

free things you can do for your acting

Everybody goes through times when there isn't a lot of broccoli in the crisper, for whatever reason. But that's no reason to stop doing work to develop yourself as an actor.

Here are some terrific things you can do to feed your creative soul or hone your craft while you're waiting for the financial picture to change.

- 1. Read.** Acting is about bringing the word to pulsing, transfixing life. So getting to know said written word better is never a bad idea. Read books about acting, read biographies of actors. read great novels, read pulp novels, read poetry, read the newspaper. There are plenty of options. But in our media-saturated world, spending some time reading is never a bad idea, and if helps you develop your sensitivity to the extraordinary expressive power of language, that's even better.
- 2. Study the Alexander Technique.** Wait, what? I thought you said this was a list of free stuff? The Alexander Technique is pricey high-end body-mind integration training. How do I get it for free? Well, it happens that there is an Alexander Technique Training Institute in Los Angeles, where people train to become teachers of the Alexander Technique. And such institutes often need people to serve as subjects for the teachers-in-training to practice on. So give them a call, and offer them the use of your body for their pedagogical purposes. There's a good chance you'll learn invaluable things about said body, for a song.
- 3. Meditate.** Practice the fine art of paying attention. There are all kinds of places to learn to meditate in Los Angeles. Here is one of my favorites, but there are many others.

4. **Study Pilates.** What does Pilates have to do with my acting? Well, acting as I teach it involves what Pilates people call core awareness. The actor's awareness should rest in the abdominal core, in order to achieve true visceral activation and the radiance that comes with it. Pilates is a great way to work on that, because Pilates is about learning to use your abdominal core muscles in everything you do. Literally: everything. There are lots of how-to videos on Youtube, such as this one.
5. **Journal.** "It's so funny, you go to acting school thinking you're going to learn how to be other people, but really it taught me how to be myself. Because it's in understanding yourself deeply that you can lend yourself to another person's circumstances and another person's experience."—Lupita Nyong'o
So get going! Writing a journal is a great way to develop intimacy with yourself, an invaluable asset for an actor.
6. **Read aloud.** Pick up some Shakespeare. Pick up some poetry that speaks to you. Read it aloud. Read it to yourself. Read it to your dog. Read it to your roommate. Read it to anyone who will listen. Savor the sounds of the words and the rhythm of the sentences.
7. **Improv.** Look on Meetup for an Improv group near you, and join in the fun.
8. **Make a game out of being rejected.** Like this guy.
There will never be any shortage of people to reject you. If you have the nerve to do this one, your future as an actor looks bright.
9. **Go to the zoo.** Ok, this one isn't quite free. But if you can scrape together \$20, there are worse ways to spend it. Studying and learning to imitate animals is a hallowed form of actor training, and is wonderful for shedding inhibitions and exploring physical possibilities.

I'm sure there are others, and I'll add them as I think of

them. But there should be some things here to get you started.

the things you can learn from clickbait

This is total clickbait:

29 Formerly Huge Stars Who Are Basically Nothing Now

What's amazing is how many of these people WON OSCARS.

I think this says something about the importance of craft. Focusing on craft, on always getting better, means you're less likely to be a flash in the pan or the flavor of the month. It also keeps it interesting FOR YOU. I think people probably lose momentum in their careers because they lose interest. It can become a job like any other, and without the interest in how to do it better, it can grow stale.

Maybe some of these people were seriously interested in craft but lost their way anyway. Or maybe they decided they wanted to do something else. There's no way to know.

But it is sobering.

Morris Chestnut: "I always

try to get better. I still see acting coaches.”

Terrific interview with Hollywood veteran Morris Chestnut. And speaking of chestnuts:

Interviewer: Morris, you've had such a longstanding career in TV and in movies. What do you attribute that to? Some actors, you know, have a hard time sustaining their careers, but you've had such a long career. Why do you think that is?

Morris Chestnut: Wow, I think there are a number of different factors. I believe, for myself, a) I try to be a nice person. I come to work on time. I try to be prepared. But I think first and foremost, is I always try to get better. I still see acting coaches. I still go to acting classes. Even if I'm not in them, I go to watch them, because, I think as an actor, the more experiences we have, the more we need to be able to incorporate them in our work and use them for our work.

