not all about the self. Forming the personal story can create a piece that speaks to the world, from the message that comes out of the personal story. Or the story becomes formed in such a way as to craft a bigger message, that it can be a satisfying, creative, personal biography/or story telling that is molded into the universal message. Very inspiring. And a lively dialogue. Great session.

Tags:

politics, equality, sex, America, religion, Theatre, feminism, Feminism, THEATRE, theatre

Are actors interested in staying on making short films July 18-22 in Southampton?

Ragnar Freidank, 15 July 2012

involving Ragnar, Caitlin, Rena, Stacey, Ediana, Karine, Llyandra, Jorg

Ragnar: How can I share my passion for a collaboration and help make it happen?

Just before Open Space started I had a conversation with Mitchell Kriegman, who is running a digital filmmaking workshop in Southampton, making 9 short films from July 18-22.

Mitchell asked if any of the actors in our conference are interested in being in some of the short films that will be made here coming week.

How can I help to make this possibility happen?

The following plan of action was developed:

- * Actors interested in staying on for the films can contact Caitlin in person or by email: caitlingoldie@gmail.com
- * Mitchell is emailing Ragnar the filmmaking workshop schedule which Ragnar is passing on to Caitlin. Ragnar will also post the schedule under "BREAKING NEWS".
- * Caitlin is asking Nick what would be involved in staying on an extra week.
- * some people are looking for possibilities to stay overnight in New York City for the time between July 16-18. If you can offer accommodation for one or two nights, please contact Caitlin personally or by email.

Session concluded.

Update:

- * Peter: "Someone is welcome to stay on the floor in my apartment in NYC"
- * Nick: "Currently there is no space available for actors to stay overnight on campus between July 18-22, but I am exploring possibilities"
- * Karine: "I can arrive Friday late afternoon. If we all can find accommodation for 3 nights not too far away, I have a car and can drive people. My email is: karinescialom@gmail.com And I have a French accent, by the way.. And it's not a joke. I am dead serious."

Tags:

Staying overnight in NYC, actors, Screen writers, Filmmaking workshop, Actors

What is the holy trinity of Theatre (creativity)?

Christopher Estevez, 15 July 2012

Convener: Chris

Participants: John, and Rena

At the end we found:

Gaurdian Angels, or the compass for an actor:

Exploring Gesture as Character: North

Exploring Time as Pace: South

Exploring Space as form and shape: East And West

The Trinosophina of Creativity:

Mother: Reason, Wisdom, Creation

Daughter: Imagination, Purity

Soul: Inspiration, Perception

Head: Past

Heart: Present

Will: Future

Tags:

Theatre, Acting, chekhov, acting, Creativity, Chekhov, Holy Trinosophia, creativity, theatre

My Whole sense is tingling?

Christopher Estevez, 15 July 2012

Title: My Whole Sense is Tingling?

Convener: Chris

Participants: Ruth, Hugo, Mara, Linda, Ellie, Thais, Karine

Notes:

Chekhov has mentioned the sense of the whole within his book having witnessed it in his students while working with Stanislavsky's etudes (extended piece of improvisation; nothing is scripted). He explained it as the first lesson learned in the first period of their class.

The sense of the whole, I'll tell you how I feel about it. Do you know how people nowadays, they discriminate between my mind is working, my body is working, they feel like they need to strengthen their muscles but sometimes they forget that aside of all those elements they forget their whole being. Say for example doctors, a patient is experiencing a sore throat and they believe let's concentrate the medication on the sore throat, and sometimes that works, but a holistic approach would be to really see the entire body. And they understand the whole system, how you live your life, what kind of stress do you have, what do you eat, what do feel, what you think...And through that they see what is the root of the problem that may be influencing the disease. This is of course a medical example, the same way Michael Chekhov is perhaps the first person that talked, and of course Stanislavsky, a brilliant man developed the first method, Systematized Acting. He really is like a father, he is like Freud.

Still Chekhov, took it a step further, really energized the system.

You have this whole body, and when you are acting you still have to have a sense, and it can still be applied to anything later on. You can have a sense of whole in the whole world you can have a sense of this monologue, but it starts in your body, feeling

in your body completely whole.

Say for example, some shallow teachers focus on performance while isolating certain elements, like script analysis and speech and the way Michael Chekhov applied his technique is through the body and the body is this instrument that creates this wholeness, so even if your speaking or moving you have to create a feeling, you still are a whole being. It is not like your limbs are separate from language and speech. Michael Chekhov was one of the first to mention the sense of the whole, he is technique compared to others like the difference between exercise and yoga or martial arts. Because these two forms have a deep connection to the soul, something deeper than the body.

I was posing on the sense of the whole and what it is taken to the all-knowing consciousness level, the sense of everything that is occurring at the specific moment on stage.

It can be...Hello Hugo, Come and tingle with us. How can the sense of the whole be brought to the whole universe level?

The way I understood from his writing I thought about it as the sense of the whole company of actors in sync, working towards a common goal. And Mara enlightened me, by defining the whole by awareness of the whole body in action. And I mean, I am interested in this because, it is very vague, it can be anything, it could be everything. Yes, I suppose.

But you only have one body, and it is whole.

Yeah,

There you go.

I mean you can any direction with the sense of the whole; the sense of the whole body is something that is fundamental in the Chekhov work. It is like a violin, it is an instrument. You started by saying the whole of the universe. Scott led a warm-up where we led us to a concentration of an object. And begin to concentrate on it looking

at it just through your eyes. And noting line, shape, the edges. And if you turn your mind to that you can then notice that you have a relationship with an object, you are with the object, there is information recorded in your mind. And then he asked us to notice what is surrounding the object, gathering the object in the sense of the whole room, and then from above the building, moving on to island, the continent, going all the way into space, and then in the whole universe and then it was all gone.

If you close your eyes, you can feel the whole universe inside. It can be just you, it could be your inner sense of your self.

The sense of whole, when Chekhov talks about the sense of the whole or entirety. If you enter on-stage...

From the beginning of the play with a sense of the whole play.

So, it is not just linear.

If I understand you correctly, the sense of the whole is connected to the creative life of the show?

The last that I remember, is that there is an essence of knowing what you're doing, like a road map.

I think this is the sense that you have to with you always, whether it is rehearsal or an open space. It is not just entering in sort of a linear way, you are coming in with something, you're coming in with...

Soul. I mean, I noticed how at first he mentioned his dissatisfaction with masks because they portrayed a 2-dimensional character because he was interested in portraying a living soul on stage. Although he did acknowledge its benefit. And he tied the sense of whole to the creative life on stage.

Right.

Ok, so how do you begin to separate from the actor's sense of the whole and then from the character's perspective on his sense of the whole?

Well they are not contradictory, they are not oil and water separate from each other. So, I do not see it as a dilemma, limiting as an actor.

Do you have to be conscious of this sense?

No, you have to be conscious, I mean Chekhov, take for example this table is whole in itself and yet it is part of another whole, like these group of tables. So, we do this all the time, the artist will be aware of this all the time.

Your perspective is obviously slightly different, say I am looking at this tree depending on where you are standing. I think he means when you approach a role you have to take the context of the whole play.

Exactly, and you have to trust your instincts. Say, if I read Hamlet and I see him as slightly effeminate and others will say it's wrong, you have to go with gut, and if you commit to what you think then you are on the right track. And there is a sense of wholeness in every little part of a play, in any part of the scene.

Yes, along the same line; what if every moment of the play, if you were to stop it was still an image definition of the whole play. And I am not recommending expanding a minute to an hour setting every slight movement.

All depending on the choice of that you make.

That is definitely true, I think that is when tingling comes into play. Yes the choice is the definition of who you are. Tingling meaning like a sensation, excitation, active engaged.

Yeah, you can't be passive.

...SUMMARY..

