Thursday Night Mike Teaching 10/7/21 Notes

Elliott, “Frankenstein” (new)

Recall: I’ve been thinking about this piece since last year. I was thinking about putting it up and then October came around and this time slot opened up for me. I know this character. I was asking around if other people wanted to do future scenes with me. But I wanted to do early scenes. I gave thought about what that birth is for the creature. I thought a lot about birth and childhood wihout love or parents. I saw this episode of This Is Us and the baby is premature, the father looks at it and it can’t even cry. Remove the love and concern from the parents and that’s Frankenstein. He’s a child with no love and no parents. Abandoned before he even came to life. (It’s an extraordinary piece and you put so much work into it. What is it about Frankenstein, you just described the bottom. What’s drawing you to this character?) Frankenstein is a tragedy. It’s a story of what happens when we’re fixated on hate or pride and we don’t care about anything else. You can see that there are so many moments where beings can grasp at the best parts of it if they can push aside all the shit that the world has. I’m referring to later in the story. For the creature he becomes so fixated on revenge. Revenge is too simple of a word. The creature, he’s a living being. He’s bent on having his master fulfill everything an inventor should give his creature. He has a very demented version of what that looks like for him. He becomes very intelligent but he’s very narrow minded. He’s super bent on having his creator create another creature. He doesn’t see himself as human. But he doesn’t want to die. He wants to have his piece of the earth no matter what. (How do you feel?) I’m so happy, thank you Malachi. I know those last moments, I was able to bounce off you. Leading up to that there were some really moments that I was scared. Also curiosity and joy.

Critique: You’re risking a lot here. You’re exposed emotionally and physically. You throw yourself in harms way. It’s amazing what you put together here, between the set and everything that goes into this piece. That would’ve been enough but on top of that you were 100% commited to the birth of this creature. It’s beautiful as an actor. I feel like you and I have been in a struggle for a while. You’re not resisting me, but at the same time I think what’s different and special about you is your vision. Your director’s eye and your ability to create magic in a black box. I think you’re a director and I think you need to exercise that in a meaningful and deep way. You’re not getting traction yet because you have deon’t a career concept yet. We haven’t had a director come up here in a while my assignment is to cast two actors and direct a scene. (I can be in it right?) You can be in but I do want you to sit back and direct. When you direct yourself a lot of things happen and some things don’t happen. There’s a real advantage to be in it but there’s also something great. You’re off the hook. You’re just sitting back receiving what’s going on. You either need to get this space or another space and put something up. You need to start directing. There are so many things that are right in line with what I'm asking but really it’s a director’s note in a Playbill. It’s relevant to today and all of us. What you’ve revealed in your own pain. It’s the creature. You have rapport for that. That’s clear in this work. The stuff you did with Suzie in Zoom, it really feels like you’re building something. I never would of thought that this is what’s coming today. It feels like this is really personal to you.

In terms of the acting. There’s so many things you were flowing with. The physical state alone and birth, the water. It felt like you had an animal exercise going on. It’s a really interesting character study. There’s a lot that can go on in this and I think you’re just beginning to explore. The only thing I want to say about the acting, there are moments for you where you get swept up and it’s difficult to watch and it’s pretty intense. There’s also moments where you can stop, get your shit together and take stock. How do I feel? I want to remind you that after the horror of Omg what just happened to me? But within the breathing and all the physicalization there can also be stillness. Investigating with sound. You deal with touch beautifully. Do you have any memory or sense of what’s happened to you? (No the way I imagine Frankenstein’s growth, it’s very much like a child a blank slate. The pieces of an adult are there. He has pieces of an angry person. The creature has all of the open eyes of a child but as soon as he makes his mind up about something it’s complete.) My experience with older people that have dementia is exactly what you’re describing. How self aware is he? Does he know he doesn’t know? Does he know he has no memory? (All of that happens with his conversations with Delacey. He teaches him to speak he teaches him to read. He flees with Victor’s journal and there’s questions he doesn’t get answered.) I guess what I’m interested in his awareness. I guess he’s just beginning. (We’re seeing an animal or child.) What’s the next bit for the process? (I’m pretty focused on the scene with Delacey there’s also an interaction with people where he gets stunned and stoned.) Maybe we skip the stoning and move to the part where there’s connection. The creature you’ve created is horrible and beautiful and brilliant. I want to see how Elliott and the creature interact.