*I know a lot of actors, once they get a movie or once they get a show, they think that, that's it. They've made it, they don't need a coach, they don't need an acting class, they're good, but I feel that **every actor can always continue to get better**. I mean, Tiger Woods, the best golfer in the world, he had a golfing swing coach. Michael Jordan had a coach. So, you know, I would say first and foremost, you're just continuing to try to get better each day.*

So much wisdom in here.

Like that whole always-trying-to-be-better thing, which I wrote about in discussing Gary Marcus' book *Guitar Zero*:

The second prerequisite of expertise is what Ericsson calls

“deliberate practice,” a constant sense of self-evaluation, of focusing on one’s weaknesses rather than simply fooling around and playing to one’s strengths. Studies show that practice aimed at remedying weaknesses is a better predictor of expertise than raw number of hours; playing for fun and repeating what you already know is not necessarily the same as efficiently reaching a new level. Most of the practice that most people do, most of the time, be it in the pursuit of learning the guitar or improving their golf game, yields almost no effect. Sooner or later, most learners reach a plateau, repeating what they already know rather than battling their weaknesses, at which point their progress becomes slow.

Or take the whole every-actor-can-always-continue-to-get-better thing, which I have discussed in blogging about Josh Waitzkin’s remarkable book *The Art of Learning*:

So one of the first important distinctions Waitzkin makes is between different theories of intelligence. We all have a theory of intelligence, that is, a picture of what our mind is and how it faces challenges. Here he is on the two types:

Children who are “entity theorists” – that is, kids who have been influenced by their parents and teachers to think in this manner – are prone to use language like “I am smart at this” and to attribute their success or failure to an ingrained and unalterable level of ability. They see their overall intelligence or skill level at a certain thing to be a fixed entity, a thing that cannot evolve. Incremental theorists, who have picked up a different modality of learning– let’s call them learning theorists – are more prone to describe their results with sentences like “I got it because I worked very hard for it” or “I should have tried harder.” A child with a learning theory of intelligence tends to sense that with hard work, difficult material can be grasped – step by step, incrementally, the

novice can become the master.

Waitzkin goes on to cite a study by developmental psychologists that beautifully illustrates the hold that these theories of intelligence has over the minds of learners:

a group of children was interviewed and then each child was noted as having either an entity or a learning theory of intelligence. All the children were then given a series of easy math problems, which they all solved correctly. Then, all the children were given some very hard problems to solve— problems that were too difficult for them. It was clear that the learning theorists were excited by the challenge, while the entity theorists were dismayed. Comments would range from “Oh boy, now I’m really gonna have to try hard” to “I’m not smart enough for this.” Everyone got those problems wrong— but evidently the experience of being challenged had very different effects. What is most interesting is the third phase of this experiment: all the children were once again given easy problems to solve. Nearly all of the learning theorists breezed right through the easy material, but the entity theorists had been too dispirited by the inability to solve the hard problems that many of them foundered through the easy stuff. Their self-confidence had been destroyed.

Or the whole I-try-to-be-prepared thing.

You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

I think that was from a shampoo commercial in the eighties. But it’s undeniably true. And showing up prepared is the best hope any of us have for making a good first impression.

Thank you, Morris Chestnut. Very inspiring words.

“Everyone wants to eat, but no one wants to hunt”

I don't know who first said the quote that gives this post its title, but it's a righteous sentiment.

There was a profile of Baryshnikov in *American Theater* magazine recently. You may or may not be aware that Baryshnikov has become a major theater performer in the last few decades. This, from the profile, caught my eye:

What's your advice to young people looking for training today?

If you want to be in any kind of art form—musical theatre, drama, dance, Broadway—you have to start from your very early years and really learn how to read music, how to sing, how to dance, how to train your voice.

That's great if you're five or six years old, but many people who come to me to study acting are considerably older than that. So they should go back in time and get training from the time they were a small child? Well, basically.

