Thursday Night, Mike Teaching 10/28/21

Phoebe, “Recent Tragic Events” (new)

Recall: I can def. relate to her situation but I feel a little more together about it. Honestly I’ve had a lot of fucked up shit happen to me so I can grab a lot whenever I approach something. I can’t just stay away from those things because I like it. (The scene she worked on last week with Sam, there’s things that are very close to what’s happening in her life. It’s very difficult to wrap your arms around something you’re still processing. Like she said it’s hard to pull it together. To understand it when you’re in it. You can reach into things that you understand. This is progress.) I feel good. I feel connected to her. I feel really grounded in her. I think that she has to be really strong for people in her family. I think that that’s a part she plays. She has to calm down her mom. I found it really interesting. Going about the piece and comparing it to Covid. It was putting myself in 2001 without the over stimulus that we have nowadays. In the morning I see the planes hit the twin towers. I don’t have a cell phone. I’m just really present with this situation. I don’t know what she’s doing. She doesn’t tell me. She’s not answering the phone. We don’t talk about mundane shit which is interesting. And yeah she’s in advertising, I feel like she can compartmentalize a lot of things and she knows how to put a face on. There’s a blind date happening and she knows how to play that. But her sister is missing, but I don’t want to be alone. Yeah I don’t think she wants to be alone. I think she’s a doer. In crisis situations she doesn’t like to sit around doing nothing. (

Critique: Here’s your note, #1, Wendy is in this scene at all moments. The connection is through the TV, this is the only place where real information is coming from. So you’re trying to make it work but Wendy is in this place and you can’t reach her. When you’re trying to pull it together for the date, pull it together. When you’re out of control thinking about Wendy, let yourself spin as far as you can go. You’re pulling it together but the loose ends are hanging out. There’s the anxiety is she in that rubble. The churning and anxiety never stops. The books, that’s traction for you guys. He says exactly. Do some research on the writers. The coincidence is pulling you away from what’s happening. Deal with that. The coincidences are pretty intense.

Recall #2: We forget a bunch of lines but it was good. I felt all fucked up. I couldn’t concentrate. I was thinking about my sister and then I would have to respond to him. Pull it together. I felt more connected to the books in the first scene. Trollop is a weird combination of writers. (That’s why it’s so interesting in the coincidence. I love the work you guys are doing on this. There’s a lot of deep shit going on in this.)

Critique #2: I made it hard on you. You got deeper into Wendy. But really heard him. You were present to him.

Rick, “Recent Tragic Events” (new)

Recall: I feel good. I haven’t read a ton of plays this is my favorite. Something I’ve stolen from actors here is their prep. It takes away from performance anxiety and puts into the character. Thinking about going out on a blind date. It was a better launch. (Is your prep physical?) I thought about it. The scene kind of sets itself up with me in the hallway knocking. The scene itself leads me in. (How did you feel about the opening beat?) Those beginning moments for me are dejavu. (I feel like both of you are really connected to the event. Is the idea that you’ve sent this woman to this place, is that part of it? If it’s not, do you remember it in that moment?) For me, it was more so the piecing together of it as we go along. She looks familiar but no I’m not really processing if Wendy is alive and since I encouraged her to take that job.

Critique: I want to work that spin into this. That conversation is alive in you. You’re wondering if she started that job. That worry is already part of you. Then the door opens and there she is. What’s going on here? I think that’s why he leaves. I thought as the scene progressed you got more and more confused. Whatever’s going on with you, deal with it. Who the fuck is she? Is she the same person? What the fuck is happening. The scene becomes trying to be normal in this insane situation. The only thing I want to add is give you the license to stop the scene. If you want to stand there and try to figure out the bookshelf, stick with that. Don’t let the playwright push you around. Figure it out.

Recall #2: I think I was in such a different place that I didn’t even remember if I had already entered. (In a great way. You felt free. You grabbing the wine bottle was going with an impulse. The second time you took your time and it made sense.)

Critique #2: You took ownership of the scene. You lived through these moments. You started to make headway with her and acknowledge what’s there. You’re in a different place. Even just the opening beat where you’re starring at her. It launched you. I see your mind working in a lot more ways, you’re present to a lot more and your agenda feels much stronger. The freedom you guys found in that second take. The foundational work that’s going on is high end and elite. Follow it. You have control as an artist.