Malachi, “Frankenstein” (new)

Recall: It was pretty last minute, he texted me yesterday. I looked into the scene and saw what was happening and this is the only interaction with us. So yeah he set up such an awesome set. For me it was learning about the story what kind of happens and trying to build on what this means to me and the initial oh shit what’s this noise. That’s my creation and oh shit, the flesh started decaying already. I expected him to be functional and he’s a disgusting failure. I think it’s a weird story to try and get behind in so little time so I set my expectations high. I wanted this brilliant being. I created life. He could be my living testimony and then to have that not be the case, that’s where I was going with it. (So you had the beat of oh shit, this is alive.) Yeah and then things progressed, it’s like what is he and then the danger but I’m your master kind of thing. Like I said it was last minute, my interaction and watching I think could be a little more polished. (In your 24 hours what did you work on?) For me it was learning what happens in the story and the moment behind him. In the story my mom dies in childhood giving birth to my little brother. This is a way we could create life without ever having to go through that again. I was expecting to through his parts away and then I hear the noise. (Do you have a sense he might be alive?) Yeah. That’s the only noise coming from the room. So holy shit.

Critique: It’s not a bad part for you to investigate. Did you hear what he said to you? (Yeah.) Did you buy it? (Yeah, yes.) Your critique. I think you understand what’s going on I get what you’re saying but at the same time, I do think you’re answering the questions that you had for me. When you’re asked to do something in class or have an audition for the next day, often the writing’s not great, or a bunch of questions for your character. There are keys to belief you have to ask yourself. The questions I ask you are questions you need when you walk in the door. What the circumstances are and what they mean to you. Once you have answered those basic questions for yourself, you’re ready to play. As long as you take those questions seriously you’re ready to play. I want to tell you a couple things. You try and do a lot in this scene. You don’t need to tell the whole story in this moment. You’ve worked your whole life to take dead flesh and create life. It’s all about creating life. In 1818, pre iphone. You have created life. So to step into the room and think holy shit it works. Then there’s a moment of oh I lost control immediately. My whole life’s work has been completed but he isn’t what I thought he would be. But I think the expectation is oh I’ve invented life. Revel in that a little bit. The homework for this piece is that. The arrogance of that, the brilliance of that. He’s Elon Musk times Jobs. Brilliant men, interesting guys. You can dig into that quest and that concept and then the realization of that more deeply. (Sometimes I panic in that and I’m like oh shit.) You get that. You get a little flustered, but the bottom of this is you’re god. You’ve created life. I’m not sure that conecept’s hit you yet. You own stillness in real life and you’re able to hold a gaze and hold a moment and understand process. You’re connected in that sense, when acting you don’t always trust that as much but all you’ve gotta do is walk in the door and stop and look at this thing. You sewed all of those organs together. When you only have a little bit of time, get to the bottom and stop. Sit on it. Part of that is you haven’t had the time to sit with the material but part of having the trust is to sit back and own this.

AJ, “Move On” (1st repeat)

#1 Recall: Story, the idea of what’s happening right now and why am I the only person? I think maybe I’m dead. I haven’t seen her since we parted ways post no. She wasn’t at her place. It’s okay man. I was a little more self aware than I’ve ever been in this. I was a lot more angry than I’ve ever been. I was annoyed that she just showed up. I think every other time just the relief of being around another person and this time I just think oh you’re the first fucking person I’m seeing. I’m angry at the whole situation. It’s not a bad thing, but she just broke my heart. She just told me no I’m not going to marry you. Then the world froze and I’ve just been sitting in that. I was more pissed off at the situation, why her and not Squid or my family. It has never happened like that before, I’ve always been more with it. It’s like whiplash.