It's not commonly understood that many of the successful people in the business now *have been doing this their whole lives*. They do things instinctively that untrained people can only do with great effort. Many people think they will come to Los Angeles and cash in on their looks and youthful vitality. They just need to take a few classes to learn how to not look like a clumsy neophyte in auditions and what their best camera angles are. Maybe a few improv and cold reading classes, and they're ready for prime time.

Sadly, no.

Learning a new language is difficult. Learning to read music is difficult. Learning to finger a flute is difficult. And yes, learning to act is difficult.

People watch their favorite shows and movies, and the actors in those productions make it look easy. They bring a lifetime of skill and experience, make it through the gauntlet of multiple rounds of auditions, and then are coached, directed, costumed, coiffed, made up, lit and edited so that no one ever gets to see them sweat. But as Bette Davis once said, in this business, you have to love the sweat more than the lights.

Some people come to my class and don't want to engage with the complexity of the framework that I present. But human experience is complex, and acting presents human experience, so it could **only be** complex. *Like any art form*. And that's actually a good thing. It's what keeps it interesting. I am frequently asked by students if they have talent. I don't answer the question. But to cultivate and nurture whatever talent you have been given, you have to have an *appetite for* this complexity. You have to be fascinated by it. You have to be able to become obsessed with it. If you can't do that, then while you may be able to trade on your native talent (and/or looks), there will be probably no growth, no development, no sense of discovery, and you will likely lose interest in the business, the way that Kurt Cobain stopped wanting to play "Smells Like Teen Spirit." It was a great song, but it even it grew stale after being played a few thousand times.

Everybody wants to eat, but nobody wants to hunt.

the great challenge of making imagined relationships feel like real ones

I came across a column on The New York Times website, called The Myth of Quality Time.

Columnist Frank Bruni shares a realization that he had about why he changed his mind about thinking that brief visits with family members or other loved ones were best:

With a more expansive stretch, there's a better chance that I'll be around at the precise, random moment when one of my nephews drops his guard and solicits my advice about something private. Or when one of my nieces will need someone other than her parents to tell her that she's smart and beautiful. Or when one of my siblings will flash back on an incident from our childhood that makes us laugh uncontrollably, and suddenly the cozy, happy chain of our love is cinched that much tighter.

There's simply no real substitute for physical presence.

Bruni is saying that the defining moments of relationships of any duration occur as they occur. Not on anyone's schedule. Not by appointment. Not by any kind of design.

What does this tell us, as actors? It tells us that the relationship-defining moments, the moments that make Blanche and Stella into Blanche and Stella, or make Macbeth and Lady Macbeth into Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, happen in the midst of long stretches of time the individuals in question have spent together. And it's also true that these special, definitive moments arise, unexpectedly and mysteriously, from the daily, mundane interactions, the exchanging of pleasantries, the

doing of favors, the reporting on how the day went, etc. The special moments of connection emerge from the everyday comings and goings, and the familiarity that grows in the process.

It's this familiarity, borne out of repeated, everyday interactions that occur over months, years, even decades, that actors attempt to create when they enter into an imaginary relationship in a fictional situation.

Doing this successfully is no small feat, and one that is, sadly, often taken for granted.

How to go about this process of making fictional relationships seem like real ones? There are some tools that I present in the class, which I'll describe briefly below, but the most important thing is to recognize that making a fictional relationship seem like a real one is not something to take for granted. There's no one way to do it, but it must be done. Too often people think it's as simple as saying "Ok, we're sisters" or "You're the boss, I'm the employee" and then you can get on with the all-important business of deciding how to deliver the lines or whatever. Keeping in mind the fact that a relationship is something that develops across an expanse of time, often a vast one, and is given definition both through the major milestones, good and bad, and through the process of unremarkable, everyday interaction, is paramount. If you keep these facts in view, you won't forget about what you're up against.

