Thursday Night Acting Class, 09/16/21 – Stuart Teaching

AJ, “Move On” (new)

Recall: I felt super connected to myself and Jane. Feel like immediate environment was definitely very real for me. I feel like I could’ve gone further with the world stuff. Givens feel good. With what has just happened, I feel pretty solid. I do feel pretty entrenched with the world. Words definitely feel like my own. This was interesting because there’s a ton of stuff going on and that was a challenge.

Critique: Let’s talk about bottom. Right now the scene, I could give notes and direct it but that’s not how I roll. I work on process. I think your process is working well for you so we’re just optimizing now. Do you know what I mean when I say bottom? The way I think of it, the problem in the story that’s the cause of all the other problems. That’s especially helpful when there’s a lot going on. Identifying the bottom can help. I think there’s two that are connected? (I don’t know. It blows my mind to see her. My problem is that the world is frozen. I haven’t seen her for 3 months. I think the scene is like chaos. I’m a little overloaded. She’s making this worse somehow.) The night of the freeze she said no? (Right.) Is this the first time you’ve been back since you left? (Yes) That’s fun. I think the thing to talk about, that is the bottom. She left you, she said no to you and then the world stopped. I wonder about that. We’re the creatures that create patterns when there’s not necessarily patterns. (It’s hard to believe that they’re not connected. It’s coincidence, intentional or cosmic. I think all of that is alive in me.) Let’s talk about time. For both of you, there are a few ways we can approach time that can benefit us. I think time is just an exercise in perspectives. What my worldview was and how it’s changed now. I think both of you are very different than you were 3 months or 5 years ago. I wonder how those beliefs have altered. You can create a juxtaposition from one to the other and in that you can get a sense of time. It’s the not knowing and all the unresolved questions that are fun. You cannot answer these questions.

Jane, “Move On” (new)

Recall: I felt good. Words definitely feel like mine. Connected to myself, story. I feel like there’s more work to be done. There’s five years of life that have happened. More to explore and work on. I thought the prep was helpful. We agreed on doing an individual spin and then the moment before is they see each other outside and hug. I think that was helpful. It’s not a scene that feels good when you’re done with it.

Critique: And you can’t do a spin for five years. He died the night you turned him down. That’s in you I’m getting that. My question is, how different a person are you now? How do you see the world now vs. how you saw it then. I’m guessing that fucked you up. (He died and there was a lot of guilt, I couldn’t get over it. 2 years later, I met someone new. He’s the person that created this place. He proposed 2 years after that. I started getting nightmares of Teddy dying and that goes on for 8 months. It feels like it was my fault. I’m still not over it. So I came here to say goodbye to him. At first I don’t want to but then I decide to because I feel like I'm never going to move on.) How accurate is he? (It’s him and it feels real. I can touch him.) I get that you are in your exploration being awful to yourself, that’s coming through. Are you exploring as well when you were free? Try to create more of a juxtaposition for yourself. (Yeah certainly not as much, I feel like the newer relationship can be clearer.) And when you were free, when you didn’t have this weight over you. The last time you were free before all of this happened. Because your life has become this kind of hell. You had a little reprieve, that made it worse. You were enjoying yourself, but you killed him. I get the bleakness, but if you get when things were golden and green that’ll make the bleakness more fucked up. It’ll fuck with this in a good way.

Cameron, “Pitch Perfect” (1st repeat)

Recall: It felt good. My notes were really get into the song in the beginning and put my anticipation somewhere else. I don’t know that I feel really good about that. throughout the scene I want her to leave me alone. The words felt my own and I felt connected to her at the end. Circumstances, in the beginning, I don’t feel as naked tonight.

Critique: Expectation work. Let’s talk about that. Do you try to build expectations? (Yes but I build my own so that I don’t expect the rhythm. I can catch patterns really fast in a scene. So if I expect something else. Like I know she’s going to scare me, I know we’re going to sing, and that we’re going to connect at the end. I was trying to expect going to the shower and leaving. I just forgot I was naked this time around.) Oh so your expectation work was working? (Yeah but then I got in my head about something else.) I think where there’s going to be really benefit to how you’re working, I suggest you create more variation in your absorption. I like the process of absorption. My relationship to the lines, but there’s a danger in it becoming an analytical exercise. One of the purposes of it is to break patterns. The idea is to think about circumstances and exploration and coming at it from different ways. To absorb the script. Take a deep breath, start thinking about where the scene takes place. The bathroom in the dorms. I’m alone and it’s the first time, it’s been a crazy day. I need to relax. I think singing is your happy place and I think it’s about surrendering into the song. I have no friends. I’m all by myself. That belief is going to start things off differently. I’m creating variation at the beginning and then throughout it where taking different tracks. Fuck it up. (Yeah I’m afraid to mess it up.) If there’s no right or wrong, what is there? Maybe involvement. The deeper we’re involved and immersed in the story. I think the idea is to be immersed in it. The deeper we’re in it the idea of right and wrong is superfluous. You probably think you don’t like the people even though you don’t know them. There are lots of possibilities here. You find it easy to lose yourself in your moment before? (Yes. I jump and shake off what’s in my head. Then I think about whatever in story. I feel myself more free in my head, then I get scared out here to do it because I think it’s wrong.) Do me favor, look at them. If you fuck it up what’s the worst that’s gonna happen? (Literally nothing. I know that.) You have an assignment. When you sing and when you come on, you also have to start dancing. The kind of dancing you do alone. Do it when there’s no one here too. This getting it right is costing you some of your experience when you’re in play. We have to move your comfort zone by pushing and risking more. Let’s see what happens when you start letting yourself go.

