Thursday Night Acting Class, 09/30/21, Mike Teaching

Malachi, “Move On” (new)

1. Recall: I feel awful about being late. We came in and as far as prep she sat on the couch for a little bit I stood next to the couch and was staring at her. I was playing in my mind that I was giving the presentation. My big thing is finding the agenda, like why am I here? For me, I know what she’s been through. I want to be there to help her and comfort her and provide her with what she needs. Obviously there’s physical desire, but that’s not why I’m here. I’m genuinely wanting to help her. I threw my pictch to her and she liked it. She was interested in the virtual reality. So maybe she went through something similar. (You feel present with your words?) I do, I think there was a battle a little bit for multiple reasons. I can relate in my personal life but mine is more recent. This character went through it twenty years ago.

1. Critique: In terms of the pain you’re feeling, yes it’s different time frames. You’re so heartfelt and genuine and clear. But don’t be afraid to breathe into what’s really going on. I can feel how involved and invested you are, like yes it’s about her but you are opening your heart. She’s right there with you and she’s going to go on this journey with you. You were only a 12 year old boy and obviously it inspires all this. You come in here to find out how she’s doing. Now you’re here and you’re not sure where to go with it, measure how much to give her and what to do next based on what she needs. You didn’t come here to tell the story. You were drawn to come in here and help her because she’s hurting. Once she doesn’t open up you have to figure out how to help her. You need to decide in real time. The scenes really good I just want you to play again and not quite know where it’s going.

2. Recall: The more takes I do, and in that first scene as soon as I sat down I felt weird. By take 3 I felt a little bit more self-conscience. At the end I felt weird. I was self aware at certain times.

Critique: You’re telling someone that you may love soon, something deeply personal. You’re risking, you’ve never told anyone this before. This was gorgeous. You’re interested in her, you’re affected by her. By saying how are you really doing? She had this incredible moment. It got so much more intimate immediately. You gotta let yourself off the hook. That was art. When she said why haven’t you told that story before, you were having real thoughts. The object of the game is not to not feel self-conscience. You lean into it. It was vulnerable and it was handsome and manly and had some humor. The last moment, you had an impulse but didn’t do it. (It felt like the moment had passed.) How many times have you been with someone and didn’t kiss them and were like fuck. You’ll find the time. If you turn around and it doesn’t feel right, do something. Stop beating yourself up and worrying about how you feel. Nobody cares how you feel. There’s very few moments where you really fall in love with your scene partner. You just need to care about what’s happening in the scene. When you reveal something about yourself, it’s not only your character, but if it happens to line up with where you’re at, there’s beauty in that, That’s art. And yet for me, I feel terribly embarrassed and ashamed after that. I feel like I gave you something that I wouldn’t give you. You exposed yourself in a vulnerable way and that’s gotta feel a little weird. That’s a beautiful place to be, it’s a pro place to be. That might be a little bit with the applause and feeling self-conscience. Own that too. That’s what happens.

Jane, “Move On” (new)

#1 Recall: I feel terrible but good. Stuart said to focus on the times I was happy with AJ. I’ve been kind of sad lately, but this scene is the kind of sad that’s numb. (Whether you’re sad or not, was Teddy present?) Yeah. (What’s your prep?) Right before this it’s a montage of her being numb and ending in this scene where Malachi is giving a speech. It’s like the end of the sad montage and then this relationship develops. I was kind of stressed because he wasn’t here yet, but that’s fine, I’m stressed at my job. It’s in story. I was pacing back there then I sat down and marinated in my feelings. I also sat back there and sort of listened to what was going on here because I also felt like it was in story. (You can create whatever prep you want to create. The point is you used everything around you. How was the scene?) Good I was intensely uncomfortable. (Why?) I think because the scene that follows is not what was expected. I had extra time and I didn’t expect to sit down and have this intense conversation. (Was it too intimate?) Yeah a little bit. (Were you swooning at the end?) I think any time someone is vulnerable to you, you can fall in love with them a little bit. At the end he says he never felt comfortable sharing that with anyone until now. That affected me. And he has most of the words so I was listening to each piece of the story and understanding and reacting.

#1 Critique: You came in completely wrapped up with what happened. A breath of fresh air came into the room and you were swept off your feet. I wrote down discovery three times. Your ability to listen is special. This is the end of her grief montage. Allow yourself to get swept up. I could feel you were deeply affected by this. Allow whatever comes up to happen. Take the cap off a little bit.

