The Art of Acting — Drama as a Path of Inner Development

The basis for any true art is our ability to live... in the World of Imaginations.
— Michael Chekhov, To the Actor

Michael Chekhov (1891-1955), deeply inspired by Rudolf Steiner’s anthroposophy, taught that the art of acting can reveal the highest in the human being, and that Theater can be a healing force in world culture.

Chekhov’s imagination- and movement-based dynamic exercises have a surprising and exhilarating power to help the student access his own and the character’s inner core by generating an experience of the whole human being. As students train their body, voice, and imagination, they develop a healthy, flexible soul life and a soft, permeable physical body.

Where other methods compel actors to draw on their limited pool of personal emotional experience, Chekhov’s technique draws upon our vast store of healthy inner resources, creatively engaging the whole human being.

An outstanding actor and teacher, Chekhov had among his students numerous famous names, among them Marilyn Monroe, Anthony Quinn, Clint Eastwood, Mala Powers, Yul Brynner, Gary Cooper, Gregory Peck, and Beatrice Straight. More recently, Johnny Depp and Anthony Hopkins have acknowledged Chekhov’s influence on their work.

The Art of Acting is a challenging, supportive, playful, soul-stretching opportunity for adults to experience Chekhov’s techniques for exploring the foundations of human character and self-expression. This course is a rewarding experience for actors, aspiring actors, and anyone seeking deeper self-awareness. Through art, we discover new horizons of life and new facets in human beings.

In the course of ten monthly Saturday or Saturday-plus-Sunday-morning workshops, participants will learn craft-enhancing tools and techniques. We will journey together on a path of movement and gesture through which we will explore the healing and creative spaces between Me and the Other, Me and the World, and Me and My Self. Because Chekhov taught that every actor should possess a varied bag of tools, guest teachers at selected workshops will provide introductions to such specialties as improvisation, poetry, clowning, and speech. At the end of the year, our work will culminate in a performance/sharing for the community.

No acting experience is required — only a desire and willingness to play and explore!
November 20, 2010: INTRODUCTION
Chekhov's Nine Basic Exercises help the actor to: increase inner strength; develop the ability to radiate and receive; acquire a sense of form; enhance feelings of freedom, ease, calm and beauty; experience the significance of inner being; and learn to see things and processes in their entirety. This basic training makes the body finer and more sensitive, enriching psychology and beginning to give the actor a degree of mastery over his or her instrument.

December 11, 2010: CHARACTER TOOLS
Using imaginary centers, the imaginary body, and specific exaggerated features, we distinguish the differences between actor and character, and develop the ability to step into and out of a full and alive character.

January 8 & 9, 2011: GESTURE
We explore the invisible soul movement that colors everything a person does or says, and learn about movement as the key to our power and our desires. Guest instructors LAURA GEILEN and BENEVIDA BERTAU will introduce us to the magical realm of clowning.

February 26, 2011: PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE
A deeper study of the archetypal gesture that belongs to each character and informs everything he says and does. We learn how strength, type, and quality of movement conjure the life of feeling and will, and explore the possibility of recognizing, choosing and creating a new and different psychological gesture.

March 9 & 10, 2011: IMAGINATION AND INCORPORATING IMAGES
Working consciously to develop objective imagination, we soon find that characters can grow and develop by themselves. When the right relationship is made with our life of images, sparks of inspiration can strike with greater frequency and accuracy, and our body can begin to be molded for children, Drama for the Little Folk and the Middle Folk, and workshops across the country, and offers drama to special needs adults in New York and Pennsylvania. Laurie is Waldorf-educated, holds a BA in Theatre Arts, and also trained at Sunbridge College and Rudolf Steiner College.

David Anderson is a founder and Executive Director of Walking the dog Theater, www.wtdtheater.org. He holds a post-graduate degree in Waldorf Education from Emerson College, England. He studied Speech and Drama at Threshold Theater in Christchurch, New Zealand, and has performed throughout North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

Benedicta Bertau trained as a Waldorf teacher at Emerson College, England, and holds a BA in Dance/Eurythmy from Helicon College in The Hague. She also trained in Physical Theater in Chile, the Chekhov Acting Method in Berlin, and Clowning in the Netherlands. Her extensive credits include teaching acting, dance and clowning, directing, and acting.

Laura Geilen trained in dance at the Boston Conservatory of Music, has a BA in Human Services from Lesley University, and is a graduate of the Spacial Dynamics Institute and the Camphill Social Therapy Training. She is a member of Walking the dog Theater’s OFF LEASH! Improv Theater Ensemble, and a Clowning Facilitator with Nose To Nose of North America.

Ted Pugh, a professional actor since the early 1960s, was a founding member of the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, CT under the direction of Jon Jory. He has appeared on Broadway, Off-Broadway, and in regional theatres in the US. He trained at the Michael Chekhov Studio in New York City, and was certified as a teacher by Beatrice Straight and Dierdre du Prey in 1983. A co-founder and co-artistic director of The Actors Ensemble of New York, Ted has taught workshops throughout the US, Europe and Russia.

Fern Sloan, an actress for over 30 years, is co-founder and co-artistic director of The Actors’ Ensemble of New York. She was certified by the Michael Chekhov Studio in NYC to teach the Chekhov technique, and served on its faculty; she has performed and taught the Chekhov technique in the US, Canada, Ireland, and Europe. Fern was co-director of the Speech and Drama Program of Sunbridge College, and has played leading roles in numerous regional theaters and Off-Broadway.