Don't you think that when you are in the whole, it's just there is no question. Therefore, you know when you are whole, so it's the truth your truth. When you are there, there is no question. With Chekhov, you know you are there, the most difficult is to get there. I feel like I connect with what you are saying, because when I feel I am part of the whole is when I have the most sense of the whole. All of these questions are sort in

service of what?. You know, when I am working with an actor, you need all the principles all the time. And you practice one thing and feel that's the thing that creates the sense of the whole, or it may be something else. I wonder if the question isn't as much about what is it that defines the sense of the whole or I guess I am less interested in having a linear definition of the sense of the whole and I am more interested in the question within all the trials and tribulations and complication of life and making and creating art, can I be a part of the sense of the whole or can my work be a part of the whole.

But then, how do you accomplish that?

You do may not have to make a constant effort, because if it whole it just is.

This question is very interesting to me because it is tied with your all-knowing sense or how some psychologist call it your supraconsciousness. Meaning that every occurring in the planet though you may not be consciously aware of it may be having an impression.

Write down this name, Rupert Sheldrake, he talks about Morphic fields, I think. He is biologist and he is somewhat of renegade dude, most of the science community does not like him. He wrote a book about the sense of being starred at, describing all these different morphic fields that we are coming in and out of, from a scientific perspective. Sometimes a performance is so electric because there is a sense of the whole and the you as an audience are a part of it.

Tags:

theatre, entering and exiting, martial arts, Stanislavsky, perspective, sense of the whole, Rupert Sheldrake, performance, Supraconsciousness, text analysis, yoga, Biology, chekhov, Chekhov, Theatre, Performance, exerciceses

Chekhov influence in Film Performance and Production

Jonathan Phillips, 15 July 2012

Does everyone have to know the Chekhov technique? How can the collaborative process influence and change the film process? Does it have to be only the actors/director/author, what about the Producers? Picture and Sound crew? Lighting and Grip? Camera person?

If closed off then nothing will develop and grow.

No new artistic development without challenge, questions, accidents, experimentation. Simple gestures of Opening/Closing.

Once open to the process then there is endless abundance.

The process of film making is now so swift the character must be found developed exposed released in an instant. No more time to explore in rehearsal. new acting techniques that present immediate results are required.

No performer should be waiting for a producer/script/production to find them, they can explore the film space with simple tools and techniques.

Focus on the money making to the end.

Common sense comes thru the crisis.

There is a wealth of information to be shared and talent everywhere with which to partnership and collaborate.

The collaboration reinforces the human instinct of social cohabitation, even in different

timezones.

The speed at which technology allows us to move, we must have a technique that will allow for creative and instructional process. A strong basis from which to work, deliver results.

There is no limit to age/gender/race/differences, we are of the same atmosphere and collaboration allows for a welcoming into the background and back-space of each participant. We are therefore more wealthy and enriched by each resonating cross-section

In attendance -

Jonathan Phillips - NY area

Uli Meyer-Horsch - Hamberg

Stacy Jack Russo - LA

Jorg Andrees - Berlin

Tags:

dubbing, production, Chekhov, voice over, film, voice, Film

Film Scenes at a future MICHA workshop in Southampton

Ragnar Freidank, 14 July 2012

Name of Convener: Ragnar Freidank

List of Participants: Joanna Merlin

This was a very short impromptu session on the bench in front of the bathrooms. The idea came up to work on film scenes at one future MICHA conference in Southampton. We would ask for “submission” of short film scenes in advance; so we would be able to work with scenes of screenwriters/ screenwriting students that will physically be present at the writers conference that is taking place parallel to MICHA’s time in Southampton.

Images:



Tags:

Film, Southampton, film, Screen writers, MICHA, Camera

How would a beginning storyteller use Chekhov techniques in preparing and telling a story?

Jane Knox, 15 July 2012

Theater of the Future
Sunday July 15, 2012
2-3:30
Convener- Jane
Room-Underground #1

Participants:

1. Jane

Notes:

I would be delighted and grateful if people would share ideas with me regarding my question.

Tags:

Storytelling, Chekhov technique, storytelling

Movement and MICHA

Cathy Albers, 14 July 2012

The group met to discuss the future of a movement track within the MICHA conferences. The discussion was wide-ranging and we ultimately had 12 people participate. Deborah Robertson and Liz Shipman were the conveners.

The discussion centered around the idea that to create the whole actor, movement needs to be given the same focus as the various “acting” classes. David Zinder has

done this in the past but there are many different approaches and ways to integrate. We need to fully integrate and engage the actor and too often the disciplines are separated, when in reality, the actor needs this sort of integrated training. The strong consensus of the group was that what we would like to see is a commitment from MICHA to to consider offering a movement“track” every year at the conferences. We realize the difficulty of this but it could be done in many different ways. We began this year with the morning meditation, the warm-up, and the sacred nap. The response was excellent and the group would like to see this expanded. MICHA does such a wonderful job of helping all of us explore the Technique that this seems a natural extension of that approach. It certainly follows the idea of creative individuality, which is so important to us all. This would enhance the pedagogy through the vocal training, as well.

The goal of the movement approach would be to fully embrace and engage in the Michael Chekhov Technique. Training the whole artist in a body mind track brought a new movement technique into the discussion, Body Weather, which was introduced by Joyce Lu. It was a great session and we were grateful for this opportunity to discuss these important ideas.

Along with Deborah and Liz, in attendance were Cathy Albers who typed these notes so all edits can be referred to me!, Jane Knox, Maricina Zaccaria, Joyce Lu, Janice Orlandi, Suzanne Bennett, Ediana Souza, Ellie Heyman, Aein Morati, and Linda Kleppinger. Jessica joined us at the end of the session and was helpful in clearing up a couple of issues.

Tags:

Body, Weather, Zinder, Body Mind Centering, last, Shipman, Liz's, is, Correction:, name, Alexander, Meditation

Comments: 5

Marcina Zaccaria, 17 July 2012

I enjoyed attending this convening at MICHA's Theater of the Future conference.

I often think - what does it mean to be "in shape"? When working with other theater practitioners, it is important to recognize new techniques. In terms of movement, some of us might be skilled at Williamson, perhaps, while others might have a specialty in Alexander. I gain perspective when I hear about different specialties. With a different angle, I am sometimes inspired to bring new ideas into my daily practice.

Finding ways to integrate acting, voice, and movement can be joy rather than a challenge. I think it's important not to forget administration, as it is a discipline that can get left behind in the creative process. Spending several hours at the computer working on stage management or marketing makes me a more articulate artist, even if the articulation presents itself in a movement rehearsal or when I'm directing a full length play.

Liz Shipman, 17 July 2012

FYI: Liz's last name is Shipman, not Shipley...

Christopher Estevez, 18 July 2012

The 'issues' Cathy mentions I cleared up related to questions about how MICHA sees itself offering comprehensive training to attendees. We offer a certificate of completion to all who complete 5 workshops (3 summer and 2 teacher workshops). This cannot be done in less than 3 years. Full details about the reasons the MICHA board voted to continue on this course and not a program which certifies individuals can be read in our newsletter archive at www.michaelchekhov.org

I also mentioned that there has been discussion among the MICHA faculty about how we don't always witness 'full body' engagement in classes and would like to increase the possibility for deeper physical engagement. Brief experiments with Alexander technique, Body Mind Centering and what Zinder has called 'pre-Chekhov' work has happened -can more be done? Shall we pool from resources within the MICHA community? Shall we reach outside to a teacher less familiar with MICHA and the Chekhov technique?

Jessica Cerullo, 18 July 2012

Jessica Cerullo made the above comments about MICHA's certificate of completion program and "full body" discussion. Not Christopher as it is currently posting...

james clark, 28 August 2012

Here is the information is provided about the future of the books and really it is great issue and topic to discuss and it is nice to comment here.

[Youtube MP3](#)

What is the role of the artist in giving back to the community that nurtures us?