Susannah, “The Abyss” (new)

Recall: I’m doing alright. My goal with this scene, it’s challenging because it’s part of an action movie. Thinking about how to prepare for it, as I'm driving to class I’m thinking about the scene. There’s nothing I can prepare for. Everything that’s happening is immediate. This is the end of an action sequence. Hard to do in acting class. It was interesting because there’s not a terrible lot to prepare for. I can definitely work on our relationship more. I was kind of more focused on the challenge of having to deal with what’s exactly what’s in front of me. Being present to the situation and thinking of a way out the entire time. The only way I can do the scene as it needs to be is to constantly think how to get out of this. The one thing that did help me is when she realizes what the solution is and he’s got to get on board with it. Up to that point it’s trying to find the solution. I know my role in the pairing of us. When I play a professional I think about being a producer and what it takes to get things done.

Critique: You are strong and you are smart and you are a leader. You do get things done and make them happen. You owning that and owning the Lindsey in you. This part makes you bigger. It’s a nice look for you. I think one of your superpowers is being at the effect of, but I also think the status and being at the high end of things gets you off. As an actor you grow and get more confident as character and as actor. The top of the scene, I want you physicalizing that I want you sweaty and breathing. I want that orgasm of energy to happen so that after that we carve out a beat of you fucking did it. We lived through that. (It’s fair that we should have that beat.) Yeah, we’re alive. Together. (It’s a high adrenaline scene. but you’re right.) She’s right when things get chaotic and adrenaline spikes. It’s easy to power through and not carve them out. You have to have the wherewithal of when the water’s rising that we’re here dealing with this. There are moments in the script that I’ll circle sometimes. You can’t stumble into, can’t have the water rising mess it up. You’re right there, but you have to make sure. Stillness. That moment where you explain to him the answer. You totally did that, but to carve that moment and quiet everything and own him, you can carve that slightly better. (I get what you mean by carving the moment as a storyteller. But as an actor, I would find a reason that would force me to carve it out. Like I need him to understand.) Yeah as a storyteller you get out of one sequence and into another. So it’s like okay I’ve solved it, you look at him and you’re like oh shit he’s never going to go for it. So I gotta carve it for him. 100% as an actor you’re not carving it out for the director. It’s for you as an actor and your scene partner.

Elliott, “The Abyss” (new)

Recall: I wasn’t sure about doing this on stage. We just decided to try it. I was working with tech for a while. (The environment you created, unbelievable. The way you guys lived in it, it fed the scene and totally fed you guys.) I see Suzy in the character a lot. A smart headstrong person. I love that. This is a scene about them finally working together. (In the last scene you guys did, the connection you guys have now felt so easy for you. In terms of relationship, the bottom was there, I want to understand. Was there something you did differently?) A big part of this scene was a ticking clock mechanism that was discussed at some point. That helped a lot. I knew that I could line these lights up and we could see where the water was at. And we could line up where we needed to finish the conversation. And then there was a second clock for Linds as the time ran out. I think that really helped make the scene. It pushed it along. There was no time to really think about, can we discuss this for very much longer. There’s not a lot of dialogue but so much happens. (It’s a terrible solution but the best. You were affected by her.)

Critique: There were a few points where the behavior or the props rob you guys of some clarity of the moments. There were little moments like the prop of the mask, there’s some jostling with the mask at the end. Make sure the mask doesn’t get lost in the tussle. This prop represents life or death for you. It’s you guys empowering that prop and who’s gonna wear it, and who’s gonna die. You guys have to create that relationship. Carve those moments. Before he puts the mask on you guys have to look at each other, like fuck, he’s got to really do this. We need the beat for the audience to enjoy it. You have the bottom but some of the key relationship beats get lost or muddy.

Allie, “I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change” (new)

Recall: I didn’t really care, the way I care when I do songs by myself. This was too much fun to care. I honestly just don't really care about how it sounded. In the beginning we don’t interact at all.

It was better that time for sure. The relationship did change the whole thing.