#2 Recall: I definitely was less self-conscious that time. I feel like your note was just, I paid more attention to him basically and was less concerned with myself. (I think that’s partially because it was your second take, and because your brain can believe what it wants.) Your note was are you interested in this person? I think in this take I allowed myself to think what if I could be happy again? (Yeah and you enter with that and at the end it’s what the fuck was that? It’s important in the texting of it, that you open up the possibility that anything could happen. When you relax and let yourself get affected by him, you can get swept up by him. I’m elated at the end at the possibility of you two. Your heart getting swept up is one of your beautiful gifts.

Reyneen, “Silver Linings Playbook” (1st repeat)

Recall: I feel weird. I’m in a weird mood. I’m more sad and less angry. I feel weird. We’ve never done it like this before. I think my prep was all about Tommy and less about him and the dance. I had my parents in there and I'm just so disappointed in myself and it’s sadness instead of anger. I know how it’s supposed to go. (What do you mean?) I think I just focused too much on Tommy and his death and my depression instead of what just happened. I’m just in the wrong place.

Critique:

#2 Recall: A little better. I guess my attention was on other things. The first time I was too into Tommy. (When do you decide that you’re not going to give Nikki the letter?) He comes to my house and fucks up my plan with Jordy. I’m tired of doing things for other people without getting anything in return. (In terms of the way things play out are you aware of how it changes you?) Yeah I think so.

#2 Critique: There’s an agenda and an activeness that you have in the second take. And also your feet betray you. When you’re in the middle of a moment you’ve gotta stay and not slide. You were much more stationary in the second take. There’s an ownership of your work when you’re feeling confident. What I loved best about it was that you were like I feel weird, let’s go again. There’s something about this character that is triggering and unstable and dangerous. (She has so many mental problems and how is she so strong?) It’s not real. She’s floundering just as we all are. You’re playing in this arena and feeling unstable and scattered. Part of that is the story. (I just don’t know how to channel it.) I think you are channeling it and it doesn’t feel good to you. (I have an idea of the movie and how this goes. I think she’s really smart and really tough.) You don’t feel like you have that toughness. (No. I think it’s a shield, a defense mechanism.) When was the last time you read the script? (Today and yesterday.) It feels like your intimated about the character. (I have a lot of questions about her recent life. I really enjoyed the script, I just ugh got lost in the mental health aspect of it and trying to discover it and know about it and feel it.) How are the circumstances going? Are they feeling foreign? (Tommy is resonating with me and my parents, but the black sheepness of it. I kind of have my sister. I know her marriage is falling apart even though it looks perfect from the outside.) It feels like you’re a little bit spinning right now. I would argue that it’s some of the character in you, I think it might be triggering you a little bit. The fact that you’re not feeling close to the character is concerning for me. Is there stuff going on outside this piece that’s affecting you? (I think this scene is tougher than the others we’ve done and I don’t know why?) How’s the dancing going for you? (At dinner when we first meet Veronica is talking me up. It’s something I’ve been wanting for a long time.) When you’re talking about what you want, are these things real for you? (The competition is not something that I really want right now, I knew the whole point of the conversation is to get him to dance with me.) You have this idea. You hatch this plan. (Why is she so hesitant to fucking say it.) You’re playing that whole section based on what you think from the script. (She’s like, I can’t.. and they trip up. Why is she stuttering?) Because it’s not important to her? Maybe it’s so big to her that she’s afraid to ask. She’s afraid his answer’s going to be exactly what it is. She’s afraid because it’s so important. I can feel you when you’re asking that you’re not really there. It’s easy for me to come up with an idea. But what’s going on underneath, the active agenda is playing in some parts. When you say you’re not gonna be that guy. You’re kind of backing into it. She’s a spinner, you’ve gotta work extra hard to wrangle what she really needs. They both are, it’s like who’s the adult? Who’s in charge of this hole thing. I feel like you want this to be over. (I want to be able to play this character.) What do we need for you to be free? (I liked the second incarnation of the last time we did it. I feel like I was in a more powerful position. I just feel weird tonight.) You seem a little weird. You don’t seem as grounded and in control of your work that you’ve felt. It doesn’t mean you’ve backtracked. (I think I just played too much into the depression and not the other things that are going on.) When you have something that’s really overwhelming. Simplify keep it really simple. There’s a lot of layers to this scene, but at the end of the day because the characters can’t ground themselves. You’ve got to lean into it. I don’t understand what her logic is but there’s logic to it, that’s where I’d start.