Cathy Albers, 15 July 2012

We had Christina Bryson, Liz Shipman, Llyandra Jones, Jared Bishop, and Cathy Albers. Stacey Jack joined us at the end of the session. Cathy recorded the notes for this report.

I introduced the idea behind the question and told the story of how I have taken an experience and turned it around so that I can reach out to my community. After doing the play WIT, I experienced a re-dedication to the power of the work we do as artists and how that can change lives. Since then, I have utilized the experience to reach out to various communities in my area, most specifically with the women of an ovarian cancer support group, interacting with them and with my students who now work with them. Christina Bryson shared her experiences with the show she created with a fellow student, called WHITE NOISE. It won an award at the Ottawa Fringe Festival and she wants to be able to take the show with its powerful message to high school and college students, to aid in understanding what leads someone to commit suicide. Llyandra Jones spoke to her experience with her company that has produced a show about the Occupy Movement.

What we all agreed upon was that we need to look outward to the community to see what it needs. How do we capture the spirit of our communities? Chekhov said that the greatest threat to the Theater of the Future is the lack of ensemble. By reaching out to our communities and the stories that they want to tell we can create community ensembles, working toward the 'whole.' Also, what stories do we need to hear? The ripple effect we talked about in Ulli's classes teaches us that what we put into the space will always have an effect on the space and those in it, and what it then sends back to us can be transforming.

We want to be a community of actors that educate ourselves in order to create an event, take the event out to the communities and then receive what is given back to us. We need to become an organic part of the community in order to be truthful in what we do and all in the community can participate. Everyone then is an artist and we can truly become one. Llyandra Jones' theater in Toronto, called the Docket Theatre, is changing their way to work with playwrights, because of this discussion. They will now have their playwrights become actively involved in the communities they are writing for and listen to the stories they want to tell. This becomes the work that is presented.

It was a wide-ranging discussion and all of us were activated and involved. It was so good to share ideas with one another and to find a way in order to begin to answer the question of how we can give back. Great day!

Comments: 2

Liz Shipman, 17 July 2012

FYI: Liz's last name is Shipman, not Shipley...

This was a great session!

Max Hafler, 15 August 2012

Hi Folks

I wanted to share an unusual project I did this year. I devised a piece of theatre with 4th year medical students here in Ireland. I had often felt as patient and carer that doctors were not emotionally equipped to deal with the matters of life and death with which they were confronted with daily, and I thought it would be interesting for them to explore their experience as patients and how they felt about their oncoming careers in a piece which they made themselves. Very often it seems to me, theatre is used for non actors as a way to develop skills rather than open up the participants and enable them to find their voices.. One participant said afterwards. "I had never realised the power of emotional honesty before". It was a moving

project as they revealed more and more about their experiences as patients and their hopes and frustrations of the idea of healing. What was also amazing was they presented it to an audience of their peers who were completely overwhelmed by the honesty of it. Whilst we did small pieces of Chekhov around communication with patients - radiating and receiving was a great concept for them, and lots of breath work, I feel that ultimately it was the honesty which I feel they will not forget. Max hafler

Chekhov & Writing - kids who get sad, early childhood picture books

Jessica Cerullo, 15 July 2012

Caron Levis talks about how she has been teaching the Chekhov technique to writers. She uses the Chekhov technique as a writer and her understanding of his basic principles in her interactions with young children.

Tamara talks about her 4 year old son who is often sad and she sees that his feelings are often dismissed by adults.

Caron shares that she has recently written a book called "Stuck with the Blooz" with illustrations by Jon Davis that will be published by Harcourt Children's Books in the fall of 2012. She wrote it because she has worked with children for many years.

While teaching a kindergarden class Caron noticed that one of the young students would often cry. One day Caron sat with her and they had a chat. The little girl began to talk as she tried to figure out the reason why she felt sad... "I'm not hungry, I don't miss my mom, I'm not tired..."

We talked about going into feelings and not having to rationalize them. We talked about how 'sadness doesn't sell books' and how Jamie Lee Curtis' books have helped to open publishers to the possibility of allowing children's books to be about feelings

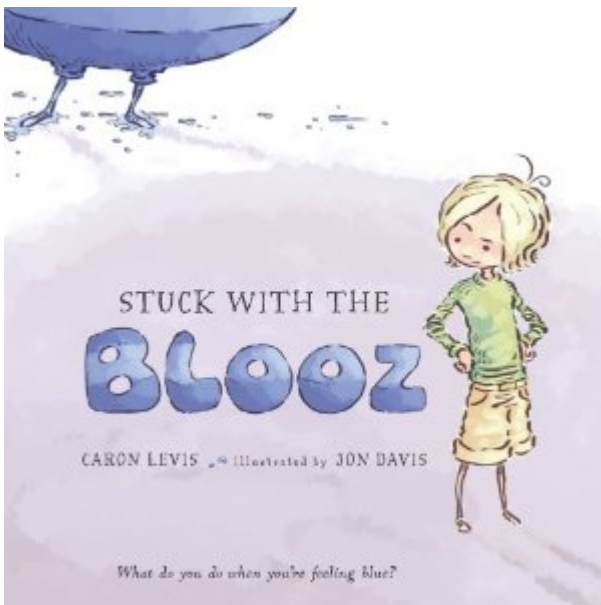
and emotions and how real they are for small children and how we adults can engage kids in these talks.

Caron has been reading her book to children and then working with them on the themes in the book. One class explored working with musicians who composed a score to the book. The kids chose instruments to represent the 'girl' and the 'blooz'. The kids also talked about what they do when they feel sad.

We exchanged information about Caron's book. Tamara expresses her interest and excitement in having a book like this to read with her son.

In attendance were Tamara MacGregor, Caron Levis and Jessica Cerullo

Images:



Tags:

Chekhov, feelings, chekhov, publishing, sad, children

Comments: 1

Phelim McDermott, 20 July 2012

[Michael Rosen's Sad ook](#) is a wonderful example of a children's book that deals with sadness in all its ambiguities. About his grief for his lost son. It's beautiful.

Active Receiving workshop

Hugo Moss, 15 July 2012

Convener: Hugo Moss

Participants: Stacey, Suzanne, Rena, Kim, Christopher, Mara, John, Jane, Ellie, Karine, Uli, Wendy, Ediana, Liz

(this list compiled from memory - have I forgotten anyone? please tell me!)

Listening: Linda

Photographing/floating: Thaís Loureiro

Finding a place to start in the space.

A round of Staccato / Legato just to find the space around us.

We are going to be working with objects/things around us, however we are **not** going to be working with incorporation today, but finding a world which exists in our experience between concentration and imagination/association/incorporation/playing as actors.

Each one takes an object from his/her bag and gives it to another participant. Place the object in front of you and look at it, see it = describe it to yourself (in your mind).

Find the movement towards the object which takes place when we turn our concentration on something. Being “with” the object.

Now close your eyes and continue to describe the object to yourself, just carry on but now your eyes are closed. Perhaps there is a question: have I missed something? what might that be?

Open your eyes and continue to work, “simply” describing the object to yourself in your mind.

Now break your eye contact and continue to work, continue to “be with” the object. Stand and look out, sense how the object is with you, whether it has a place with in you. And walk. Walk about the space, sustaining this being with the object.

Now find another object and repeat above.

Talk/sharing - some people found they were having an emotional connection to object, e.g. possession, or difficulty leaving it behind.

Can we just keep it very “simple”? Just be with an object in a room. “Be with” it in this way.

Repeat the exercise with an object which is not in this room. Suggestion: pick a neutral object, something familiar to you but without great personal significance. And just repeat this exercise of describing, sensing the movement towards the object, and being with the object as you move about the space, looking out from this place, seeing the room, seeing others, exchanging glances.

