



Title of Workshop: Lee Strasberg's Method (Intermediate)

Instructor: Kamil Haque

Prerequisite(s)

Actors must be aware of workshop policies and agree to abide by them. On the first day, actors will be made aware of specific workshop policies. An open mind, an open heart, objective eyes, constructive mouths and listening ears.

Introduction

The Lee Strasberg's Method workshops are one of the many technique gateways for all actors at the Haque Centre of Acting & Creativity.

The workshops builds on the fundamentals from the Intro workshop in a more physically rigorous and detailed manner.

Methods of Instruction

Workshops will include: short lectures, interactive group discussions, writing exercises, relaxation and, sense memory exercises, which will later be incorporated into solo or scene work.

Required Materials

(Please Bring These Items to Every Workshop)

- A notebook for relaxation and sensory analysis, homework assignments, notes related to work, rehearsal reports (e.g. what you worked on during rehearsal, how long was rehearsal, when was rehearsal, any observations from rehearsal) and writing exercises.
- At least one working pen or pencil and a three ring binder to store notes, homework and Handouts
- Gloves, pads, guards for the body, yoga mats etc. and athletic clothing that allows you to move around freely.

Introduction: What is the Animal Exercise?

Movement as an actor is vital when creating a character. The movement of your body is important to help establish the credibility of your characters. Movement with specificity and knowledge establishes a sense of confidence and self-awareness to the audience without being self-conscious. Likewise, the movement and behavior of animals can inspire great characterizations.

The Animal Exercise is an indispensable tool towards a deeper physical characterization of a role. It is a balanced outside-in/inside-out approach to acting and creating characters. The Animal Exercise enhances the embodiment of unique characters through rigorous physical characterization. The Animal Exercise provides uncommon ways to create your human characters with an animal edge.

Course Goals: What are the Benefits of the Animal Exercise?

- Hone your skills of observation
- Forgo your inhibitions
- Become self-aware of your body
- Improve your impulses of spontaneity
- Learn to look at the world from a different perspective
- Increase your range of movements
- Create characters that are unique to you and unique in their embodiment

How Is Animal Exercise Done?

There are approximately three stages to the Animal Exercise:

State One: **Observation**

State Two: **Physicalization**

State Three: **Humanization**

Observation Stage

1. Pick an animal.
2. Study the animal for as long and as often as you can.
3. Carefully observe the animal's behavior down to the tiniest details.
4. Look and study the animal's eyes. Does it seem intelligent? Tame? Wild? Dangerous?
5. Notice their tempo-rhythm and how they respond to things around them.

6. Notice their faces and how they watch, listen, and communicate.

7. Write down these notes, take photos, capture footage for your future reference.

Observing & Physicalizing the Animal

You play an animal in much the same way that you play a character. Ask yourself many of the same questions as you observe. Try to physicalize the answers out with your body:

- If your body is your animal's body, how does it feel?
- Where is the animal more relaxed than you are?
- Where is it heavy?
- How does it move its mouth? Its ears? Its cheeks?
- How does it lie down, sit, crawl, walk, or roll over?
- What's it like to have a tail? Exaggerate this.
- How does it feel to have hair as long as your animal's? How long is it?
- Are its eyelids heavier or lighter than yours?
- What kind of sounds does your animal make? Dare to be outrageous here. Really trumpet your elephant, or let your lion roar. Really jabber your monkey. If you don't know what sound the animal makes e.g. a fox or a rabbit or you don't have a clear answer to a question, use your imagination and logic to come up with answer. As long as it is right to you, it's right.
- How is this animal different from me?
- How is this animal the same as me?
- What makes it pull its ears back in certain contexts?
- What is the animal's posture?
- How does it move?
- When does it move?

- Why does it move? Can you imagine what the animal might be thinking? Try to understand the inner motivations of the animal you are observing or embodying. E.g., if you watch a monkey, why and what motivated its move from its spot to another spot? Ask yourself why did it move now, and not five minutes ago?

Physicalization Stage

1. With the notes from the observation in mind, begin physically imitating the animal movements. Be as specific as possible.
2. Try to transfer the animal's thoughts to your own thoughts. See the world through the eyes of the animal.
3. Begin to replicate the sounds, the movement and attitude.
4. As an animal, you must know who you are but not how you'll react.
5. Always be specific, never general, and do everything to the maximum.
6. Avoid interacting for the first few sessions.
7. When you do react or interact, in every case you are responding to very specific circumstances.

Humanization Stage

1. After weeks of practice, gradually stand the animal up. At this point, the animal element is adapted to the human being, retaining its strength but becoming much more subtle.
2. Begin making the animal "human". For example, your elephant now has legs and arms.
3. Keep the physical and psychological aspects of the animal, and transform them to the human counterpart in yourself.
4. As you begin to humanize the animal, work with percentages. It is much easier to be specific when instead of thinking "some animal, some human". Go 100% animal, then 90/10, 80/20, 70/30 etc.

