**Thursday Night, Mike Teaching 09/23/21**

Maritza, The Accused” (1st repeat)

Recall: More connected than last time but spotty. In and out. I’d go from being connected with her then pulling out. Being aware of myself, my body how I was standing. (Out of story?) They’re not at all but I think my awareness of it was. I feel like my attention with her was there but the rape wasn’t until the very end. (How was your prep?) I definitely didn’t have enough prep time. Within those ten minutes, probably 7 went to getting dressed and setting the place. The 3 minutes left I did a spin. That this just happened. I folded the nerves into the scene. This time I thought about how my body felt, the pain. It’s only been 3 days. The adrenaline overtook that. (Do you immediately know you’re not grounded?) The minute I entered. I was looking for Larry in the kitchen. I just came from the Dr.’s office. I just found out the guys are out on bail. She wants to drink at home and feel safe, she doesn’t want to go out with Larry and be caught by those guys. The world is not safe right now.

Critique: Feels like you’re grounded right now. I think sometimes you distract yourself from maybe going to where this feels like. It’s dangerous and scary to you. We showed last time that you can do this, don’t let me or anyone prevent you from accomplishing the one thing you need to do before you start your work which is, connection to yourself. You know so much about every scene you do, you just have to really be there. I thought when you sat down and picked up the thing you stopped acting and was really there. I have some notes here but the only thing that really matters is to get yourself present. Until you stop the scene and really look at her. She was sitting on that chair and so uncomfortable and you didn’t want to engage with it. You need to deal with what’s really going on in the scene. You can really respond with what’s going on in the scene. You’ve proved that. We all understand plowing through the take. You don’t have to really stop the scene, just stop the action. You’re the only one on stage. You have a life, get yourself really together. Fuck the lines. If she’s knocking you don’t have to let her in. (I want to confront her, I want her to know I’m pissed.) Great but to do that you have to be toe-to-toe with her. There’s a rush of adrenaline that happens when you get on stage which is the opposite of where she’s at. You have to acknowledge it. The state, self-consciousness. Where should I put my hands? All those things are perfect for this scene. Everything you’re saying, that’s the story. But you create oh now I’m out to avoid putting it in. Yeah I’m aware my left hand is awkward so we just shift it, we change it. That’s life. We all know you’re just there, you’re just living. From here on out what’s our contract? (To be honest I should’ve gotten up way earlier in the casting. More prep time. Working on the listening more and detaching the judgment not judging it.) More prep time. The time spent is not a cerebral exercise. I want you in a physical visceral place. You were gang raped three days ago. Getting a drink, some physical activity of the circumstances. Then when you feel the rush of the audience, breathe, stop. You don’t want to have a scene. Fuck you I’m not answering the door. She forces her way in finally. Once she’s in, okay I got some things to ask you. Have real force in the scene. You don’t take care of yourself. You don’t take care of your business. To get there you have to let go of the thoughts and get there physically. We’re not going to allow it. (Yeah and the work I did before lockdown, this regression, I’m sick and tired of it. I miss being able to listen and connect and be present.) Maybe part of the prep is sitting together and connecting.

Allie, “The Accused” (1st repeat)

Recall: I’m a little mixed. Feel a lot better this time. The prep was kind of a mess because of time and all that. Something that helped ground me was a note you gave me last time, deal with the door and not being let in. The first time we were going so fast and I wasn’t hearing any of that. This time I felt everything she was saying. I know I’m coming here to grill her but I also discover at the door that she knows nothing about the criminal justice system. We’re at square one right now. That def. helped me. The environment was more there this time and the difference between us was really there. That played more for me this time. I felt uncomfortable and weird. I could feel the difference this time. A couple things weren’t great because I was focusing so much on listening this time, I feel a little low energy. Like I was almost going too slow to not speed. I wasn’t getting everything I needed out of her. (This is why I don’t tell people to slow down or speed up. I think agenda becomes important in that. The agenda and my scene partner dictate how fast or slow I’m moving. What’s your agenda in this?) I didn’t wanna take the case originally. Stuart gave me the note that I also sleep with different guys. That I need to analyze my sex life and what assault means to me. In this scene there’s not a doubt in my mind that she was raped. I’m thinking I don’t know how we’re going to get her off because she’s a mess. I’m here to show her this is exactly what they’re going to do to her.