One important means of lending depth and substance to an imaginary relationship is to bring imagination and specificity to the defining moments of a relationship, the major milestones that I mentioned. How did the relationship come into being? What were its origins? What were the high points? The crisis points? How were the crises overcome, so that the relationship survived? Making these little short films of the imagination is a great way to begin to give the relationship a specific gravity. It's backstory, yes, but not a more or less

arbitrary stream of factoids strung together into a “backstory” or character bio; it’s backstory that focuses specifically on the defining moments of the relationship, its origins, peaks and valleys. We can call this process **particularization** of the relationship.

Another valuable tool is transference. The term comes from Uta Hagen’s book, *A Challenge for the Actor*. Transference means finding relationships from the actor’s own experience that approximate the relationships of the character to people, places and things. Playing Stella Kowalski? You want to find a transference to help you make the relationship with your Blanche feel more real. If you had an older sister who you were once close to, or even one you still are close to, you’re all set. If not, then you have to try to find another relationship from your own life whose essence approximates the relationship that the character you’re playing has with the character in question. Then you want to find ways to reinforce that transference. While you don’t want to be trying to think of the person from your own life while you’re rehearsing (you want to be present, in the moment), creating little rituals to regularly remind yourself outside of rehearsal of the connection can go a long way towards prompting the unconscious mind to direct the energy associated with the real relationship into the fictional one.

Also, taking care to always engage in relationship while rehearsing, that is, to treat every moment when you are actually rehearsing a scene as a moment of relationship in involving give and take and the pursuit of visceral need, then each of these moments acts as a deposit in the piggy bank of real relationship, and gradually, over time, the fictional relationship will start to take root and find a reality of its own. But every time you treat a moment of rehearsal as an exercise in remembering the lines or the blocking, this deposit in the piggy bank of relationship does NOT occur, in fact, when rehearsal is approached that way, a deposit is made

in the piggy bank of mechanical repetition, and that's NOT where you want your money.

These strategies are most effectively used together, in and out of rehearsal, to get over the bar of making fictional relationships seem like real ones. It takes work, but it's one of the greatest pleasures that the craft of acting affords.

the secret of their success

Japan has won three of the last five Little League World Series.

What's the secret of their success?

The team practices eight to 10 hours every Saturday and Sunday. Each morning is devoted just to fielding practice. The kids field endless bunts, and turn one double play after another.

Ten hours a day!

*"This is the Japanese way of doing sports, the same in karate as in baseball," he told me. "It emphasizes what we call konjo, or **grit and tenacity**. Repetition is important. You've got to repeat movements until you master them."*

He calls this yakyudo, the "way of baseball," just as kendo is the "way of the sword," or bushido, is the "way of the warrior."

They all focus on honing technique until it is flawless and instinctive. It's this way that Omae believes led to the team's victory two years ago.

*“We had no star players,” he says, “but our **discipline and repetition** of basic plays made our defense strong and helped us to finally win.”*

Longtime readers of this blog will find these sentiments very familiar. It's at the heart of what Josh Waitzkin has to say in his book *The Art of Learning*, which I ask everyone who takes my class to read. Also *Guitar Zero*. And Malcolm Gladwell. Betty Davis says you have to love the sweat more than the lights.

But as many times as I have remarked upon these things, they bear repeating. A prominent Hollywood acting teacher with a platform on a major industry website tells students NOT to rehearse, and says their scene partners would rather be at the beach anyway. This is a remarkable double-whammy: a teacher telling students not to rehearse, and then scaring them with the prospect of social rejection at the hands of their partners.

Actors are already up against it because the acting they consume lets them see the lights but not the sweat. The work is cast, costumed, coiffed, lit and edited for consumption for an entertainment-starved public. Aspiring actors don't see the sacrifice that was required, the sweat that Bette Davis mentions, behind those lights.

So telling actors not to bother with rehearsing and to worry about whether or not their partners would rather be at the beach is, as I have written previously, nothing short of criminal.

There was a reason Uta Hagen her book *Respect for Acting*. Telling people not to rehearse is an act of gross disrespect for the craft. Taking class, working on scenes, bringing obsessiveness, grit and tenacity to the class work, embracing the breadth of challenges that acting involves, and the difficulty of those **challenges**, is what respect looks like.