#2 Recall:

#1 Critique: I’m not giving you emotions to start playing but I do want to talk about circumstances for one moment. You’re defeated in this scene. But from where I sit, she says no and breaks your heart, the world freezes, and now here she is, the possibility. Since she broke your heart the world froze. Thank god she’s the first one. (Truly every other time that’s how it’s been. This time I was just annoyed.) You have a right to your anger and maybe there are parts where anger comes up, I just don’t see an agenda. I don’t see a possibility of this moving forward. I don’t see how the love still stands. (I think one of my notes is trying to figure out what’s happening? I do feel crazy man, I’ve been alone for 3 months and she showed up. I was trying just to let it happen because I felt it in the scene. It made me feel more self conscious. The disbelief of seeing someone for the first time took a big front seat. Do we have to deal with the fact that you just told me you don’t want to marry me.) I love that you take that seriously and that that was hurtful for you, but the choices she made 3 months ago don’t matter now. We’re going to run it again, here’s what I want you to do. You have an agenda, god smiled on you and your praryers have been answered, here’s the woman you love. Look at her. You’re in your own shtick right now. A lot’s happened in the last 3 months. (He’s doing everything he can to not look at her.) Yeah because it hurts too much to look at her. (I’m right on with that.) I just want to run it again and play a different thing, unless you believe that there’s a possibility there’s no chance. She doesn’t look happy. I’m not sure what you can do to make her feel better. There’s moments that can be more filled. That’s different from fuck this, why are you here. The moment you guys connect is the scene and everything else is cover. Agenda, the possibility of us.

#2 Recall: It felt way different. The love was way more present this time around. I felt myself much more in awe of her being there. Way less angry. I think this was more similar to idk, yeah this felt like the person I loved showed back up. I did feel super normal if that makes sense. I didn’t feel like I had been on my own, I felt more equipped to talk with a person. I think maybe, idk I don’t think after covid I was able to be a normal person very easily. I think it was much more like oh here I am and we’re back. This thing just makes me very, Idk not in a bad way. I think I had done a lot of work on that element this time around. It didn’t feel bad. It felt nice to connect with her again. It some ways it was reassuring that, part of my spin, we just plugged back in right away. It made me feel less crazy about the lead up to this. And why the fuck did she say no. What if she had been with me the whole time. It was comforting to feel like we plugged back in. (Did the scene change after she hugged you in the bathroom?) The first time I was scared. In my fantasy she shows up and we’re back together. (It feels to me like you’re still harboring resentment that she says no to you and yet there’s been an apocalypse. Now you’re energy feels low. Why an agenda, why the person you love that comes here. Maybe there’s jostling at the beginning but when she comes and hugs you.) Yeah and then she says sorry and tries to leave. (But I’ve seen you energized by your agenda. I’m not seeing a sense of urgency that there’s a possibility of the future of you guys now existing.) In story I don’t know. (You guys have a moment righ here that’s intimate and intense and personal and then she’s going to go, isn’t that going to energize you? You’re not going to let her go this time.) In my brain, I’m like fuck off. She’s saying I’m sorry and then walks away. (She comes in here to love you.) I definitely think ther’s an element of us caring for each other and maybe there hasn’t been as much in other variations. I guess I’m in my own tragedy right now. I feel like we should be disconnected. It’s been 3 months. I hear her and I do love her but I feel like it’s them moving through this stuff. (Would you say the tragedy that’s happened to the world is slightly less tragic?) yeah but it’s still been traumatic.

#2 Critique: When you’re traumatized and you see someone you love, you go to that. It feels like a disconnection that isn’t is story to to me. You’re fighting the connectjion against her. From a directorial stand point, for you to play into the tragedy rather than the discovery you’ve just made, I feel like there needs to be more energy to this scene. you feel a little down and in yourself right now. Maybe I’m off but I also stand behind the idea that the person comes back and gives you the possibility. By the end you’re convincing her to stay with you. Look for solutions, look for possibility.

