OWNING THE STAGE

USING DRAMATIC THEORY TO IMPROVE TEACHING

LOEX 2014
PERFORMANCE WARM-UP

1. A moment of physical release—shaking your arms, legs.
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2. A study of your Other—what do you find fascinating/scary about your Other?
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3. What excites you about the situation of the scene? What’s the best that can happen to your character?

4. What terrifies you about the situation of the scene? What’s the worst that can happen to your character?

5. Voice your intention: “I’m gonna give a great presentation by being engaging, and making the audience think—and I’m gonna do it now!”
OWNING THE STAGE

LINDSEY RAE
TECHNOLOGY & PUBLIC SERVICES LIBRARIAN
CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE LIBRARY, BURLINGTON, VT
@LIBRARIANLINZ
OWNING THE STAGE

USING DRAMATIC THEORY TO IMPROVE TEACHING
OR...

HOW AN ACTING CLASS COMPLETELY BLEW MY MIND & CHANGED HOW I TEACH
LET'S START AT THE VERY BEGINNING

A VERY GOOD PLACE TO START
WHY ACTING?
SURE, WHY NOT?!

SOUNDS FUN!

I LOVE PUBLIC SPEAKING </sarcasm>
IT WAS SCARY, BUT..

I did it!

And I learned more than I ever could’ve anticipated.*

*I highly recommend taking an acting class.
HOW ACTING MADE ME A BETTER TEACHING LIBRARIAN

Three theatrical concepts that I applied to my teaching in a meaningful way.

Simple exercises to be more mindful, intentional teachers.
WHERE
TEACHING
MEETS
ACTING
WHERE TEACHING MEETS ACTING
WHERE TEACHING MEETS ACTING

Teaching is just performing in front of students.
WHERE TEACHING MEETS ACTING

Teaching is just performing in front of students.

WHOA.
WHERE TEACHING MEETS ACTING
WHERE TEACHING MEETS ACTING
WHERE TEACHING MEETS ACTING
WHERE TEACHING MEETS ACTING

KEYWORD:
WHERE TEACHING MEETS ACTING

Capture the attention of an audience

CONNECTION

Deliver content in a memorable way

COMMUNICATION

Establish a presence in a room full of people

CONFIDENCE
WHERE TEACHING MEETS ACTING

Teaching is just performing in front of students.
TEACHING-LIBRARIANS ARE UNIQUE

As teaching-librarians giving one-shot lessons, we have many roles to play in the classroom.
YOU WILL HEAR THESE CONCEPTS REPEATED THROUGHOUT THIS PRESENTATION

CONNECTION
COMMUNICATION
CONFIDENCE
DEFINING YOUR TEACHING-CHARACTER WITH

GOTE
WHAT IS GOTE?

Robert Cohen

Acting One, 1992
‘WHAT’S MY MOTIVATION?!’

Wait, Wait, Wait......

What's my Motivation
GOTE
G IS FOR ‘GOAL’

The objective or intention that drives a character’s actions and propels them forward.
GOTE
G IS FOR ‘GOAL’

✓ specific
✓ ongoing
✓ vigorously pursued
GOTE
G IS FOR ‘GOAL’

‘I WANT ______________________.’
GOTE
G IS FOR ‘GOAL’

Google

‘I WANT ______________________.’

______________________________

- candy
- it that way
- you back
- you to know
- to hold your hand
- it all (& I want it now)
GOTE
G IS FOR ‘GOAL’

Wicked Witch of the West

The Wizard of Oz
G IS FOR 'GOAL'
GOTE
G IS FOR ‘GOAL’

“I want to get my students to engage in meaningful discussion.”

“I want students to be able to find an article in a library database.”
GOTE
O IS FOR ‘OBSTACLE’

What stands in the way of what the character wants?
GOTE
O IS FOR ‘OBSTACLE’

What stands in the way of what the character wants?
GOTE
O IS FOR ‘OBSTACLE’

Hurdles that the character must leap over in order to find success.
GOTE
O IS FOR ‘OBSTACLE’
GOTE
O IS FOR ‘OBSTACLE’
GOTO
O IS FOR ‘OBSTACLE’
GOTE
O IS FOR ‘OBSTACLE’
GOTE
T IS FOR ‘TACTICS’

Strategies the character employs to navigate around Obstacles and ultimately achieve their Goals.
GOTE T IS FOR ‘TACTICS’

CHARM          THREAT
GOTE
T IS FOR ‘TACTICS’

CHARM

flatter
praise
encourage
garner sympathy

pressure
intimidate

bully
scare

THREAT
GOTE
T IS FOR ‘TACTICS’

‘I’LL GET YOU, MY PRETTY, AND YOUR LITTLE DOG TOO!’
GOTE
T IS FOR ‘TACTICS’

CHARM
GOTE

T IS FOR ‘TACTICS’

We are negotiating appropriate versions of these tactics to conduct and manage our classes all of the time.
GOTE
E IS FOR ‘EXPECTATION’

The enduring confidence that the character will achieve their goal.
The truest theatrical energy comes [...] from an actor’s eager portrayal of the character’s expectations and his or her consequent efforts to bring these expectations to fulfillment. Positive expectation, on the actor’s part, lends his or her portrayal a necessary excitement and energy. Not all characters succeed, of course, but they must be shown to expect success and even to be enthusiastic about their prospects.