We talked about the emphasis M.Chekhov lays on concentration in this way, since it gives us a living connection with the world around us = Active Receiving, which an artist must have. If we cannot awaken this within us all the time, then perhaps there can be no Theatre of the Future - ? An artistic way of seeing and being in the world.

Now with this new sense, take a short walk around outside, come back and share.

Final talk/exchange and a walk around the space knowing we've shared very different experiences here, and find some ending for yourself. Look at each other, flying back over this time together.

Tags:

receiving, concentration, active, objects, looking, being with, seeing, Concentration

Comments: 2

Liz Shipman, 17 July 2012

Thanks Hugo! This was an amazing session and touched upon what seems to be a much-needed and vital practice for actors and humans in general. What is it to truly receive? Brilliant!

Hugo Moss, 19 July 2012

Thanks Liz, it was a real pleasure to work with you, not only in this session but throughout the week in such diverse and often rich/stimulating classes! Right now I'm back in NYC having been delayed a whole day by Delta, but I'll be back in Rio Friday and we should keep in touch between MICHA's, yes?

Charting Chekhov's International influence and connections around the World.

Phelim McDermott, 15 July 2012

So I'm sitting here in the UK feeling excited that the MICHA open space is this year connecting up with the Devoted and Disgruntled community. Hi there everyone I'm sad not to be at your event but as you can see from the website we have our own journey here! I also feel touched that MiCHA are using open space to support and develop community and artistic development in the States after we first did D&D New York a couple of years ago and Jessica and I talked about how useful it is in creating a sustainable artistic landscape where all the voices can be included if they choose to take responsibility for that. I'm sure Chekhov would have loved Open Space as it is ensemble personified.

Thinking about all of this I'm remembering my own journey with Michael Chekhov and how he first inspired me to teach a course at the London Actor's Centre called "The Future Actor". 25 years ago! That course was a big step in the clarifying of my own practice as an actor who also directed. I am also thinking about how working with singer's this year at the Metropolitan opera on The Enchanted Island using Chekhov technique was such a joy and how great it has been as a way to work with the chorus there. Opera singer's get Chekhov technique!

Of course all of this just came from charting my own journey through his writings and teaching. But his vision and high dreams still inspire me today.

Which brings me to the thought in my session title. Many years ago I remember wandering into a bookshop in Amsterdam and seeing a translation of Chekhov in Dutch. How many more people around the WORLD have been touched by Chekhov's vision and writing and where have his influences spread that we do not yet even know about. I hope this event being on our website can help support that network of creativity and inspiration can become a little bit more connected through this website.

Love to you all out there dreaming and envisioning a better kind of theatre based on love and beauty.

Tags:

Chekhov, GITIS, Lessons for the Professional Actor, chekhov, Opera, international. vision, Love

Comments: 1

Jessica Cerullo, 18 July 2012

Lovely to have you with us from afar, Phelim! Some interesting evidence of "Charting" of the Chekhov work appeared at our event. For one, Maxim Krivosheyev translated Chekhov's 'Lessons for the Professional Actor' into Russian. The edition was published by GITIS and sold out. Max wrote me during our event that the second edition was just released and a line at the GITIS bookshop in Moscow formed with people eager to purchase it...

Also, our open space in Southampton was surrounded by a writing conference. Many artists not in residence to attend the Theater of the Future but in residence for other events were easily able to stumble into sessions. You can see in the reports that playwright Stephen Adly Guirgis, for example, attended sessions. This was the case with others, too, who connected from various disciplines as they made their way to and from their own events.

Ever expansive and inclusive - the D&D site is an enormous assistance in this endeavor!

Brilliant Arts Administrators or What/Who will do my job? I'm having a baby!

Jessica Cerullo, 16 July 2012

Convener: Jessica Cerullo

in the backyard

In attendance: Lionel Walsh, Cathy Albers, Rebecca Rich, Caitlin Goldie, Christina Bryson, Suzanne Bennett, Rena Radulovic, Christopher Estevez, Rena Polley, Kristine Gilreath, Thais with her camera and others.

setting:

white folding chairs placed in a kind of circle, one large green beach recliner all in the shade of the trees. Jessica, 6 and a half months pregnant, reclines in the green chair, the others rest in the white chairs. The conversation that follows ambles... snippets of advice, stories, offerings of assistance.

Jessica has a photo copied piece of paper listing all of the tasks she currently does for MICHA that she will no longer be able to manage after December. People are invited to take a copy and look it over as we talk.

Rena says: You know when you get on an airplane and they tell you to put the oxygen on yourself first and after to put it on your child? That is my advice. Yourself first, then your marriage, then the child. This is a year of polarity. Oxygen is your creativity. It is your artist practice and your manicure, pedicure.

Lionel says: MICHA needs a "web maintenance person"

Hire someone who can deal with any technical difficulty from the website.

Cathy recommends that MICHA look for a pro bono organization who can be a consultant on our organizational behavior and analysis. She has a nephew, he knows someone and will email jessica the info. Ask MICHA's pro bono lawyer, he may have a suggestion.

Kristine offers to help MICHA in any way she can. She is a trained stage manager.

Day care discussion:

Cathy: Case Western Reserve University has a drop in emergency day care for faculty

and staff. If you suddenly don't have child care and need to teach your class or get to rehearsal you can take your child to this place and they will be cared for.

Lionel: Some Universities have early childhood education programs.

Mara: I have a general impulse to help MICHA. I don't know what I would do. As I look at the list I am not sure but the impulse to help if there.

Becca: I'm happy to help - specifically with the summer workshop.

Cathy: I directed plays when I had my children.

Jessica: Did you bring your child into the rehearsal room with you?

Cathy: Yes.

Jessica: Do you think it entirely unprofessional to breast feed during rehearsal?

Cathy: I didn't do it but I know people who did and who do.

Someone suggests that a theater department culture is different from others. More possibility of acceptance. Children are welcome in the theater.

Christopher offers to help with grant writing.

Caitlin offers that she will be living in nyc and could check the po box or do things in which it is necessary to have a presence in nyc.

Someone says that with birth it is best to be prepared to be surprised. Open Space all the way with child birth!

Lionel suggests to contact Nancy Erikson who runs her own business by coordinating ATHE and ASTR annual conferences. Nancy is not a theater person but she understands how organizations work and is talented and has a passion for organizing. Her contact info is neriksn@aol(dot)com

Another option is CCC Conference Connection Chicago Carol:
ckuc@cccmeetings(dot) com

Both of these organizations are on site at a conference but they don't have anything to do with the content they just helping to manage and run the support structure.

Mara says that one of the things that makes MICHA so special is the warmth that one meets when interacting with MICHA. There is no 'business' feeling. This seems essential and it is playful.

Suzanne: I took care of my child while acting. I was very torn in rehearsal. I lost an acting job because the theater wouldn't house me and my family.

Someone says that people in the theater community were very enthusiastic about their child and willing to help with everything but that enthusiasm was not supported in any reality. They discovered that there was no 'real help' unless it was paid for. Take care, plan ahead, set it up.

Tags:

baby, arts administration, theater, organizational changes

Question: Archetypes - Story - Gesture

Jane Knox, 15 July 2012

Theater of the Future

Sunday July 15, 2012

11:30-1:00

Convener: Jane

Area: Kansas

Participants:

1. Rena
2. Karine
3. Wendy

Notes:

Jane thought that "story" itself is an archetype and story has a beginning middle and an end. Rena said that some stories did not have a beginning, middle and end. For instance, stories can be imagistic, flow of consciousness and random thoughts.

Rena said that to understand an archetype you need to ask what the character does.

What does a warrior do? A warrior fights and protects.

What does a seeker do?

What does a prisoner do?

Rena talked about the three different centers:

thinking

feeling.

willing

They have different energies, different qualities.

Does the character go in a straight line or do they curve?

What do they want?

Rising

Falling

Balancing

Rena suggested looking at the archetypal cards of Carolyn Myss.

