

Intro to Action Theatre: Sat JUNE 11 email for more info

Ruth Zaporah's spontaneous creation technique for movers & sounders in dance and theatre

Taught by Maxine (certified as trainer in 1996) DISCOUNT with MAY 31 TKT

What is Action Theater?

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Action Theater is an improvisational physical training and performance method created by Ruth Zaporah.

The practice of Action Theater incorporates the disciplined exploration of embodied exercises that lead to increased skills of strong, clear, spontaneous, and artful communication.

Action Theater addresses and expands the vocabularies of expression including: movement, vocalization, and speech. Action Theater is a tool to examine one's perceptive and responsive process, bringing awareness to and thereby disempowering distracting thoughts of self obsessions, fears, judgments and analysis.

The exercises of Action Theater isolate the components of action - time, space, shape and energy -- so they can be examined, experienced, and altered in order to expand the expressive palette. Students increase their ability to hold and express emotion, dance with their own poetry and recover lost personal material. Composition, listening and relationship are deconstructed to be reassembled with greater awareness. Acting from a sense of play, students are encouraged to venture into transpersonal realms, accessing intelligence more encompassing and boundless than their personal experience.

Awareness and play are fundamental to the practice, as both are portals to spontaneous imagination. Within this orientation, the student is no longer bound by the conventional interpretations of reality. They are free to roam throughout the grand spectrum of possibilities, discovering who they are in the moment. Every exercise acts as a mirror, reflecting back to the student their patterns and flights of freedom.

Action Theater is also a performance method, although many of the practitioners come from other performance forms or walks of life. Fundamental to the practice of Action Theater is an embodied presence in performance, where the experiencing of the body informs the content of the moment, moment by moment. For example: how the hand, experiencing the hand, reaching for the glass is as important as reaching for the glass in order to drink from it. Intention is created simultaneously with action in the moment of performance. This awareness in action invites the possibilities of freshness intrinsic to improvisational performance. The Action Theater method offers a map, a way to proceed. The trainings are appropriate for the novice, the explorer and the professional.

About Training

The Action Theater exercises don't set up life-like "scenes." Instead, life-like and non-life-like situations arise through physical explorations within forms and frameworks. The forms are open, content-less, and address how we organize specific aspects of behavior or experience. They invite us to inhabit our bodies, deconstruct our normal behavior and, then, notice the details of what we have. This process frees us from habitual perceptions and behaviors. We become more conscious of our moment-to-moment thoughts, sensations, emotions, feelings, fantasies, and to our outer world.

This practice turns the mind outward. Because we place the activity of the mind into action, we can observe its ways, examine who we are and how we operate. We can consciously redirect our functioning.

Human expression reflects the universe. A mind won't create an image or form that's not already out there. What's already out there, everything out there, is stored in the body. If someone expresses that with their body through awareness, then what they create resonates with all beings, everywhere. Their work communicates on a universal level.

Ruth Zaporah Talks about her Training

My classes follow no single tradition, neither dance nor theater. All of the participants are simultaneously active throughout each session. I rarely demonstrate anything. I watch, occasionally interrupting them to mention something I've noticed, or suggest they try a different approach. Usually, at the end of the session, small groups perform for the rest of the students.

I begin every session sitting in a circle with the participants. I sense the mood, the energy present and respond with the

first exercise. Each class builds from what I see is happening or not happening, combined with the basic work that I intend to cover. The order is haphazard and immediate. I make up new exercises, veer off on tangents if need be. I watch the students and observe details. They teach me what to teach. Since every exercise has within it many teachings, what comes up each day and why it comes up, is dependent on what was occurring at that time. Every class is ideal, whether it's progressively arranged or scattered. Understanding the work comes with doing the exercises, regardless of what order they're done in. I purposefully say the same things over and over. As one progresses through the training, concepts understood early on ripen into deeper knowing. We learn through repetition. No matter how different the exercises look from each other, they're all about the same thing: presence.

The length of time students improvise on an exercise or score is variable. Usually, newer students have a shorter capacity to stay with an investigation. Their interest wanes due to lack of skills. More experienced improvisers may stay with one exploration for hours. In class, I judge whether inaction or dullness is due to fear, boredom, laziness, distraction or lack of skill.

Some students arrive, expecting to learn techniques that will turn them into charismatic performers, lawyers, teachers or parents. Soon, they learn that techniques bear limited fruit. At some point, we must look inward for our education. We must notice what inhibits our freedom, be willing to give up all preconceptions, be truthful, and relax in order to act from lively emptiness.