- Robert Cohen, Acting One, 1992, p. 49
THIS IS KEY, YOU GUYS!
Oh curses, curses! Somebody always helps that girl!

But shoes or no shoes, I’m still great enough to conquer her. And woe to those who try to stop me.

Just try and stay out of my way, just try!
GOTE
E IS FOR ‘EXPECTATION’
TRY THIS AT HOME: THINK GOTE

Think about your GOTE as a teaching librarian.

✓ Goals: What do you want?
✓ Obstacles: What’s in your way?
✓ Tactics: What are some strategies you can use to overcome your Obstacles?
✓ Expectation: Set your sights on having a good class, whatever that may look like to you.
TRY THIS AT HOME:
PREPARE TO PERFORM

Preparation for Performance
(Robert Cohen, Acting One)
1. A moment of physical release—shaking your arms, legs..
2. A study of your Other—what do you find fascinating/scary about your Other?
3. What excites you about the situation of the scene? What’s the best that can happen to your character?
4. What terrifies you about the situation of the scene? What’s the worst that can happen to your character?
5. Final GOTE check: “I’m gonna (EXPECTATION!) win this (GOAL!) by doing this and this (TACTICS) to him/her (OTHER). And I’m gonna win it now!”
DEEPENING YOUR TEACHING-CHARACTER WITH

STANISLAVSKI
STANISLAVSKI

Constantin Stanislavski is arguably one of the most influential figures in theater.

MORE INTENSITY!
STANISLAVSKI
[The actor] will not give himself up wholly to his part unless it carries him away. When it does so, he becomes completely identified with it and is transformed. But the moment he becomes distracted and falls under the sway of his own personal life, he will be transported across the footlights into the audience or beyond the walls of the theatre, wherever the object is that maintains a bond of relationship with him.

- Stanislavski, The Actor Prepares, 1989, p. 196
(Original work published 1936)
STANISLAVSKI
TRY THIS AT HOME: ACT ‘AS IF’

Connect to the intention—the Goal—you set for your class and what you might do—your Tactics—in order to reach it.

Practice inside and outside of the classroom.
IMPROVING YOUR PERFORMANCE IN THE CLASSROOM WITH

IMPROV
Although we come to class ready with a “script,” the classroom is an unpredictable performance venue.
IMPROV

In improv, it’s important to think on your feet and respond quickly while also staying true to the scene.
IMPROV
‘YES, AND...!’

- accept new information
- consider how to add to the scene
IMPROV
‘YES, AND...!’

- accept new information
- consider how to add to the scene

Keep the conversation going in the classroom.
IMPROV
EVERYTHING WORKS!

THERE ARE NO MISTAKES
JUST HAPPY LITTLE ACCIDENTS
IMPROV EVERYTHING WORKS!

Helpful classroom mantra when things don’t go as planned.

✓ give up control
✓ go with your instincts
✓ be organic

JUST DO IT!

THERE ARE NO MISTAKES

JUST HAPPY LITTLE ACCIDENTS
IMPROV
OTHERS AS BRILLIANT!

✓ treat your partner as if they were a poet or genius
✓ make yourself look good by making them look good
IMPROV OTHERS AS BRILLIANT!

✓ accept what students bring to class as brilliant and inspired
✓ give more to get more
✓ decide that your students are awesome!
TRY THIS AT HOME: ACTION RESEARCH & REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Action research as a framework for debriefing after class.

✓ Start by noticing.
✓ Unpack your session: what worked and what didn’t?
✓ Any “interesting turn of events”? How did you handle them?
✓ What made students respond? Is there a pattern?
TRY THIS AT HOME: ACTION RESEARCH & REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Action research as a framework for debriefing after class.

✓ Use these observations to make informed changes to your presence in the classroom.
TAKE-AWAYS &

FINAL THOUGHTS
FINAL THOUGHTS

These theoretical, yet practical, examples from theater demonstrate how learning to be better performers can help us be better teachers, no matter which part we’ve been asked to play.
WHERE TEACHING MEETS ACTING

You don’t have to be theatrical in the classroom to be a better classroom performer, but being mindful about what you’re doing and the way it affects your audience will make you more intentional with the way that you teach.
THANK YOU

BREAK A LEG!
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