Ask –

1. Where is the character's center?

2. What is the dominant quality of the character's movement?

Molding

Floating

Flying

Radiating

Karine reads stories to children and she particularly likes fairytales.

After she tells a story, she often asks the children such things as:

How would one of the characters do some specific actions or say specific things like “hello”?

Rena said something about form and images.

She talked about atmosphere. There would be an atmosphere for coming together and another for departure.

Rena said the chapters of books have atmospheres.

Archetypes:

What does an archetype do?

Witch- What does a witch do?

Control?

Manipulate?

Transform?

Rena has asked actors to form a circle. She then has them turn around facing away from the center of the circle. She then calls out an archetype such as addict, gambler, seeker, robber, etc. Each participant is to find a gesture for that archetype. The actors will then face inward and share their gestures. They will observe differences and

similarities in the gestures.

Karine said that when she works with children, she reads a story and then asks the children to move as a character from that story. They spontaneously move creating archetypes using staccato/legato and qualities of movement such as:

Floating

Flying

Molding

Radiating

It is interesting to approach characters also through

- Color. What would be the character colors.

- Elements. What would be the element of the character?

Earth/ Water/ Fire/ Air and what the nature of the element.

Exploration of the character's element and their different manifestation.

- Music/ sounds. In which soundscape the character live What kind of music?

Move in it or it is moving in you.

Devoted and Disgruntled in Toronto

Ragnar Freidank, 15 July 2012

Report by Rena Polley

In the spirit of the Open Space, Ragnar and Rena had an impromptu session over the proverbial coffee pot and decided to take the following steps to make a D & D happen in Toronto - through either the Fringe or Summerworks.

Step 1 Post this intention.

Rena Polley

Ragnar Freidank

Images:



Tags:

Toronto, D&D, in

Comments: 1

Phelim McDermott, 15 July 2012

Sounds like a good idea! :)

What are the boundaries of theatre? And how to transcend them?

Christopher Estevez, 15 July 2012

Convener: Chris

They are no boundaries in the theatre, most of the limitations are develop by your self. Be fearless, have pure intentions. And theatre is unlimit.

Tags:

chekhov, Thearte, Chekhov

The Relationship Between Voice Work and the Chekhov Technique

Stacey Jack, 15 July 2012

A stream of consciousness record of the conversation:

Participants: Ediana, Mara, John McManus, Ellie Heyman, Suzanne Bennett, Peter Tedeschi,

-We are interested in discussing how this topic resonates for us today as opposed to a formal lesson.

-Speech is action. Speaking a word is powerful. Speaking words can haunt someone, terrorize, soothe, seduce...

-Our voices are ourselves.

-Our voices contain everything that has ever happened to us.

-Linklater and Fitzmaurice Voice Work create an excellent foundation from which to begin the Chekhov work because they deal with the body and breath.

-If we lived in a healthy society, we wouldn't need these methods of Voice Work.

-Part of being an artist is engaging in a process of healing oneself from the violent/destructive forces in society.

-Artistic training has 2 key aspects: Developing Capacities and Dissolving Hindrances.

-Going on stage often produces a habitual contraction.

-The first thing to address is the body—Often, we can't get the breath in.

-John told a story of growing up on a farm—working on the farm created space for breath to enter his body. There was a natural rhythm to it.

-In our modern society, we have lost connection to these instinctual rhythms. The muscles around our ribs are no longer actively worked. They become lazy and the space within our bodies contracts.

-When the body is tight and contracted it prevents our breath, speech, and impulses for movement and gesture to flow freely from a range of locations. When our breath is pushed up, we lose connection to our lower body and our power center.

-A natural breath feels like relief and release.

-Breath is nutrition.

-We are breathing to keep our feet alive. Every capillary oxygenates when we breathe in.

-We are 2 different animals capable of different types of thought depending on whether our breath is flowing freely or not...

-Jon talking about his journey from his early training to his interest now—30 years ago he began to train in Rudolf Steiner's Creative Speech in connection with Chekhov's Technique and later he studied Eurhythmia. He fully allowed the experience. Then he realized his technique was "hindering him."

-You can become skillful at Chekhov Exercises or Shakespeare and put a big fence around your work, so although it "looks good," the audience is sitting on the other side of the fence.

-This realization led John on a journey to free himself of this mask/barrier/way of hiding. He studied with the ideas of: Cecil Berry, Linklater, Patsy Rodenberg, Fitzmaurice and others....

-Patsy called him on "showing his technique" and so he allowed himself to let it go.

-"When you forget the work, inspiration comes"

-Now John is interested in a process of reconnecting the training methods he's studied while continuing to let them go.

-“If a technique becomes a habit, it stops serving you.”

-It is essential to have voice work that releases habitual tension because one needs physical availability in order to be present in the moment.

-The ability to hear tension is like hearing a bell that is cracked. There is an intuitive lack of clarity.

-When one is acting, it is not useful to use one's directing and teaching skills.

-There seems to be a continual process of learning, codifying, releasing and re-exploring—when one is in a relationship to a technique.

-An awareness of all of the different aspects, gestures, archetypes living inside of us allows us a kind of inner flexibility conducive to voice work.

-John discovered the work of Louis Collainanni which has led to his exploration of taking voice work into speech. He uses phonetic shaped pillows to explore sounds. Students discover the form or gesture of the sound. This is very similar to Eurhythmia but the student discovers the form organically. This work is very different than Skinner's work which dictates a correct external form.

-There are positive and negative results when classes separate Body, Voice and Acting. Sometimes an exploration is able to have more depth, but sometimes it inhibits

synthesis or an actor's sense of the whole.

-Voice Work is essential in relationship to the Chekhov Technique because when Mind/Body and Voice are one, then the Chekhov work changes the voice based on the gesture or quality...

-Babies are fully connected in Mind/Body/Voice—and voice work allows adults to regain this Sense of the Whole. If you are properly synced up, if you have an impulse, your voice will naturally go to that place.

-Humanity didn't evolve to need microphones. Our voices are capable of far more than we think they are in mundane life.

Playwriting for Dummies/Actors and Devised Work

Lauren Dobbie, 15 July 2012

Open Space Theatre of the Future 2012

Playwriting for Dummies/Actors

Christina Bryson, Margaret Evraire

Participants: Christina Bryson, Margaret Evraire, Lauren Dobbie, Kristine Gilreath, Becca Rich, Caitlin Goldie, Wendy Thompson, and Stephen Adly Guirgis.

*It should be noted that this session was called to address challenges that Margaret and Christina are having with the dialogue and narration of their devised piece White Noise based on the true story of Nadia Kajouji.

Becca: Try and figure out what the opposite situation is to where you need to end. Improvise the work—or start writing knowing where you need to end.

(Talking about an exercise with Jorg) Find the “Oh”, “Bah” and “Wow” moments within the plot and structure. Make sure to adopt the voice of the character, and separate the self of the playwright from the self of the character.

(In response to a question about showing and not telling)

Becca (talking about a Le Coq exercise) where one actor is having an experience internally and “le mimer” another actor is physically manifesting that internal experience.

Kristine: Characters need to have specific goals that either work for or against the central theme. The choices that the characters make are important and the figuring out how they have to make them. Know the story and how you want them to feel.

Stephen Adly Guirgis arrives.

Margaret: How do you deal with the challenge of a narrator character, where their dialogue seems to be very information heavy?

Stephen: An actor can be given information to convey to the audience, and it is the actor’s job to bring that information to life. What is the character’s point of view about the information? What are they relating? Why are they relating it? What stake does the character have in delivering this information?

Margaret: How do you deal with writing being too obvious, and not subtle enough? Can you speak to subtlety in writing?

Kristine: Make sure you know the theme and the interests

Stephen: She (the narrator) needs to tell the facts that interest her, not just what needs to be brought up to the audience. Figure out why she needs to tell it.

Lauren: How do you deal with stage directions? Do you use a lot?