Take it from the Japanese little leaguers.

the actor: child AND adult

What draws many of us to acting is the “play-acting” aspect of it: we like to dress up and pretend to be other people, with other people who like to do that as well. There is something wonderfully child-like about all of this, and in fact, Earle Gister, one of my teachers at the Yale School of Drama, liked to quote Nietzsche: “Man’s maturity: to have regained the seriousness that he had as a child at play.” To be able to abandon ourselves to a world of the imagination, and allow our inner lives, our moments of triumph and exaltation, and our moments of devastating grief and loss, to be laid bare in the process. This process of fearlessly sharing ourselves with child-like abandon is what draws most of us to this prodigious pursuit.

However, on the way to being able to do that is an enormous amount of hard work. The acting we consume on TV and in the movies has been air-brushed, so to speak, with musical underscoring, lighting, editing, and all manner of show biz magic. That’s not to say it isn’t good, but great care has been taken to make sure that it looks effortless.

Acting isn’t effortless, though, most of the time, and learning to act is even less so. Learning to act necessarily means being brought face-to-face with your limitations, so you can begin to see the need to get beyond them, and to understand how what is being offered you in acting class helps you to get beyond them. In any endeavor, acting or otherwise, this process of being confronted with your current limitations is difficult but absolutely unavoidable. There is no growth

without this, no matter how you slice it, no matter what technique you are doing. And not everyone wants to go through that process, frankly, or at least acting, they learn, is not the craft for which they wish to subject themselves to this process.

The ability to face limitations, persevere, and ultimately move past them is an *adult* faculty. Children have to do some of it, as part of the process of growing up, but we tend to limit the amount of this that we ask children to subject themselves to, I suppose because growing up is hard enough, and because we worry that children don't yet have the emotional resilience to handle this process.

Facing limitations, failing, and getting up again and soldiering on: the ability to do this is something that we think of as a form of maturity. Whether this is in a martial art, or in learning a musical instrument, or a foreign language, or whatever: the tenacity and the ability to keep going in the face of failure is a hallmark of the grown-up. The real world is a tough place for anyone lacking some measure of this.

And there are other ways in which acting, in spite of its child-like essence of make-believe, asks for adult characteristics. In a previous post, I wrote about how adults are more sensitive to context in the way they understand things than children are. This is very important for actors, as every scene is embedded in a larger narrative, the full script, that functions as a context. But beyond that, acting asks for the readiness to take on a complex task that requires an array of abilities. We must be able to read closely and carefully, from the character's point of view. We must envision, with all of our senses, the people, places and things that make up the imaginary world of the role, and invest in that world, make that world of make-believe matter to us in the ways it needs to. We have to identify compelling

goals to pursue as the character, that help us to become absorbed with our whole being, heart, mind, and body, with the scene at hand. We must identify the major milestones or shifts in the scene, and understand how we arrive at them and how we are changed by them. We must have the ability, as we develop a performance, to maintain the shape of that performance, so that important parts of it don't disappear from one rehearsal to the next (a mentor of mine in graduate school, who had won awards directing Off-Broadway, said that it was ten years out of graduate school before she felt she was working with actors with whom she didn't have to live in terror of what was going to deteriorate in any given performance. Ten years! Out of graduate school!)

There is a breadth and complexity to what I have described above that requires maturity to undertake and sustain. This is not child's play, any more than playing a Mozart Concerto is, or playing a tournament tennis game.

It's these "adult" aspects of acting that surprise many beginning students of the craft. Again, after all, on TV they make it look so easy.

So we need both: we need never to lose our child-like ability to abandon ourselves to the present moment of make-believe, and we also need the very "adult" ability to craft our work. Both are indispensable.

"Plans are worthless but planning is indispensable." – Dwight D. Eisenhower

"The readiness is all." – Hamlet



on *Foxcatcher*

I was deeply impressed with *Foxcatcher*, which tells the story of eccentric money man John Du Pont, scion of one America's most well-known wealthy families, and the Schultz brothers, Mark and Dave, Olympians of working-class origins. Much of the discussion of the film in reviews casts it as a parable about the sense of entitlement among American oligarchs, and while that is not an inaccurate gloss of the film, *Foxcatcher* struck me at a deeper level. I saw it as a myth of the devouring of innocence that looks back to *The Great Gatsby*, and even further back to the Greek tragedy of *Hippolytus*, the story of a noble youth destroyed by his step-mother's lust.

