

INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

This class focuses on the needs of every lawyer or professional who must deliver a polished, expert, compelling and yet natural “performance” under pressure, whether your audience is a jury, a judge, or a client. You will learn techniques for dealing with stage fright, sure-fire strategies for winning over your audience, and the skills you need to make your case clear.

There is an expression in the theater: “the actor who uses every part of himself is irresistible.” Actors are the ultimate communicators. It is not our intention to make you stage-worthy actors, but rather irresistible communicators in the public forum.

Course Outline

Week 1: EVALUATION: Presentations by each student. Through the critiques we begin to introduce the basic techniques and vocabulary of acting including relaxation, use of energy, concentration, imagination, dramatic tension, commitment, and communication. Each participant will be evaluated for eye contact, body language, vocal issues, organization, emotional accessibility, and demeanor.

Week 2: SOUND: Words have meaning, and your voice conveys meaning. The goal is for our voice and use of sound to relate a story independent of words. Participants learn a comprehensive vocal/physical warm-up: Loosening up, Breathing, Vocal Production, Projection, Tongue Twisters. We begin to learn a Shakespearian text as a basis for our voice exercises.

Week 3: ACTION: The most fundamental of all acting principles, this class emphasizes the importance of specific intentions and strong motivations in communications. Learning “objectives” (how you want the audience to react to you) to help physicalize and empower communication.

Week 4: CONNECTION: Students find a personal way into their text to illustrate commitment, credibility, and persuasive power. Exercises for connecting the theme to the audience. Students use their Shakespearean sonnet as the basis for writing micro-plays.

Week 5: STORY: How to tell a story through text, through the inflection in your voice, through the movement and gestures of your body and through structure is the focus of the week. Participants will create a storyboard or outline to give the presentation an effective shape and takes the audience on a “dramatic journey.”

Week 6: AUDIENCE DIRECTED: How to take the audience on an intellectual and emotional journey. Through activating the outline, we direct the audience to react in the way we plan.

Week 7: DRESS REHEARSAL: Putting the presentations back together and practicing the acting techniques with the text. Shakespearean texts will be performed as scenes or monologues.

Week 8: PERFORMANCE: A summing up in practice of the previous lessons through prepared presentations.

DATES: September 25 – November 13, 2023

INSTRUCTORS: Gillian Drake & Robert Bowen Smith

TIME: 6:45 to 9:30 PM

FEE: \$760

LOCATION: Spooky Action Theater 1810 16th Street NW in the basement of the Universalist National Memorial Church

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