Critique: You two ladies, it really feels like two different performers. It’s the connection you have together and the strength and confidence. The experience you had doing it outweighed the perfection of the note. Your attitude is everything. When you’re not precious with your thing you can’t lose with that attitude. If you’re like fuck it here we go, no one can judge you. You’re above it. You’re free and having fun. You’re getting up and strutting out there. The rules of this game need to be clear to you. The last bit is you guys have to be good liars.

Katie, “I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change” (new)

Recall: I think throughout the song we notice each other going through the same thing. (Maybe when you both stand up together.)

One thing we connected on in rehearsals was all the bad dates we’ve been on. (Yeah the bottom of it feels solid. Not necessarily that you guys are in that place now.)

Critique: Each of you ladies have a relationship with the audience but neither of you are really talking to us. It’s gotta be to us and real. You’re relationship to us is vague.

So much fun to watch you guys. And that relationship really changed it. And your relationship to us. It’s much more specific and we feel like we’re involved. I love hearing you guys sing a duet and it points out that you have made it too precious in the past.

Ellen, “Cruel Intentions” (new)

Recall: I think it went pretty well. I think I tried to use what I was feeling to be there in the moment. (How are you feeling about your circumstances. How’s the discovery? Did you feel the environment?) I think I was like present-ish. It’s definitely a big change for her. I think I felt the magnitude of something. (It felt like what she was saying you were hearing. What about Sebastian? How was creating that?) I think that was good. (What about what she reveals?) That’s a problem. I feel like I don’t know what I’ve going to do which is not common. (Does she buy that you’re going to play her game?) I think so. (Anything we can augment or deepen? I think you guys did a beautiful scene.) It felt like fine. Like I don’t know. I think it was what it needed to be, but I don’t think it was real enough. (Tell me what’s really going on.) I’m trying to keep myself composed, but now that Sebastian is dead I don’t know what’s really going on. He gave me a sense of purpose. He was something I could play with and entertain myself with. (It’s right there and really personal and deep for you. Where you as connected to where you’re at right now?) I don’t think so. (Your prep is getting to that connection right now while getting consoled by a bunch of people. That’s a difficult launch. It takes a little more digging in. What else?) I think I’m just trying to stay connected to the stakes of my social capital here. I’m not really worth anything without it. I do a lot of stuff that no one knows about and if they found out it would be really bad.

Recall #2: Sebastian felt more real to me. She felt more annoying. I felt more here mentally. (How was the launch?) No thoughts. I was in the bathroom like fuck. (It was a bigger problem for you.) I think the first time I was anticipating her coming in. This time I was much more immersed in that moment. (Did you feel more present?) A little bit more.

Critique: This is the projection of me and it’s fabulous. Beneath that is what my life is really like. Keeping those things separate is a full time job and it’s exhausting. Here comes this little bitch out of nowhere. I think the stakes are higher than you’ve investigated. The fact she says you have the journal is one thing, the fact she pulls it out of her bag is another, the fact she mentions the bulimia. No one has ever come to you with this sledgehammer. Take your time at the top. You come in here because you can’t deal with what’s going on out there.

Rachel, “Cruel Intentions” (new)

Recall: I always get nervous when I have to be the bitch. Whenever I get angry I cry. I feel like I was able to fuel my hatred with her with my love for Sebastian. I feel like I had pointed bitchiness. I felt driven, I wanted to see her cry and I understood why. (Tell me why you’re doing this.) I was in love with this boy. I broke every moral I had to be with him. I was broken by him. I realize everything I went through was because of her.

Recall #2: I feel like, I was really thinking towards that and everything I said was you did this to me. I felt like my anger was pointed. My meanness, felt like it was so intentional.

Critique: You guys have started deep into this piece. You both have a really difficult situation here. You have to own that relationship, then the loss of that relationship and how she played you. Those will absolve you of playing the bitch. I love what you’re doing but it’s based on your understanding. But we’re on your side. You’re not the bitch. She’s the bitch. She tried to destroy you. Getting under this in terms of the bottom have nothing to do with bitchiness it’s asserting your power based on what you’ve earned because of her. This is her doing. She forced your hand to do this. You need to dig into the way she’s messed with you.