Critique: What’s missing from the agenda for me is, you did slow down, but for me the note is, I know you and I know your heart. That person right next to you was raped three days ago by multiple guys. I’m not sure that’s there for either of you right now. Your heart is so huge. It’s so devastatingly horrible but first you gotta gain her trust. She’s asking you what your sign is. In order to make her rise to the occasion you’ve gotta pick her up a little bit. (Her being raped is there for me but being raped and gang raped by 6 people in public is not fully there for me.) Your hearts are both missing out in this. Instead of saying slow down, I say really take her in and how she lives. There’s judgment in it but also empathy. There’s bonding that goes both ways. I’d love to move on. Rather than browbeat this scene, move on. (Yeah we’ve done it for you, in the online class, texting it. Some of the moments doesn’t feel like new information.)

Kamri, “Fathers & Daughters” (new)

Recall: I’m happy about it, I did a lot of work on it. I love this piece a lot. I love Katie. I think when I first came I didn’t know how this whole process went. In the book Stuart talks about don’t try to impress your teacher or students. Now I’m just like fuck it, go with what happens and don’t put so much pressure on where you want it to go. I learned if you put in the work you’re going to be happy with the results. That’s like everything in life. It’s hard to always put in the work. I really like this scene, I’ve never done a meet cute before. He makes it easy. It was definitely different in rehearsal. In the script she has tears coming down her face. I didn’t want to push that. I wanted it to live in me and be real. I told myself if I’m not there, then I’m not there. I allowed whatever was going to happen. (Often writers that don’t trust their writing will give too much descriptions. I read it, but then I cross it out and ignore it. The tears come if I move by it and am connected. That’s an important thing. Writers often trap you. You clock it, take in the writer’s idea. Now you’re on set living with your scene partner.) I feel like I was affected and moved by Zach. It was kind of a struggle. I knew I had to get the dad but I didn’t want to use my father. I started to work on a different father but then last night I took a bath and did work there. I wasn’t moved by this person so then I used my dad. I really focused on what it was like, the happy times when we were together as a kid. Not using my memories but using memories from the script and being specific with those memories. (That’s so there for you. It’s beautiful. They are scenes from the script. You’re not substituting because you’re using beliefs from the story.) I focused on the good times and then the loss. (You used story and the script and the scenes not in this meet cute and you used your own story. It’s pretty pro work.) I just really like the piece a lot.

Critique: We talked a lot before you left. About getting in touch with yourself, deepening your homework, your beliefs. Your head is exactly where it needs to be right now. You’re a killer. You’ve thrown yourself into this thing. Your present and grounded and in story. Tonight it was all right there for you. It was pro shit.

Part of it, to be honest with you is about time. We all want to be ambitious. When you did Rabbit Hole you wanted it so much. Part of it is maturity. Time away, time to live. Time to make a decision. You’re at the head of the class now. It’s so good to see you do the work.

Zach, “Fathers & Daughters” (new)

Recall: Script I love. It was written really well. I had a great time. The time I did get to do my homework on it I realized Cameron’s not too far from Zach. I was kind of being me in the circumstances with her. When I was first doing my homework, the writer’s notes were tripping me up a little bit. In my mind I was putting in a stop in the paragraph. (Yeah I was doing the same thing. And usually when you do a monologue it’s multiple thoughts together. We all know the feeling of turning the page in your head. As best you can, you’ve gotta get rid of the page.) I think the scene was fun. If I just had more time on it, more of where I came from and what I'm doing. (You do an amazing job of bringing this guy to you. Not easy to play yourself by the way. How is he different from you? Something to think about.) I don’t think I’ve ever thought about how a character is different from me. (This is why I'm bringing it up. You’ve certainly brought him to you. I admire that. This guy’s a filmmaker and a writer but I’d meditate on how things are different. It’s not going to come easily. Part of it for you is separating. What beliefs do I need. I felt like you gave her the scene and gave the scene to her beautifully. The next step for you is what is different. I want you to be on the lookout for that.)