The innocents in the tale, the Schultz brothers, are devotees of a craft: the ancient art of Greco-Roman wrestling. Mark (Channing Tatum), the younger, is the archetypal initiate: he is wholly devoted to the development of his skill. We see him in his cheerless apartment dining on Ramen noodles: he is a twenty-first century ascetic, dedicated to a practice that we come to understand is at the core of his being. In the moment when he tells his brother that he extracted "the largest number I could think of", \$20,000 a year, from his fabulously wealthy future patron, we learn that Mark is lost in the the world outside the gym, but Channing Tatum's soulful silences, and the opening sequence in which we watch Mark wrestle with a dummy, make it clear that the world inside the gym is world enough for Mark.

Not so for Dave (Mark Ruffalo), who is a gifted wrestler but also a father and husband. More importantly for the story, he is a gifted mentor. He is a true master of the craft in which he instructs Dave and others, but also possesses the psychological insight needed to develop young male athletes.

He is gentle and nurturing with his charges, a far cry from the “tough coach” cinematic stereotype. It’s clear that this light touch is exactly what the sensitive and troubled Mark requires to blossom.

The delicacy of the brothers’ loving relationship, devoted acolyte and wise adept of an ancient craft, is what makes the growing, insidious menace implicit in John DuPont’s patronage exquisitely discomfoting. I won’t say more than this about the story to avoid significant spoilers, but I don’t need to say any more to get at what I want to say. What is important about this film is its understanding of the rarity and fragility of the deep bond of trust and love between dedicated students of a craft (such as acting!) and the mentors to whom such students decide to entrust themselves. The film further understands that such relationships usually require some kind of context in which they can exist: often an institution of some kind. But institutions sometimes attract those whose true priorities are power and self-aggrandizement, so serious students and teachers who seek refuge in such a context are often subject to the caprices and whims of administrators with no understanding of, or interest in, the priorities of the teacher and student. The desire to learn and the desire to share understanding through teaching have a purity to them. It is the film’s great achievement to render this purity in the brothers’ relationship on the one hand, and the besieged status of this purity in a world whose ultimate priority is the consolidation of power on the other.

“Film acting is small.” Oh

really?

Just a couple of counter-examples. Feel free to suggest more in the comments.

The notion that “film acting is small and theater acting is big” is a cliché. Great acting is bold and truthful, regardless of the medium. An underwhelming, trivial performance will vanish down the memory hole faster than you can say Amy Adams or Anne Hathaway. An overly “large performance” may live on in infamy, but if you regard “film acting is small” as a deep and powerful insight about acting, you may have a long career of cautious, eminently forgettable performances ahead of you. Sadly, many young people aspiring to be actors regard this kind of soundbyte-y, easily-graspable, *facile* pseudo-insight as exactly the kind of thing that will help them feel more comfortable walking into an audition.

Deep vs. shallow is a much more useful distinction than big vs. small. Have you studied a script carefully, thought long and hard about the situations of the characters and the worlds in which their stories play out? Their dreams for the future, and their fears? Their past setbacks and triumphs, particularly in the realm of forming and sustaining relationships? Have you considered corresponding relationships in your own life? Have you found a way to look at the scene as an opportunity to form or repair a significant connection, rather than a situation in which annoyance or injustice must be squelched? Have you found a way to light yourself on fire? If so, you will likely shine, in front of the camera or on stage, especially with the help of a discerning outside eye. If not, well, at least you won't be too big. Never mind that in order to make sure you're not too big, you'll be **watching yourself**, monitoring yourself, measuring the “size” of your

acting, cutting yourself down to size, where necessary. That might make you, I don't know, a little *self-conscious*, but don't worry about that. Whatever you do, don't take a risk, don't dare greatly, don't expose anything raw. Because you know, if you do, they're all gonna laugh at you. Just keep it small. Safe and small.

