

AN ACTOR PREPARES

Coordinator: Bruce Smith

An Actor Prepares combines an analysis of acting theories and practices that have evolved in American actor training with in-class exercises, textual analysis and performance. The study group focuses on the Stanislavski system, Strasberg's "method" and related adaptations. Participants develop the ability to interpret a play from the actor's (and director's) point of view, including: character analysis; character's relationship to a production's interpretation; beat-by-beat scene analysis; and the application of these analyses to performing scenes in class. In class games and exercises, we develop skills in concentration, sensory perception, playing an objective, physicalizing, overcoming obstacles, improvisation and working with other actors. After this study group, participants should be able to more fully appreciate and assess acting performances in the professional theatre.

Note: This study group is designed for people with **little or no previous acting training**. Participants must meet and rehearse with other participants outside of class-time.

Bruce Smith taught theatre and directed plays for 20+ years at the college level. Once upon a time, he thought he wanted to be an actor.

Type of Study Group: Discussion of theory and theater games and exercises

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

Henrik Ibsen; Ibsen: *Four Major Plays Vol. 1*, trans. by Rolf Fjelde (Signet Classics, 1965 & 2006; ISBN-13: 978-0451530226, \$6.95)

NOTE: Ibsen's plays will be used in script analysis and scene presentations in class. Study group members will need the Rolf Fjelde translation of *A Doll House* and *Hedda Gabler* to participate.

Coursepack and/or PDFs distributed by email or online: essays on acting training theory and technique covering Constantin Stanislavski, Lee Strasberg, Robert Lewis and other American variations on Stanislavski's acting theory and practice.

******* SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS *******

Most study group sessions will be split between a discussion of the topics listed below for each week and improvisational games, exercises and practical activities by participants that illustrate the topics presented.

WEEK 1

TOPIC: Introduction of study group design and objectives
What is “American acting”? Acting before Stanislavski; Stanislavski in America

WEEKS 2-3

TOPIC: Stanislavski’s view of actor development
Play analysis: The Who? Why? What? of actions; “Objectives,” “Super-Objective” and “through line of objectives”; Actor’s Physical Apparatus: voice, movement, gesture, etc.; Building a character

WEEK 4

TOPIC: Applying Stanislavski to the analysis of a sample play (Play TBA)
Introduction to “Beat Analysis”

WEEK 5

TOPIC: Beat Analysis workshop

WEEK 6

TOPIC: Evolution of Strasberg’s Method
The Method: “Emotional Honesty” & “Private Moments”; Role of the actor vs. role of the playwright; The Actors Studio

WEEK 7

TOPIC: Alternative approaches: Stella Adler and Sanford Meisner
Stella Adler: The actor alone; Sanford Meisner: The actor’s relationship with other actors; Robert Lewis: Bringing it all together

WEEKS 8-9

TOPIC: Applying objectives, super-objectives and Beat Analysis

Analyzing an Ibsen play for an actor; What is this play about? What are the major “given circumstances”? What is the “through line of action”? What are the characters’ super-objectives?

WEEK 10

TOPIC: Discuss beat analyses

Sample scene preparation

WEEKS 11 & 12: Scene presentations and critiques

WEEK 13

Revised scene presentations if time permits

Reflection on acting experiences

NOTE: Please keep this date open in case we need it to complete scene studies in class.