AJ, “Silver Linings Playbook” (1st repeat)

Recall: I feel okay. I’m sweaty.

#2 Recall: I feel pretty good man. I tried to let it fly a little bit this time. I feel like I was in the place Reyneen was in last time. I felt very intimated about this scene and for me last time I was thinking at the bipolar a lot. I was putting a lot of focus on that and the direct moment before. I spent a lot of time working on how excited I was at her offering to bring the letter to Nikki. I threw on a good song and tried to feel that feel. I focused on the day leading up to this moment. When I found out she wasn’t going to do it, I felt much more focused on trying to fix that. I felt like I was a little wiggle worm for sure. Last time I was so scared to let it fly. I tried to really pay attention to my impulses this time. I was more precious last time. I tried to open up and play.

#2 Critique: I think you’re both a little bit in the same place. These two characters are spinning in their own shit. Neither of you guys are, I mean we’re dealing with mental illness. You found out a way tonight to work this mania into you. We talked last time about where you are emotionally. Are you waiting for her at the top?) No her parents have said she’s not there and her parents have kicked me out. I’m in the headspace, I think I think very highly of her in this moment. She’s told me she’s going to give the letter to Nikki. I'm talking her up and escorting this dude out. I’m not expecting to see her right now. In my brain I’m like going to run by again. She comes by and I’m like what the fuck? Her family said she wasn’t there. I’m confused, I’m not angry about it. (I’m not saying you are angry. There’s something about the scene that you’re dancing around. She’s laying a lot of shit at you. My question is if you need this fucking letter, you’ve gotta turn her head back around. It feels like both of you are skating a little. You can stop and be like hey you said that we’d do this. She starts by saying fuck it, it’s done. I feel like you’re not engaged in that. You’ve got the whole manic thing down, the only thing I want to do now is connect it to story. This guy is so clear on what he needs and what’s real. From where you’re at right now, there’s nothing else that matters. (I don’t wanna go off on her, I’m aware of that I’m investigating what’s going on and not going off on her.) You’ve saved her from another horrible experience and she comes out like fuck you I'm not helping you. When you’re telling her about Nikki it’s all about what’s going on. It’s just not connected to story. (I think in my homework, it’s a little bit of a delusion. As important as it is he’s chugging forward on it. This is a super important thing, the letter is one thing and she’s the first person that’s offered to help. Everything going on is to drag my old life from the grave, I feel like he’s just trying to move forward.) I love everything you said and I think she’s your best bet. (I’m struggling to understand, like I feel like I’m trying.) It’s not changing her enough, it’s not grabbing her enough. I think there’s moments where she’s not affected enough. These things feel desperately real to him.

Allie, “Silence of the Lambs” (1st repeat)

Recall: \*\*Computer crashed so I missed your recall\*\*

Critique: In terms of the head in the bottle, you have to have the image not only in your head, but the context in your heart. You never know what’s going to get you in. Maybe this new way works or something old works. When you’re banging your head against the wall, find another way in. (Yeah that’s another thing, last time Stuart said it sounded too analytical.) And by the way, Clarice is as well. She’s very analytical. This scene flips the relationship. You admit to him that you’re exhilarated. Everything about you is growing in this scene, most important: you’re alive, you’re present, you’re listening. Are we clear about why you showed up tonight vs last week? (No.) This is something we’ve gotta nail down. Your approach to the scene, your care and your belief in the circumstances. That’s the reason. Let’s meditate on that. We want this woman, this pro to show up. You’re not gonna bring your A-game everytime. But you’ll be there.