"There are no small parts. Only small actors."

this is a test

Are you ready?

Are you ready to learn that being excited about getting up in front of people does not, by itself, make you interesting to watch?

Are you ready to read all assignments for the dates when they are assigned, and read them not just once, but until you feel that you have an understanding of what they say? Are you willing to take responsibility for finding all the texts in question, even when it takes some work to do so?

Are you ready to listen to lectures?

Are you ready to learn a framework for studying a script, a robust framework, a framework that is not a set of blanks to be filled in, like a tax form, but a series of prompts for imaginative exploration?

Are you ready to learn about objectives? Underlying objectives and plot objectives? Physical plot objectives and psychological plot objectives and psychophysical plot objectives, and what the differences are? Not just to hear these distinctions once, but to study them, master them, so

that you understand the criteria involved, are FLUENT in the criteria involved, so that you can actually use them in your work, they are not just some words you wrote in your notebook one time?

Are you ready study a script fastidiously, obsessively, extracting information about your character and her world, rearranging that information so that you can view it from a first person perspective, filling in the the gaps left by the script, so that you can genuinely feel that you have some sense of who the person is you purport to be playing?

Are you ready to have the holes in your preparation exposed in front of the class?

Are you ready to be a good scene partner, turning around phone calls and emails to arrange rehearsals outside of class promptly and courteously? Are you ready to be accommodating to your scene partner? Are you ready to partner and collaborate? Are you ready to recognize that your partner is an autonomous artist and is not waiting for direction from you? Are you ready to show up on time for rehearsals? Are you ready to work diligently and avoid getting off topic and talking about your personal problems in rehearsal?

Are you ready to memorize your lines perfectly, by the date given for this to be accomplished?

Are you ready to accept that you will not go up in class every week, that watching and listening will be the most important means of learning in the class?

Are you willing to find clothing for rehearsal that will help you enter the world of the character, including shoes, and bring those clothes to EVERY rehearsal and change into them? Are you willing to find and bring props that will help you create the environment that the scene takes place in and bring those props to every rehearsal?

Are you willing to do what is necessary to secure a place to rehearse that is conducive to productivity and concentration? If necessary, to contribute to renting a rehearsal space (by the hour) so that you and your scene partner have a neutral ground to rehearse in where you won't be interrupted?

Are you willing not to skip weeks of rehearsal, to forego the temptation to skip the week after you get up in class, instead recognizing that after you have gotten feedback is when you need to immediately plunge back in to rehearsal?

Are you ready to listen actively in class, thinking about how the discussion and feedback might be applicable to you?

Are you prepared to support and encourage your classmates?

Are you ready to spend time alone, daydreaming productively, particularizing and investing in the world of the character and the relationships in which he is involved? Work that you will not get any kind of immediate or direct confirmation that it is valuable or that you are doing it right?

Are you ready to show up for class even though you didn't get enough sleep last night and feel like maybe you should stay home and catch up?

Are you ready to make asked-for adjustments, trusting that even if you don't see the point of them, you may see the point of them once you make them?

Are you ready to learn that they don't call acting a craft for nothing, that it is very difficult, much more difficult than the actors on your favorite TV show make it seem? Those actors are no doubt very skilled, and their work is packaged by skilled directors, editors, and others who make it look easy; are you prepared to accept that it isn't easy at all?

Are you ready to recognize that while there are some rules of thumb to learn, what is really valuable in the end is

developing an instinct for good ways of looking at things and good choices, and developing such instincts requires sustained effort over time and an enormous amount of repetition of the process?

Are you willing to recognize that “being in the moment” or “being vulnerable” or “engaging physically” are not things you can make a simple decision to “do”, but are skills that involve a lot of preparation and practice to do in any deep or meaningful way, and that developing any skill in them at all will require enormous, sustained dedication?

These are the things that will be asked of you in class at Andrew Wood.

“Nothing any good isn’t hard.”—F. Scott Fitzgerald