Stephen: I tend to make the dialogue very specific so that the actors can figure it out. I've realized I don't need to italicize every word that I find important. Trust the interpretation of the actor.

Lauren: Yes, you must trust that the actors can interpret the text well.

Margaret: We are finding it challenging to work as writers and actors... it's odd to speak text that you have written.

Stephen: It's great that you are creating work for yourself. That's important. I used to act in some of my own work, but when I really came into writing was when I listened to my work from other actors. Or sat in the audience and watched how they reacted. That's where I learned the most about my work. The really important thing is why are you telling the story you are telling. What feeling does it illicit in you? What feelings does it illicit in the audience? Really put yourself into the work. Mine... and try to find where you are in the text. Where you are in the piece and allow that to compel the writing and the text. Find the relationship that the narrator has in the play. Like in Amadeus... he causes the conflict, not just speaks about it. What role does the narrator play in the plot?

Christina: It's hard to step back from your own work and see it objectively. It's hard to take the ego out. Stephen, do you find that you start with a large set of ideas and concepts and distil as you write... or do you start with a simple theme and expand?

Stephen: Both. It depends.

Christina: Sometimes it is challenging, because we come from a very "devised" work background, to just sit down and write. I tend to block myself, I tense up and censor what I am writing. I have a hard time being free, just sitting down and writing.

Stephen: No one wants to sit down and write. You've got to do it anyway. But the people who do, who do it anyway are the ones who create work. Repeat, repeat, repeat.

Wendy (talking about a class with Joanna Merlin): When you approach writing try and approach with expanding to it, rather than contracting. It is hard to write from a contracted place. Open yourself, expand to the "obstacles" and give them the life of a character. Let them come out and say what they need to say. Then find the gesture that will banish these obstacles from the space.

Becca: There is a really interesting TED TALK with the woman who wrote Eat, Pray, Love that talks about the process of creative writing that I would recommend. Also The War of Art by Stephen Pressfield. That motivates you to work.

Stephen: That's a great piece of writing. Read it.

Lauren: As actors, when we're stuck we do exercises to break through the surface. Do you have writing exercises that you do when you're blocked, or do you just write?

Stephen: Just write.

Lauren: We work on character study at school—where we can choose any character living, dead, fictional etc and write/devise a 20 minute piece and in that work I found it very useful to get up and work on my feet because I was exploring a character I would play. I'm not sure how useful it would be for me to get up on my feet and explore the character of a 55 year old man. I will never play that part.

Stephen: That's what is great about writing. You can live out those realities. You have to empathetically take on another's point of view. A 55 year old man has totally different worries, troubles, realities.

Becca: Do you try and not be obvious when you're writing?

Stephen: It's very hard to write and edit at the same time. You've got to turn the judgement off while you're writing. Then when you're editing you turn it back on.

Stephen (parting words): It sounds like you've got a really interesting topical piece that you're working on, but it's not about the subject matter. It's about how you feel about it. How you relate to the subject matter. Consider different points of view... maybe the narrator has a non-traditional point of view. Maybe she thinks that Nadia did it to herself? Find the provocative points of view. Get under the hood and really explore the nitty gritty. Find the areas and ideas that are repellent to you and explore them.

Margaret: Yes! The narrator doesn't necessarily need to start out as a likeable character. The audience and narrator don't need to get along.

Stephen: Right, but I find it useful if a non likeable character has a sense of humour. That's a great thing.

Margaret: It's odd to write characters that you play. It's an interesting paradox.

Kristine: When I write the characters sort of flow in, they come and go. The characters I write about are not for me to play, but as they develop I find that I have come through in some ways. The author comes through naturally.

Wendy: Do you know *The Libertine*? Johnny Depp's character begins by telling us, that we probably won't like him. He goes on to describe his faults etc.

Christina: That's really interesting, our narrator audience relationship is sort of implicit. It's assumed they get along, that they're comfortable with one another. But what if the narrator doesn't trust the audience, doesn't start out having a good relationship with them. She says... "you don't like me"... "I'm not special" ect.

Margaret: Yes, like she almost accuses the audience of being the people who don't pay attention to her, or don't care about her story and then grows and opens up throughout the piece.

Wendy: Yes, you want to go the distance with the character and audience, see a real transformation. You want dramatization, not illustration.

Margaret: Then we could really earn our ending and give the narrator character a much stronger arc, and a much stronger and growing relationship with the audience. The audience is her scene partner... and we need to explore her relationship with them.

Kristine: Are these characters victims?

Christina: In a way, yes, in a way, no. My character is a victim from the world's eyes, but not from her own. She doesn't ever realize that she is being taken advantage of. She has made peace with her choice to take her own life. She goes into it peacefully.

Kristine: There's a movie where the suicide scene is quite beautiful, the music, the movement, and the character is really at peace and calm.

Margaret: That is something we explore. Our moment of suicide is a contact piece, a movement piece, where the chorus sweeps up Christina at the moment she plunges into the water and she hardly touches the floor—Nadia killed herself by drowning. The moment starts peacefully, and beautifully for her and only turns nasty when her body is physically fighting the drowning, not her mind.

Christina: Yeah, she starts out and she is enjoying the moment until her reflexes and her physical being starts to fight back and she realizes that something is against her.

Margaret: It's interesting, writers talk about just sitting down and writing, pounding it out and then giving it over for interpretation by the directors/actors. We work oppositely. We came to the structure of our piece, we had the movement sections, we

had most of the non verbal stuff and then we had to fill in the gaps with writing.

Wendy: That's a way you can work too. That's how Ann Bogart works and it is becoming a new way to work on theatre. She allows to see what bits of dialogue need to come out. What are the missing parts. Does someone say something? Do something? Is it with words?

Margaret: We are both trained in Suzuki/Viewpoints from members of the SITI company and in devised work from our UWindsor Professor Gina Lori Riley, so that is how we came to this method of devising work, and where we borrow from in our process.

Christina: Yes, and I find myself hesitant to say we "wrote" this piece. We really devised it and then put it down on paper. I also sometime tend to call it a piece and not a play. We've brought SITI work into our devising... now we need to figure out how to incorporate Chekhov. Especially with the text.

Wendy: So is your company involved in the process? How many?

Christina: There are 5 people involved. In the most recent they were 5 women, which we like because it is a piece of work sensitive to a woman's experience, but not limited to. But we are the "directors". Sometimes we may have to alter which three women are in the piece with us, but we stay constant. We like to involve our company in the devising process though, it is collaborative, but we are guiding the process.

Margaret: We bring things to the table, and at the end of the day, say what does and doesn't work, but we like to work in an environment where our company brings things forward too and collaborates. Also, working with 5 women gives our piece a somewhat

feminist resonance.

Wendy: Which is a great thing. We need to write more roles for women.

Christina: Yes, that's how we came to this work! We were trying to find a show for young women to do... Canadian preferably, and there wasn't really anything.

Margaret: and we didn't just want to do a play that didn't really interest us... just because it was the only one that we could find.

Christina: So that's how we came to do our own work. And to develop our own show.

Tags:

Playwriting, Devised Work, Steven Adly Guirgis, Canada, chekhov, Chekhov, Suzuki/Viewpoints

The Center of The Theater (World) is... "There" Where Am I?

Ediana Souza, 15 July 2012

•

Very often when we hear that there projects going on in differen part of the world, we fell kind of out of place and we get a sense of doubt in us that make us feel maybe I'm

not in a right place to do theater or maybe I was wrong coming to this city to work and everything is happening in other places.

-

After all the discussion we realized that there are two ways to go about this problem (If in fact we can call it a problem), we can either feel bad about our situation, or we can be inspired to do our own projects. So, in a way at any moment or any place we can be the center of the theater.

The relationship between technique and talent

-

After all discussions we had, we were referred to Michael Chekhov's *To The Actor*, on page 154 he extensively explains the need of a technique especially for talented actors who think they don't need on.