LeQuan, “Silence of the Lambs” (1st repeat)

Recall: I feel like I came in good. I had the circumstances. The moment before. I’m ultra perceptive and sensory oriented so this is horrible. He’s thinking about his plan, he’s got his plan, got his ball spinning with her. He knows she’ll be back and what to do with that. He’s thinking about Chilton and what he’s going to do to Chilton. Honestly he’s pretty drained from having the gospel program on full blast. It’s draining on a number of levels. He’s looking forward to her coming back. He’s enjoying the silence of the gospel program. He’s name dropping Buffalo Bill. I tried to egg her on at first. I say why don’t you ask me about Bill. I'm a few steps ahead. (You see opportunity here?) Yeah the opportunity has been festering. (Your plain to get a better room and escape. Is there anything in this scene you don’t know?) I wasn’t sure how she’d feel after seeing Moffat. It’s a spark. I kind of play with her, toy with her a little bit. My father impressed upon me the importance of knowing who you’re dealing with. (So you can pick them apart. You feel good about this work?) Yeah. I don’t have an abundance of energy, I’m sort of recovering, soaking everything in. It’s been stressful.

Critique: You do a beautiful job here. The light design was quite brilliant. The challenge for you in this piece is that Lector knows so much that it becomes hard to, moment to moment, and allowing her to catch up. It’s difficult because a lot of it is predicated on what she tells you. You know everything, but also you don’t know everything. I love your interest on her. Keep looking for discovery in this. What she gives you, like just about the hair. Watching this woman dry her hair in front of you, that’s a discovery. Her feeling exhilarated, that’s a discovery. Look for those. Otherwise it all becomes a performance. Also proximity. You got a little too close to her. If you’re gonna press up against the barrier, you can use your blocking and movement within the scene. Make sure it’s clear and deliberate. I felt like you wandered a little bit. I love your rendition of Lector here and this guy you’ve built. But make sure there’s discovery happening for you otherwise it becomes a dead end. What did Stuart give you? (He touched on the same thing. About him knowing so much already. Also he alluded at the stronger hint of romantic interest of Clarice.) That’s what I’m saying about the blocking. That at the end if you’re standing near her and starring down at her.

Elliott, “Uncle Frank” (1st repeat)

Recall: Feels more fluid. I think there’s been some improvements. I definitely started thinking about the weight of the advice I’m giving her and that magnitude. I thought more about the before the scene and what was happening in the other room. The brother’s never going to be happy with anything I do. (Is it stemming from the bigger issue?) yeah always. I think he’s kind of dead to me as a father. I still, there’s like a gravity in the space that keeps bringing me back. There’s good things here but there’s just something I can’t escape from. (We talked a little last time about paradigm. This guy 1973, the closet, this relationship. Have you done more work on that? This era, this place?) I probably could do a little more work on that. I have definitely worked on the closeted issue, not being able to fully embrace who you are.

Critique: I see that, take this character and these issues and stick them into this time period. To find this guy’s style, this guy’s voice. How he deals in NYC vs. how he is back home and how that shifts. You’re not quite fitting into yet this time. Everything you’re talking about, and getting pregnant, people just didn’t talk about that back then. Part of that comes from re-reading it and taking a look at the world itself and part of that is imagination work. Seeing how you’re different and who this guy’s character is. (I believe I understand the note. My only scene is with Beth, she’s the person I feel the most comfortable with. In the first scene, there’s a wall there. In the second scene, it’s new being able to talk about my life with a family member.) And all of that becomes much more relavant and so much more specific to this time period. It feels like she’s someone you trust. You changed her life. I want to make sure that all the stuff you’re already doing that it’ll strengthen it so much to put it in the time and place of the piece. I don’t feel like it inspires you. (I’m reaching back, there are definitely things I can pull from that I probably haven’t been.) The stuff you’re pulling from is working, I’m just saying get more specific. It isn’t taboo enough. In 1973 it’s just different. Take a look. I love the work that you’re doing. I love the care you’re taking with your scene partner. Just put it in this paradigm. Put it in this world. The style. Everything about him, it’s just different. Secrets. Secrets. Secrets. You owning your own paradigm also means you’re owning those secrets. I want to build your backstory. I don’t know how to give you those notes, it’s about digging into the character itself. I don’t know how to do that without you having the script. (I would take those notes, like the life I have in New York, that’s freeing. That’s fantastic.)