Critique #2: It was a response to the meanness that came on you. When you absolve yourself, when I take the responsibility off of you to be the bitch. She’s earned it. Your agenda changes drastically. It’s beautiful once you allow yourself to play. You’re both super talented and your imaginations run wild. I want to say about this piece, I think the casting is good but starting with the final scene is a tall order. I’d love to get a Sebastian and have you each play a Sebastian and work your way through the script. I want to see you get through the messes. Start at the beginning and work your way through the script. Sebastian is in this room with us tonight. You both did a great job grabbing onto it tonight.

Kevin, “A Star is Born” (new)

Recall: There’s sometimes where I do a character, that’s the uglier sides of me, in my head I think it’s going to be a big challenge. But there’s a part of my brain that hates myself so much that I can lean into it. Because I had that worry what I tried to do first was build the beliefs and then I could start leaning into the uglier aspects of Jackson and me. Because I worked in that way the beleifs were rooted. It made my connection to Cameron super strong. I’m a walking belligerent drunk, it was something I burrowed into me. Once we started doing the real lines it was there. I wasn’t sure how this was going to go. Not for any particular reason. I don’t know, I’d convinced myself that leaning into the uglier aspects of my being., I don’t know I think it went well though. I think all the ideas that needed to be expressed in this scene were expressed. The relationship was built. I think we got to that. (Is he in love with her?) I think so. My beliefs were Ally’s a star, and I can help her be a star, and I love her. This talented person walks into your life and you can build these beliefs about having a whole life together. This moment of ‘love’ turns into love. (Physical state?) I thought I did pretty good with it. He’s belligerently drunk but not so much that it’s a turn off. It’s a very fine line. He’s a functional alcoholic. There’s some swaying. The lucidness comes and goes, which I think affects the slower drawl. I speak very fast. This guy doesn’t process that way. (How did you build the belief of Jackson Maine?) That’s too big, trying to build that belief is impossible. You create the belief as a little seedling. I’m a star, and when I walk into a room I draw attention. I feel like being in this town long enough, I think people with star appeal have the charisma and the confidence to believe in who and what they are. Deep down inside even though he hates himself, he knows he’s a star and people want to listen to him. Like when you make yourself big for the bear.

Critique: Beautiful work. Not only are you guys working together beautifully as a duo. There’s some beautiful quiet connection and you both found ways to bring yourself to your characters. You built beliefs for yourselves. I think we can keep playing with this film. You’re so diligent about physical state, you’re so detailed, my only caution is she’s on one side of the seesaw and on the other side is all the drugs and alcohol. At the end you fought through the malaise of the drugs to deeply affect her.

Cameron, “A Star is Born” (new)

Recall: All day I’ve been nervous. Usually other scenes I’m a little nervous. My heart rate has been up all day. I think because I prepped differently I was nervous how it was going to affect my performance. Kevin helped a lot. Before I would just not overthink it. I was like riding a fine line with over prepping prior to this. Before doing this I was doing belief building and background work. Today was a little different I guess. I didn’t want to keep thinking and mess up and not be present. (Is the work different, and you were more engaged all day. Was there something specific you let go of?) I think texting I put more homework in. Yeah, process. (Why is this scene different?) I read the book and I’ve never read the book before. I know my learning style is auditory. Because Kevin explained stuff to me it made the book easier to read. The one thing I picked up from the book, in my old process, I use whatever’s happening in my life, but with my music I’m capable of creating stories. I realized I can do that in my acting. (Your imagination is so fertile. You can imagaine anything as long as you commit to it and decide you’re going to do it. Part of the reason this is so deep for you is because in addition to what you just said, there are some major concepts that you lived. You let yourself off the hook while also being tapped into your art and your music. It felt super personal. It looked easy. It felt seamless and you weren’t working at it. It felt like a real conversation we’ve had in a deep way. I was proud of you for letting go of some things and embracing the truth of what’s going on right here. The environment was great and you built him up. You did this. This part is made for you. I gave myself permission to be more myself this time.

Critique: You’re beginning to be yourself out in the world as well. That’s beautiful. I just want to offer up a prep before you come out. Bring some music. (I know but I forgot my headphones.) I mean yours. You go into a whole other place when you play. I want you to be playing your music. Just try it. Try it in rehearsal. You backstage playing for ten minutes and getting close to yourself through your music would be a beautiful prep for this scene.