The Actor-Outcast

Kristine Gilreath, 15 July 2012

11:30-1 Session:

The Actor-Outcast—what is the theatre we are meant to create and how do we reach the rest of the world? Can we? Should we?

Start time: 11:50 in Underground #2

In attendance: Kristine Gilreath

What is the theatre we are meant to create?

In high school, the theatre kids were the dirge of cliqued society. They were the ones who always wore black and they were the ones who placed the value of art above cures for cancers and great monetary gains. They were the weirdos. And yet, the people involved in theatre cure a lesser known cancer every time they enter a room with one another, and they are richer than the most successful playboy. Even though the theatre kid is cast away from the rest, the theatre kids together create a family, a wholeness, even an affectionately nick-named 'cult'.

Together we create a family. In ensemble-spirited rehearsals and in creating new theatre, there is often an atmosphere that permeates the toughest-skinned professional. There is a common cause, a seed from which we all grow. But sometimes the people we perform for are not from the same kind of seed. They watch for entertainment, escape, talent, a party trick, or for a grade from a class. At least, that is the case in collegiate theater in California, in my experience. Of course, on the East Coast and Europe, it would seem that more people go to feel connected and to spiritually enrich themselves through the trials of another character, to laugh and, equally importantly, to cry. So for some theatre-goers, it is a commodity. For others, it is a way into life.

I love being an audience member. Even before I became an actor, my spirit flew across the seats to the stage and sympathized with the struggles of my favorite, and

even least favorite, characters. There was an innate human truth in their performances, which is exceptionally remarkable if you are one of those who more often refers to acting as a lie that last three hours. But isn't it the lie that reveals the truth? How can that possibly be?

I often wonder the value of the actor and the value of the theatre. I began as a musical-theatre minded actress, who enjoyed the tap dancing, the sensation of singing, the joy and the standing ovations, and most importantly of being someone with relationships (with other characters) unlike what I had experienced off the stage. In three years with the same people at a university or a high school, there were many who I may have never really developed a connection with if our characters had not loved each other in the scene or the show. So in being an actor, I could feel the circumstantial friendship and lasting love, the comrodery that united as long as the show connected us. There was a lot to be gained for me. Yet, I wonder if someone as lonely as I was (and sometimes am) can really connect with others. My character can. But I am the one standing on the stage in front of that crowd, reaching to them, the audience and actors; seeking to draw them in, to share my world and who I am so I can have a piece of myself go with them, and I can feel the wholeness of having pieces of them come with me.

I love that with the work of Michael Chekhov, I am not constructing a character who isn't me. Instead, it is a character who walks out of a place inside of me, born from the text and myself. I go with that character, I am that character, and when the play is over, I leave them in the theatre, but their failures and triumphs fill up my life in the same way that character would have if I was as audience member instead of an actor in that circumstance. The difference, I suppose, is that as an actor, I won't ever forget the Jane Doe that walked out of me. As an audience member, I might need to see the

show again.

So, as an actor, I feel pretty fulfilled. As an audience member, I've learned a little bit about what an audience looks for and what they see and feel. But what about me as a writer? A creator of theatre? I am terrified of my own words. Writing all this out knowing that it has the potential of being published without a thorough revision is almost horrifying. I can only hope that it will be deliciously raw... There is no one in the room with me now, and I suspect they will not come, but that is the beauty of this Open Space day: the people who come are the right people. The lights have timed out, and only the daylight through the slivers of window at the top of the room is filling it up. It's prettier this way; the light and the shadows mark up the walls with their direction.

Perhaps I am the only one to answer my own question, as convoluted as it is. I can rephrase it so many different ways: Why do I matter? Why should the words I write or speak matter? Does anyone else feel the same way as I do? Can my experience with being an actor-outcast resonate with an audience? Do the things I care about matter to others? Do the stories I wish to tell need to be told because others need them? I can't say what they need, nor can I say what they want. All I can say is there are stories inside of me that want to spring out of my playwright. The first step of letting those words grow, establish themselves, and leave my overprotective heart is the hardest.

I am grateful to have learned this week several valuable things. First, the writer John Patrick Shanley answered a form of my active question by saying that 'The pyramids were not built by the architect, but by an entire society. Steve Jobs didn't invent the iPhone, it was all the people who came before him as well as him. And the

achievement of one is everyone's achievement.' I hope to get the words he said while looking me straight in the eye framed in verbatim so I can read them every day to understand what they mean. This concept of art belonging to all of us regardless of who makes it relieves me a little of the stress I place on my own shoulders. Perhaps it is selfish of me to keep thinking of myself and asking why I matter. Perhaps its more selfish to withhold the things I want to say through art that may affect many more people than just myself. Maybe I could be the one to make a difference in someone's life. Or maybe it is vain of me to think that perhaps I did. Art seems to require a certain degree of ego. I know I wish to make art because I am therapeutically benefitted when I speak for myself, but why share if it won't help someone else? In a world of 8 million people, perhaps there are ten who would come to see my show or read my play and perhaps one of them will have their vision adjusted 10 degrees to the left. That would be some kind of miracle, a truly miraculous thing; I think I would feel the web of all human beings past, present and future, globally fire up in me. That idea has me radiating all over this empty room. I guess I won't know what my art can do until I release it.

-Kristine Marie Gilreath

Michael Chekhov Canada

Christina Bryson, 15 July 2012

Title: Michael Chekhov Canada

Convener: Lionel Walsh

Participants: Lionel Walsh, Cathy Albers, Christina Bryson, Llyandra Jones, Sydney Haslam, Miranda MacDougall, Margaret Evraire, Aein Moradi, Lauren Dobbie, Rena Polley, Deborah Robertson, Suzanne Bennett, Jared Bishop, Deborah Keller, Karine Scialom

Notes

- How to create a studio in Canada that not only continues the training of the technique, offer workshops, but also produces their own plays
- Umbrella organization?
 - Example of Newfoundland Co-op (CodCo) – artists can apply for grants under the title of the established umbrella organization
 - CodCo: a name used by anyone who was a member, in order to apply for grants and do a show. Establishes the name, but new members can benefit from the status of the umbrella organization
- Do you start smaller?
- A co-op doesn't necessarily work the same way as a business
- Rena: Would like to do something like this in Toronto, but keeping it open, bringing in the teachers, maybe not start with a permanent space, but start with an agreement. Where do we start? Build a website: here are the teachers, here's where we are, what we're doing, do workshops under our umbrella.
 - Yearly conference?
 - There is already a community in Toronto, we just need to put a voice to it, find ourselves a name and potential spaces
- When everyone gets back (Toronto) – put together a website/contact information
 - Meet at beginning of October, come up with content/structure, members log-in, make a short movie/trailer?,
- Collective is not to make money, minimal honorariums for teachers, but about spreading the word and creating a forum for artists to come together and learn and put into practical use the Chekhov technique
- Suzanne: Interested in on-going practice, beginning a foundation of practice (not necessarily flash workshops)

- Spencer Robson been trying to establish a weekly drop-in in Toronto, we already have a community, let's merge together
 - The Creations Lab, in Toronto (\$20 for two hours)
 - Get together, jam ("The Actor's Gym/Lab"), drop in \$5 – a way to start spreading word
- Rena willing to take ownership of website and workshops, Christina/Margaret/Llyandra willing to take ownership of the space (in collaboration with Spencer), Miranda and Sydney can do whatever they can from Windsor
- Teachers already existing in Canada: Lionel Walsh, Rena Polley, Peggy Coffey (have official certificates) ...also, Cynthia Ashburger, Sara Jane, Julie Legalle,
- Labs: Review, experiment, take turns teaching and exploring, how do we practically apply this technique to our work as actors → How is this useful? Keep conversations sparked and alive, spark ideas, spark the creation of events
 - Keep a blog on the website on what we are working on and discovering
- Potential Name: "Chekhov Open Space" (Open Space Studio?)
- Establish a chatroom? Post what will be happening each week, people share offerings,
- Maybe offer session deals, pay for 4 classes, get a "card" (punch every time you go), buy different session packages
 - Pay each time you show up: ex. Come to 4 classes, get the next class free
- Monday Night (?) Tuesday Night?
- Potential Spaces:
 - Suzanne has a friend that runs Fever Graph
 - Creations Lab
 - Red Theatre
 - The Winchester
 - Dance Makers

