

## THE ART OF ACTING 6: NOTES FROM A DAVID MAMET WORKSHOP

Ashley writes:

Hi Daniel -

I'm giving you the notes verbatim, so all the "fucks" are there. But, hey, that's what the guy said.

NUMBER ONE Lesson of Acting

The only Rule (since rules were made to be broken).

DON'T BE LATE

This chick walked in maybe, *maybe* seven or eight minutes late and he [Mamet] yelled at her at *the top of his lungs*. He said: "I can't teach you *how* to act but don't you ever insult anyone and waste their time by being late." *No Excuses*.

"That's all I can really teach you today." - D.M.

So hey, on with the notes.

*THERE IS NO SINGLE METHOD THAT WORKS ALL THE TIME*

*Propositional Aesthetics* - the Ancient Ones.

Popular thinking: if you don't prescribe to these things (Uta Hagen's teaching, the Method), you are doing something wrong.

No. Actually these things can *open you to a moment*. They are not law.

*Don't fall into the hypocrisy of mystery* - that only a chosen few can "be in the moment." And lose it - spend the rest of the time trying to find it. Acting is not a religion. *There is no mystery that we are trying to hide behind*.

It's what works for you. Just SHUT UP, SPEAK UP, LISTEN!

But Acting *is* a mystery. Acting itself. Because some people are just naturally good at it.

Remember, for those that *are good*, it's [acting] always going to be traumatic. You will never find self-satisfaction. No matter what your name is - you're never above it [the struggle and the dissatisfaction].

## **THE DRAMA**

Drama is:

*Searching for something hidden.*

It is either:

1. Restored to the universe
2. Revealed

*Don't Create Chaos*

It's there, or it wouldn't be drama.

Create *ORDER* out of chaos. Really concentrate on the *other* players.

Drama is conflicting desires.

Find drama in the everyday.

## **THE SCENE**

The scene is a little play.

What is the scene about?

What is the character doing?

What does that mean in the scene?

What does that mean to me?

Your job is not to obey but to perceive.

Question: what is the nature of the scene, and its purpose to the text?

Answer: Be interesting – look at it cock-eyed. *Something like* what the writer intended – the obvious can be too obvious sometimes. *Be Bold*. Stick with a choice. It's likely the wrong one, but go in guns blazing. *Make an impression* or stay home. There is too much competition and too many starving actors.

You only have *one moment*. *Prevail* in that moment (not in three pages – I've lost my interest).

Responsibility of the scene = bullshit.

Situation = bullshit.

Character = bullshit.

Pull away - WHAT DO YOU WANT, GOD DAMN IT!

You have a point to prove - stick to it. Fight it out. Don't be general. Don't be universal. *BE SPECIFIC.*

"I want to prove (whatever) point this fucking minute!"

Fuck the scene

Fuck the essence of the scene

Fuck the "emotions" of the scene

Speak clearly - what do you want?

*SPECIFIC*

What's it like? A party [for example]. What kind of party? Orgy, swimming, birthday?

NEVER use: "really" - "just" - "kind of" - "sort of" - in your objectives

It's hard to get past doing what you rehearsed. Put your "feelings" aside and *do the active.*

Pick up your cues. Unfortunately words are not always the best tools, but get what you want no matter how you get it!

Don't give up - keep trying in a scene.

Don't fight a losing position. Fight a winning position. Fight to *WIN.*

What do you do with a badly written scene?

1. The scene is not your responsibility.
2. It's what you do with it.
3. Dedicate yourself to truth on the stage.
4. Get in there and have a good time.
5. Don't *try* to make it work.

Just do something! Your body comes alive when you do something "like" the author intended.

Act "as if" - use your life.

1. What's your character doing in the scene?
2. What is the action?

Words - they're just gibberish, people.

Never surrender. Learn the lines - have your *own* objective. They don't mean a fucking thing.

Do "as if" to train your body how to react.

Realize what you already know. Thank you.

### **THE AUDITION**

SHOW UP ON TIME!

1. No excuses.
2. Dress appropriately.
3. Present yourself well.
4. *Please God* have good speech! Diction, diction, diction.

*FIGHT FOR WHAT YOU WANT* – with what you have.

Please realize that *your* feelings don't matter. Thank you.

Invest in yourself and take yourself out of the equation. Get out of your own way.

Forget the fantasy of the "chosen" one. We're all special – your mom was wrong.

The circumstance is always: at the right place + the right time = success.

Never repeat a command to a director. You're not a dog.

Don't do "actor-y" talk. It's soooo annoying.

(Have respect for your craft).

