

# Teaching Philosophy

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How do we create an individualized voice in a naturally competitive environment, how do we brighten the future for those of you so desperate to express yourself in the art of acting, and prepare you to challenge the status quo and become artists reflecting and changing the world?

Inclusivity. This, to me, is the most important aspect of education. The lack of judgment and the abundance of support to any budding artist, even to an established artist, is paramount to a successful education. To share and initiate both the beauty of what it means to be an artist and the immense struggle it takes to articulate the very elemental configurations of the work to actors who are just beginning their journey should be the goal of every teacher in this field.

Having been in the arts for all of my adult life and taught by world renowned acting teachers, I understand the need for a younger generation of actors to be both vulnerable and immovable to the chaotic environment in which they live. Achieving a more succinct and accurate reflection of the world or creating an imaginative future where we may portray a different existence in an industry changing at lightning speeds is the goal for all of us.

The concepts of observation and articulation are the foundations of acting. The actor is a conduit in which words, emotion, characterization and intellect combine to create a moving and challenging performance. It matters not what gender, color or belief system the actor holds. What matters is their innate need to express the connective humanity existing inside them and to be given the tools to express what all of us possess; a story to tell. The very thing that when truly articulated and unimpeded has the effect of the ancient Abrahamic ideal; "by saving one life, we save all humanity." The effect of one performance, one utterance, one movement has the potential to reverberate across time.

This all leads to the very idea of inclusivity. All of us have a story. In life some choose to tell it, others do not. Actors must tell. With humanity, empathy, a selfish desire to be present and to react to any given circumstance or moment they will learn how to not just be actors but artists with heart, artists with responsibility, and artists with the awesome duty to portray life as we see, feel, smell, taste, and imagine it to be.

The paradox of teaching acting is like the paradox of acting itself. We live on stage yet do not live on stage. We teach the mystery of acting yet still, it is a mystery. In that sense there needs to be a structure in which the young actor can literally touch the elusive mystery and attempt to mold it, to then begin to create their own, undisturbed, complex and unique voice.

These are some of the basic ideas I work from:

1. **OBSERVATION** - Seeing and experiencing an entire human being. Their behavior, what they are saying, what they are not saying.
2. **ARTICULATION** - The reaction to what is observed and the uniqueness of how we experience it.
3. **EMPATHY**- Toward another, toward ourselves, toward the character we play, and toward the story being told. Where do we begin to understand what empathy is? How do we begin to understand the way it can help mold how an actor responds and expresses themselves.
4. **PLACE** - The ground on which we stand. Experiencing as the self and no one but the self. A healthfully selfish place to live.
5. **TRUTH** - Physically, emotionally, intellectually. What is our own perspective of the world at any given moment?
6. **RESPONSIBILITY** - The actor as "citizen", piloting the work through empathy and responsibility. In its purest form, acting demands of us to be the messengers, interpreters and protectors of story. As the actor works and explores we also must find our way to be responsible for the story we're telling. Whether it be ours or another's. The actor as "citizen" engages us socially, politically, emotionally and psychologically to the story, the character and to the intention of its creator.

These are large ideas, vague in a certain sense, but necessary to explore and meant to be lofty goals to reach for, not to simply be available. It takes years for us to develop the emotional and physical vocabulary we use as actors. Through carefully designed exercises we start the practice with these basic ideas and build from there. Every small discovery we make is part of the larger journey, the fearless pursuit through the welcoming unknown into a brief moment of clarity and knowledge is the engine moving us all forward. It is a lifelong pilgrimage toward truth, a never ending search for specificity and focus. It is a path toward bearing witness to society, the human condition, and the privilege of allowing others to do the same through your performance. It is and always will be a joyous exploration of the soul no matter how difficult and arduous it may be.

And yet, there are some equally conflicting and challenging obstacles in the journey toward mastering the basic areas I define above. I call them the “Elements”.

- 1. Fear**
- 2. Self-Consciousness**
- 3. Doubt**
- 4. Permission**
- 5. Ego**

These elements are like wind, fire, water, air, minerals even. The very essence of our being at times, even to the most adjusted, the most savvy, the most confident. They

affect us all. The facing of these challenges can be monumental but never impossible to manage. They will become your friends, your cohorts, your motivations to tell your story and you will be able to use them for good where they will try to convince you they are only there to bring you down.

I am well versed in Meisner, Stanislavski, The Method, Clowning, Psychodramatic improvisation and of course my own imagination. I use all of it to explore what I've mentioned. Along with these ideas I think it is vital for young students to read plays, novels, short stories and screenplays constantly. To get a sense of history, structure to story, character, and inspiration. Once we know where we came from we can break free and pave our own way. My hope is to build actors who can take the art form to another level, to evolve into whatever the next incarnation of the art may be. It is my job to both discover for them the scenes and plays that would be helpful to them to grow and at the same time take their cues for what suits them, provokes them, and challenges them to find their true selves.

Yet, whatever the method, or whatever the words we use to help a blossoming student of acting, the idea of inclusion at every level feels to be the most important part. Make a young mind feel the importance of the world they experience, not defeat nor doubt their perceptions of it. Allow them to develop their ideas, their muscles, their literary and emotional life in a safe environment devoid of judgment, bias or preconceived notion. Let them flourish in a program to build the strength it takes to conquer and even change the status quo they will be entering into.

Nurturing character through the work, individualism through risk, idealism through what was, and purpose through discipline; all in order to achieve success as an artist in the 21st century. And in the end, nurture, challenge, support, guide and then... get out of the way. They all will definitely fly at some point. Watching when and how that happens is worth everything.