- Lionel will be in touch with Spencer
- Rena/Llyandra will undertake the website
- Christina/Margaret, point people in Toronto, search for spaces
- Reaching out to students through department heads, asking for student contacts
- Website:
 - Who we are / mandate, etc.
 - Classes and Workshops
 - Bios and Contact
 - Open Space
 - Promotion Forum (“bulletin board” / chatroom)
 - Productions
 - Calendar
- NAME: Michael Chekhov Canada (MCC)
- MISSION: To practice and further the work of Michael Chekhov technique in Canada by sharing, teaching, and producing
 - “Michael Chekhov Canada: Sharing. Teaching. Producing.”
- Get Joanna Merlin to quote/vouch for us, not officially associate with them but give them credit, know that we are trained by MICHA
- 4 or 5 website administrators
 - Workshops/productions need to pass through Lionel, Rena, Llyandra
 - E-mails through the website : soandso@michaelchekhovcanada.ca
- Free legal advice, taxes, etc. from her aunt
 - Bank account?
 - Do we incorporate? (Then we are bound to paying taxes)
 - Best way to go about creating an artist co-op?
- Float / cashbox – bookkeeping, keep track, self-generating
- Memberships?

- Mailing list for productions
- Mailing list for classes/workshops
- Facebook page

Tags:

Canada, sharing, Chekhov, teaching, Canadian theatre

Creating a thriving Chekhov performance ensemble/company

Rebecca RICH, 14 July 2012

Title of Session: Creating a MICHA Professional Performance Ensemble

Convener: Rebecca Rich

List of Participants: Rebecca Rich, Liz Shipman, Marcina Zaccaria, Christine Gilreath, Karine Scialom, Peter Tedeschi, Janice Orlander, Linda Klebbinger, Thais (from Brazil)

Discussion/Notes

To create a MICHA (Chekhov) Company Ensemble – a place to put the practices/work from the workshops into performance:

Do I have a vision of what this would look like?

Rebecca had the dream vision to look at strong regional theaters to see what they look like. Could it look like the Guthrie? Could a Chekhov company be commissioned to do new work? Like a theater company in Philadelphia (i.e. Pig Iron), the company could

devise and re-envision work for the future.

What if there were a place to put the artists? What ideas do you have that could make this happen?

Peter thought that within a year from now, a few people find a way to get together to create a piece, even only 20 minutes, and propose it as an evening activity for MICHA. To be a fully staged production. Maybe a deadline could be set for an evening workshop? When trying to create an ensemble, start slowly and create the ensemble by working well together.

Rebecca would love to have more happen out of the ensemble. How do we get that to happen.

Marcina thought that perhaps ensemble would be created by starting online and having a possibility of creating the work with ideas or via skype before going into rehearsal space.

Peter thought that a deadline would be the best thing to consider before creating an ensemble.

To ask many to come from California, Boston, or other areas can be challenging. How do we deal with that?

Liz suggested: with the matrix, there was a spearhead. The director put together the ensemble script piece. People could come from anywhere, Sweden, Columbia, and we were able to meet together. It cost no money because one of the members of the

group got the space, and actors were able to fund their own travel.

The Summer and Christmas time were primary moments for finding time. It would be very feasible to find a way to make that to happen.

Having worked in Croatia with people from Croatia, Peter thought that Suzanna Nikolaivich and other MICHA people, should have met together and having a sense of forum. Sagrab Youth for New Works. (young/new works not children's theatre)

Often with small theater companies, actors create a piece together, and charge suggested donation and are able to break even. With time, energy, and resources, perhaps look for a fiscal umbrella towards Fractured Atlas and The Field. The garment district theater company, Janice's company, was able to register with ART/ NY, in terms of having a small theater company. Board members, minutes have to be presented at the end of the year. They work together and put up work.

Goal/deadline is important. Thought of "business plan."

MICHA as an educational organization, they would be very supportive of production – but likely not be the producers. The philosophy/mission of MICHA is carrying on the work of Michael Chekhov in a training capacity, as opposed to production. A MICHA committee might be able to see it, and decide what to produce. Perhaps, an approval process might make sense?

When you are making the work; who is the audience? Are you making work for other actors? Rebecca suggested creating/producing work to put the Chekhov practice into

more tangible/visible performance to inspire even more practice. At MICHA, the work is often over when it's over. The "playing" is left hanging; perhaps next year (or in future), it might be interesting to see what happens if there's some practice with an eventual "result" in mind.

What is the willingness to grow slowly? What is the willingness to continue the work w/ a group of actors/teachers/directors of Chekhov technique before/after workshops? Creation of a company – a visible performance company. Suggestion of either NYC or Philly (Janice, Rebecca) to create a series of days and times to work together. Find a core group of run it/be involved.

Dawn Arnold and others have their own theater company separate from MICHA.

Divided Consciousness - The Actor/Audience Relationship (new quality of perceiving).

Ragnar Freidank, 14 July 2012

Note Taker: Wendy Thompson

Convenors: Jorg Andreas/Wendy Thompson

Attendees: Jessica Cerullo, Deborah Robertson, Janice Orlandi

This session began as an "open content" conversation between Jorg and Wendy.

Is theatre healthy or does it make you sick? And how is that related to Chekhov?

Michael Chekhov's acting is creating a different perception in the audience through the experience of "divided consciousness".

Actors have usually experienced this awareness, however, may not have the words to describe it. Michael Chekhov defines it in *The Path of the Actor* where he talks about playing the role of Skid.

As a teacher too it's possible to experience the divided consciousness where the teacher and the students come together as one.

As students we look for a teacher who can open the door to enter that place. When you leave the studio or a great performance it is that experience that sustains or has a residue that lingers or lasts for many hours.

In inspired moments of teaching you are co-creating with students.

“As a teacher my learning from my students is the true beauty in my life”.

It's the same for the actor engaged through divided consciousness with the audience.

Tags:

New Quality of Perception, Actor/Audience Relationship, Healthy Theater, Divided Consciousness

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Tags:

New Quality of Perception, Actor/Audience Relationship, Healthy Theater, Divided Consciousness

Playing together as an ensemble and see what comes out of it

Hugo Moss, 14 July 2012

Convener: Karine Scialom

Participant at start of session: Hugo Moss

We talk about what an ensemble is, either in the form of a theatre group or as a way of working and creating, different roles within an ensemble, director, actors, shifting roles.

New participant: Wendy Thompson

We read M.Chekhov's "declaration" of the ensemble (exercise 13 of TO THE ACTOR, second paragraph), and then we moved into the space to work or play, or something.

"What if two of the walls were mirrors, and we could see each other and ourselves in various ways/moments."

We played with the atmosphere and relationships which ensued, some words, short exchanges.

Turning point: we realized that "ensemble is the willingness to 'what if?'" This informed the rest of the session.

New participant: Thaís Loureiro

The arrival of a new person was an important moment, giving voice to her, including, keep the listening going.

Thaís suggested new game: Two and Only Two

Defined the space and played game where two people are always in movement, and only two people.

Pause for talk, and after being aware of our breathing, we decided we needed to bring in the work/ exercise more Ease. Crossed threshold back into the space, and used M.Chekhov's "meditation" for finding Ease (gravity versus inclination upwards) and Whole - and we worked more and found some beautiful moments, very connected.

Then it was time to go.