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO ACT IN THIS MARKETPLACE?

Be Prepared

Have Self-Respect

Have a Philosophy – A Way of Thinking

If you don't feel like it, go home.

### ***THE CORE OF DRAMATURGY – YOUR FOUNDATION***

*Devote* yourself to the stage, especially when you don't want to or feel like it. *You will be rewarded.*

Technique will not help you *act*. Remember: Spontaneity is an Art. Some people just *have* the ability.

What is happening? **BE PREPARED.** Always, Always, Always. Don't come to fail or you will.

Be something greater than yourself.

Be physical.

Just **BE** – don't "Act."

"I can't hear you." SPEAK UP - Engage your body. "That's what acting is, people."

"Don't be a talking head. Thank you."

Speak to get something from someone else, *not* to express yourself (we're not whine-y teenagers). WHAT DO YOU WANT? Speak up!

Please have *perfect diction*. Thank you.

Don't betray your limitations. Speak beautifully.

Take dance, take yoga, take karate. *DON'T SLOUCH*. It's so unattractive.

Take care of your body. Exercise - it will help you. It's your instrument - duh, people.

BODY - MIND - FOCUS

Don't constantly gesture (you dissipate your energy anyway).

Be physical. *Do what you have to do* to get what you want from the other person.

*Be creative* or go home.

Don't be a beaten dog - you're a man in a difficult situation. Stand up, damn it! *What do you want? Get it, demand it.*

Be direct. The action comes down to a verb. *To get him come out. To wake up a delusional fool.*

Pick an objective that will engage the other person. Suggest something more fun than yourself.

Look your partners in the eye. Let them know your *will*. No matter what.

*PREVAIL. HAVE POWER.* People respect power.

Gesture only to get what you want. Move to go to the blocking. Connect.

Don't dissipate your energy. Put it in your voice.

Do something active. Thank you. Have intent. Thank you.

Enforce the law - prove a point.

You're not there to create drama but to create order out of a chaotic situation as *simply as possible*.

Enunciation will help you achieve your goals. Speak up! What do you want!

Commit yourself. Evoke unexpected feelings.

You don't have to like it, just do it. *Especially* if it upsets you.

You don't have to believe a word of it - just engage with the other person.

Only rehearse the objective - rote. You *will* do what you rehearse!

Let the words come out as they will.

1. Go up on the stage - don't warm up on stage.

2. Be in *GREAT SHAPE*.

Reduce acting study to simple tasks:

1. Learn to speak.

2. Stand up straight.

3. Get a good objective.

4. Keep it simple, stupid.

Get so involved you have to do it *EVERY MOMENT*.

**MYSTERY, BRAVERY, BEING IN THE MOMENT**

*The stage is essentially upsetting.* There is always a sense of loss. If you're not losing, what are you winning?

*Live with Uncertainty.*

*Act with Uncertainty.*

That's what really makes a *GREAT ACTOR*.

Never be cocky – always be somewhat out of control and get something from the other person by truly listening. If you do, you can't truly control a scene – it has a life of its own. *FLOW*.

The superiority attitude of an actor (in a scene, in an office, in a workshop), is bullshit. The whole point is that we're not afraid to look stupid – to play the fool. To fuck up and fall in front of everyone.

Get out of your own way. Leave the attitude at the door. Search for the *truth*.

When you feel unsure, you're bringing mystery to the stage.

What do you care enough about that you don't care what you look like [while you're] doing it?

*BE BRAVE!*

Become comfortable being uncomfortable.

Be caught off guard. Come to *life*. Accidents *are* drama!

Do "something like" what the author intended. Have fun, and *don't settle for security*. How boring!

The unknown is *ALWAYS MUCH MORE FUN*.

In your legitimate desire to please, keep in mind: it's inappropriate, it's boring.

Remember: *FUCK IT. BE BOLD. BE MEMORABLE.*

Find what is not trivial. Don't degrade yourself.

Let the amateurs worry about the car, you worry about the motor.



Daydreams are fulfilling and irrational. Go for the irrational. *You're acting*. Indulge yourself.

Don't bring obedience to a scene – bring exhilaration!

Act out the fantasy. Enjoy! Don't worry about looking stupid – you probably do!

*Love* being involved in the fantasy.

If you're gonna live in this theatre world, for fuck's sake *LIVE IN IT*. Indulge the fantasy.

Encounter: Doubt, Shame, Humiliation. *It will finally be worth it.*

FINAL ANSWER:

“ACTING IS MORE ABOUT COURAGE THAN ANYTHING ELSE.”