By performance time, the animal movement and characteristics might be just hints of the animal you started out with. To your credit, you will find that using an animal image to build a character will be a wonderful addition to your acting.

Ideally, from the audience perspective watching your performance, they might

sense something different about your portrayal on a gut level. They might guess you're working on something or channeling something but they won't consciously be aware of it or catch on. They might even sense the presence of the non-human.

Each detail in your performance will stand out more. And each detail will mean something. To them you've taken your performance from human to super-human. The end result? You'll find that your specific yet creative planning and creation of your character will be distinct, compelling and authentic.

Some Examples of the Animal Exercise in Use

The animal is chosen according to the characteristics of the role to be played. Examples of this include:

1. Marlon Brando embodied the brutality of a gorilla in "A Streetcar Named Desire"
2. Lee J. Cobb played Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's "Death Of A Salesman" using an elephant carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders
3. Marlon Brando used a bulldog in The Godfather
4. Anthony Hopkins used a tarantula and reptiles for Silence of the Lambs
5. Robert De Niro used a crab for Taxi Driver
6. In a recent interview Andrew Garfield said that in preparation to play Spiderman, in The Amazing Spiderman, he worked with his movement teacher from drama school to study spider's movement and characteristics.
7. Dustin Hoffman worked on a rat in Midnight Cowboy for his role Rizzo.
8. William Defoe uses animal work in every character he works on.
9. Claire Danes in the HBO series Temple Grandin worked on budgerigar.
10. Ethan Hawke says that one of the most important and effective techniques he uses is playing an animated cartoon animal. "When I get a role, I think what animal the character would be, because animals have character. It's the most useful acting tool I know."

Required Reading

- Acting: The First Six Lessons – Richard Boleslavsky

Course Component Specifics

- Homework is compulsory. Every participant is required to put together a minimum 3 minute video on their thoughts, questions, opinions on every chapter of Acting: The First Six Lessons. This must be shared via the class whatsapp group before they arrive to the workshop. Failure to do so will mean they are barred from participating that week.
- Other participants are required to watch and comment on at least three other videos in that are shared in the groups. Comments must be what they agree/disagree and why. Failure to do so will mean even if the participant did their video homework but didn't do their responses, they are barred from participating that week.

- When we start working on scenes, Actors with scenes and exercises who do not get to work due to time constraints etc., will automatically be scheduled to go up first the following session.

Feedback

On occasion, after certain scenes and exercises, the audience may be asked to provide feedback according to the guidelines/disclaimers below:

(a) **Your work is more important than how you feel about it.** The workshop is process, not result oriented.

(b) If you are providing feedback, you are asked to do the following:

- i. Comment as to where specifically you 'fell out' and if possible why.
- ii. Provide feedback in the form of **questions** and not give answers.
 - a. Why.....
 - b. What.....
 - c. How.....

iii. You **must not and cannot** offer suggestions that are along the lines of "You know what would be good here, or you know what you ought to do..."

(c) Do not provide judgments, Good or Bad.

- a. e.g. "I really liked it" ...OR... "it sucked."
- b. If you offer a possible problem, be prepared to offer a possible solution.

(d) For the actor(s) whose work is receiving feedback, please remain silent until all feedback has been received. This is to encourage the working actor(s) to take physical notes on their work without judgment. This will serve as their self-guide as they progress within the work.

(e) Upon receiving all the feedback, the working actor(s) may ask questions based on the feedback received.

(f) ***It is imperative that working actor(s) remember that feedback is not an attack on the work or the ego.***

(g) Those working may be asked to attempt their work again with an adjustment based on the feedback.

(h) Where required, the instructor will remind all participants of the workshop to avoid contradicting the terms of the feedback session.

Rules & Regulations

1. The use of alcohol and/or drugs by actors is strictly prohibited. Any actor under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol will immediately be dismissed from the program.

2. There is no smoking allowed in the building. Please smoke only in the designated smoking areas.

3. All cell phones must be turned off or on silent mode during the workshop. No texting or calling is allowed.

4. Workshops begin promptly as scheduled.

4 (b). Actors will be informed on the length of the break. Do NOT enter late or you will not be let in.

5. Dress policy: Comfortable loose-fitting clothing, hair pulled back; minimal or no jewelry.

5(a) If you are scheduled to perform that day, please bring appropriate attire/props etc. for your scene/monologue

6. Any conduct by the actor that is considered by the HCAC Administration to be detrimental to the actor or others is grounds for immediate dismissal. Dismissal may be permanent or for a probationary length of time.

7. There are no excused bathroom, water breaks during relaxation and sensory (subject to instructor's discretion)

8. You are free to go to the bathroom in between scenes. Do not disrupt the workshop. Only re-enter the room in between scenes. Do NOT enter during a scene.