Rachel, “Uncle Frank” (1st repeat)

Recall: First off, I think from last time I really figured out what I needed to do. I re-watched it, I understood how all the pieces fit together. I really felt in these scenes the weight. I really applied that and tried to play with age. I had two big issues. I was really playing with age and how naïve. She’s really smart and she’s worried of coming off as stupid. I just want to make sure I’m not coming off as an airhead. (It’s 1973. Your wonder in the scene and your discovery. Your innocence and your discovery of all that, that’s beautiful. That’s beautiful acting, that’s not airhead. When your eyes light up, it’s fascinating. Nothing feels unintelligent about you. If you worry about that again, just put it off the table.) The other thing, when we were doing it upstairs, it feels like we have a really genuine connection. My lip was shaking. It’s never happened before. It only happened in the first scene but I’ve never had that before.

Critique: It’s tension. That’s something to clock, But also, we can’t tell. You should and can work on some sort of relaxation exercise. I often when I arrive, even to teach sometimes is doing a relaxation exercise. BUT it’s beautiful for the scene. Filling in what’s going on behind that door. You were working on that. A lot of the information about the parents and who he’s not close with and why. That’s playing right now. your wide-eyed naiveté is a direct result of the world you’re in. I feel like you’re a good actor who’s investigated what this time period is and who he is. The more specific you are in this world, the more he’ll want to resonate with you and get you to escape. You can’t get too deep with what this world is. As much work as you can do on your paradigm and your world here. You need to take more time in between the scenes. (I really like doing these scenes back to back because I feel like I can switch them enough.) Not just wardrobe but you carry yourself like a collegiate woman, but B your physicality. Like who you are now and who you were at a 14 year old girl. I don’t know how much validity there is to work on a 14 year old, but I think you can do more work. And secrets for you. You have your own secrets, you have his secrets that you’re harboring. What she’s willing to let the world know about her and what she’s not.

Brad, “No Worries” (new)

Recall: This was the other one I didn’t do. It was written as a monologue. I guess the one thing that was tough for it to say, Man comes out and addresses audience. So the audience plays a part in some way. I don’t really know what the deal is so I gave myself permission to explore that. (The relationship you started with us from the beginning felt very natural.) It felt that way but I just didn’t know. It’s clear that to me it seems the obvious arc was very much like a therapy session. Filling in the silences where no one else is saying anything. The dropping of the façade. Actually there is shit that’s getting under the cracks but you know I’m not going to deal with it. It’s like the one thing, (That’s the bottom of this piece. Are you clear about what that is?) I tried to be yeah, there could be a couple causes and spinning that in with the family. (

Critique: I want you to do this again next week. I want to give you this note, whatever that moment is, that bottom moment. I want it as large as the sun. Everything you say in this monologue is cover, your sense of peace and happiness is all a façade that covers what sits under this. Whatever it is, it can’t be too big. It’ll never be too big. (I wouldn’t call it one note, but it is all this stuff and that one moment. It makes sense to build it up more.) Part of the fun and funniness of it is you come up with another thing, and another thing. If you can allow yourself to get so deeply into that beat that drops you in, that last bit is you trying to convince us that what you said earlier was true. If you’re willing to allow that one beat to unravel you. Get specific, get clear. (I wish I had more of that from the start. When I’m prepping for a scene with someone else I feel like I have a good grasp on absorption. I notice with these monologues I feel very memorizy. The built in, triggers what will come next. It’s also weirdly this obsession with getting it right but no one will know if I go up.) That’s true, unless you tell them. When you work on a scene or you work on a monologue. There’s a logic tracking that a writer is aware of. Sometime’s the writer’s not talented and doesn’t have a grasp. When you’re absorping your monologue, it’s the same process, whatever I’ve just said leads me to the next thing which leads me to the next thing. The absorption process at least for me is the same. Where you get into trouble is when your memorizing a monologue and you plan how it’s going to go. It felt like to me from the top you were riding that wave, the cyniscm that comes in, either everything’s a lie and you have to convince us or you hit a road block. You can’t plan that while you’re absopring but you should be following the logic and following the lines. (I get really focused to on the uh’s and the you know’s because they’re in there. It just does feel sometimes different.) The other monologue you did is not a monologue, it’s a scene we just can’t hear what the other guy is saying. It’s a scene. The more that you hear the guy, the more clear you are on what he’s saying, the better the scene becomes. It’s completely back and forth. The question about this monologue is valid, my answer is it’s exactly the same. You have a scene with the audience. I move onto teeth after my hair or whatever because that’s this relationship with the audience. And you kept plowing through. You know we’re waiting for that moment when you hit the bottom. The more specific and big it is the better.