Critique:

Sam, “True West” (1st repeat)

Recall: I think our notes were largely similar in that Stuart wanted us to go back and text. I read through twice and learned a little more about where I’m coming from and the family dynamic. Greg is good about letting it all go and let it rip. The texting gave me more of an idea of Lee’s day to day and where he’s coming from and how desperate he is. He’s broke. Here to loot the neighborhood and get some cash before heading back into the desert. I didn’t learn a ton from the texting that I didn’t already know but it did give me full permission to do whatever the fuck I want up here. Our connection was strong last time but I felt more brotherly with him in the run tonight. Just letting whatever comes into my mind, no gateway. It’s good. (Following impulses.) Yeah. I could’ve probably put more attention on Greg sometimes. I was kind of flying solo at times. But I did get irked when he tells me mom asked him to watch the place. (In terms of agenda, where are you with that? I understand it shifts of course, what I admire about you is your freedom. A desert animal and fish out of water. That’s all playing beautifully. I'm wondering if you have a purpose?) The agenda when I make my way here is the singular focus of looting. The discovery of him being in the house and her being gone leads me to discover who he is and discover his world on top of getting the money. (I think the disrupter of you is playing great. I think there’s some deep brotherly themes that get hashed out. There is a story going on.) With the physicality, I felt like I had taken it too far. His bag fell so I had the opportunity to pick it up.

Critique: Spirit animal for this guy, he’s a desert animal. He’s a scavenger. The more scavenging you do and investigating you do in this house the better. An animal exercise for this piece would be great to add in right now. I think part of the agenda for this thing is to dominate him. Within every moment that’s going on, there’s gotta be the agenda to not only disrupt but dominance. The car keys, or the home, the threat of physical violence can not be overstated. Also you want to dominate him more. I own you and I can end you. Don’t give up until he feels that. The note for you is this, it’s all about him. He’s a strong actor and has a strong will. He’s getting away with murder there. If he’s not showing you the respect you deserve you can’t let him get away with it. From the moment you’re walking around here I want you aware of the moments you’re letting him off the hook. When he’s like go away there’s a bunch of opportunities for you to assert. You’ll find what’s right. That’s the tension. Like what are you gonna do to him. Physical state, don’t forget it’s hot as balls for both of you guys. The heat is so oppressive. And the alcohol. This thing is fueled by booze. He’s just starting or he’s been drinking the whole way down. He’s an animal. So that’s where your prep is.

Greg, “True West” (1st repeat)

Recall: I think I’m still trying to figure it out. I feel like that’s the best version it could’ve been based on the work I did. There’s a part of me that doesn’t understand and hovering above it. There’s a bit of me that isn’t fully doubling down on it. (That’s the story right?) Yeah, I'm still enjoying it and having fun. It’s really fun playing with us. I knew where to hit his nerve. It was a very brotherly move in the physicality. It was just in the moment. (What about offering him to come live with you?) In the script he puts ‘pause’ a lot. It’s just family. Family’s fucking weird. (Yeah he corrects you and puts you in your place.) It was a neat moment for me, you don’t need to figure out how to get to that place but just trust that you’ll get there. I feel like when I was a younger actor it bothered me when characters contradicted themselves now I love it. The launch, I’m trying to figure out this pitch but also he showed up tonight and I haven’t seen him in five years. A part of me is wondering if I’m setting the scene right. (I think he’s been here a bit and you’ve had the pleasantries. Now there’s this disruptor. I think you trying to focus and him walking around trying to fuck you up is where the attention lives. I want you guys to keep moving and see how deeply we get into this play.)

Critique: I think you guys are working really well. I want you guys to feel the freedom you feel up here. As the script goes on you start to switch places. Also the heat. Permission for both of you guys to do whatever you need to do. You’re walking the line in this scene. At the beginning you’re trying to find boundaries with Lee. It’s not going to feel good to you for a long time. It’s gonna feel like what am I doing? I'm at the affect of this? Yeah that’s the part and that’s where Sam Shepherd leaves you. He’s a desert animal and a problem to you. Take care of yourself and get your shit done and draw a boundary. The other side is don’t let him beat you up, don’t let him rob this place and never return. Maybe that’s why you invite him too, to help diffuse this situation. It’s an option. Mostly what I want you guys to do, read it again and keep playing and finding it. It’s gonna be a lot of working and back tracking. For now just keep going. It looks great.