Nina, “Pitch Perfect” (1st repeat)

Recall: Felt generally pretty good. I felt affected by Cameron. Words felt like my own. I think my circumstances were playing on me. My notes were is this problem really mine? I explored that a lot more this time but then I got really nervous. When I’m nervous I feel less connected to myself. (Was that just before you came in?) Yeah and then it waned during the scene. I think there’s something really sexy about her being a potential member for the Bella’s.

Critique: Let’s talk about nerves. What do you do backstage when you feel the nerves? (Today I was trying to stew in my problem and the circumstances.) Let’s try a slightly different way. I like the idea but I think I want you to check out your nerves. Take a breath, feel them. Drop into yourself and experience the nerves. From that, you’ll find when you confront them you can deal with them easier. From that state of being start thinking about your life. You don’t need to justify your nerves, just see what comes to mind. I want you to check it out. They’re gonna be your best friend. It’s good, it means it matters. The line between nerves and excitement. They’re very close states of being. Bring it into the work by really taking stock. Take a deep breath and exhale slowly through your nose. Being present to yourself is the name of the game. I think everything we do, if being done optimally, is going to begin with arrival. Start from where you are rather than from where you wanna be. Even if you think it’s wrong. Start from where you are, then you’ll be able to bring in story. Until we’re fluid, nothing is going to move. This will give you a stronger lift in the scene.

Allie, “Anastasia” (new)

Recall: It was okay. I was so nervous. I feel like I wasn’t super grounded in it. She has so much nervous energy in this scene anyway. She has amnesia and doesn’t know what’s in Paris, if she has a family. I was trying to embrace the nerves and adrenaline. I breathe into it. I feel like in the past with nerves I’ve tried to sit and calm down. This time I breathed slowly and exhaled through my nose. It helped a lot. I took 3. Aside from that, I feel like I did so much homework but it went out the window a bit. The words do feel like my own, but the environment went out the window. I’m not immersed in the year yet. The only script I found was a transcript. (Maybe if you go to Samuel French.) Circumstances felt a lot more real in rehearsal than they did right now but they were still there for me. The concept of I want a family, love, and a home, that was real, that was there. (Do you explore the flip of that?) Yes. I have explored that.

#2: that was a lot better. I wasn’t really focused on how it sounded this time. Singing is super vulnerable for me but that time I wasn’t really listening to myself. It didn’t feel so hit this note at this time. (What created that difference for you?) Slowing down and taking my time at the top. Yeah everything that I had explored felt much more real this time and not clouded by me analyzing myself as I go. Taking the time I could feel the Eiffel Tower being here. I could feel it. (Because you could feel it, we could feel it.) I feel like now I have a direction for where our work needs to go. (Like when you get a good audition, start slow. Time is a perception.)

Critique: I think maybe we add something to it. If the breath helped but didn’t do the trick we need to make some adjustments. So basically we just talked about arrival and taking the time to explore the space and feel where you are. That’s going to ground you, and help you get out of your own way so the things you worked on can come through. The reality is, we can help with tools to help you immerse yourself more into story. At the end of the day it’s you that has to do it. Teachers can’t help you be better. It’s your willingness to dig into the work and confronting yourself. And that is vulnerable. I had guys in class that have seen combat in war. They didn’t last long in class because they got too frightened. They found this to be ten times more terrifying. Ego is no joke. Your willingness is great. It allowed you to be deeper. Doesn’t it feel good when you take that breath and allow story to come in, it just feels better doesn’t it? It’s fascinating to me how people can deprive themselves of the things they love the most. In our work, in our life. I think there’s an aspect of what we do, that takes care. I think people mock actors for having care in the scene. I don’t think there’s any better.