Jane, “Move On” (1st repeat)

#1 Recall: It always feels fucked up when we finish, but it was good. I actually feel like I didn’t like my prep as much but the launch was okay. I just didn’t feel as like fully engaged in my prep. I feel like we had a minute and I wasn’t in it yet. (So that happened and often it’s hurry up and wait.) I feel like the launch is easy because there’s a moment of discovery right at the top. (Whatever prep you had set you up. Part of it is you’re confident and comfortable in the scene, whatever prep you did got you there. Nobody cares what you thought you should’ve been doing. The launch was dynamite. I felt like this was an aftermath scene, it was very real for both of you. The relationship between you guys you both buy into. You don’t need to be prescious with your prep. For the class you have a sense what’s going to get you to the plate and trust it. Investigate and drive you into the scene. Did you do any connection exercise?) We did a hug, in the script the moment right before this we see each other for the first time. We had the proposal dinner and I said no because it wasn’t genuine. (What happened to you?) He died in the car accident while texting me trying to get me back, five years ago. Life is difficult and the one year anniversary is my scene with Malachi. Four years after that Malachi proposes and we’re engaged to be married. He built this VR thing and pitches to me that I should go get closure. He does say you can only go in once and once you come out Teddy will be deleted forever. That’s why it’s frozen. I’m aware he’s not real but he feels so real. (So now I understand, tell me how you feel and what’s working for you?) Embedded in the circumstances. (Is this reality real for you?) Yeah. (Anything not hitting you deeply enough?) No I don’t think so. It’s intereting with this scene, practically the whole screenplay takes place before this scene. Everytime we do it something new comes up for me. I didn’t feel disconnected from anything. The note was focus also on the happy. That I did a lot of pain on the grief and think about how I felt before the weight was there. That was my prep before the scene. I was listening to happy love songs. (Why’d you come here?) To say goodbye. To try and talk to him. I want to move on. I want to get married to this wonderful new person. I meet up with his best friend and he’s married and has a baby. I want that and I can’t do it and maybe this is the solution that will allow me to commit to a new chapter.

#1 Critique: You came here for closure and I know that’s hard and very sad. However you love this man and he died. You came here and though you wanted one thing but possibility is everywhere. You’re wrapped up super tight. He died and doesn’t know it and that’s heartbreaking. But get lost in the possibility. What if you never leave. (I don’t think that’s a possibility.) Fair enough but when you’re starring at each other, you can allow yourself to go down that road. You’re really beautiful at playing this end of it and holding back but what if you go down the road and you’re completely in love again and then you have to leave. You better get into it. Allow yourself to go, and not just this moment but hoping and thinking. It’s too juicy of a toy to play with. More than just seeing him and going. It might feel a little out of control it might feel a little dangerous.

#2 Recall: I don’t feel convinced at the end. (Why aren’t you leaving and making him get you?) I don’t know what to do in that moment, I’m overwhelmed and like what the fuck am I doing? (I’ll buy that. The answer is like it could be you see him and then go. Leave. How do you feel?) Good. Coming out felt very different. The first time I did it I wanted to cry. The second time felt good in a way like oh my god he said he loves me. There was a possibility like you said. (And I think that possibility could go further and I think the note is you looking for those moments. One of the things that’s more difficult is vulnerability. You play a lot of strong people but I highly suggest any scene you have a strong point of view, what’s the other side? What’s she afraid of? What’s her heart? It’s not something you awlays swing towards.) In this scene it does say she’s self assured and asking him questions. (Why is she asking him questions? She’s lying right?) I’m talking about how he died. I’m asking him questions I genuinely want to know. I didn’t expect the world to be frozen. I didn’t expect it to be that way. In the playground everything works but because it’s been downloaded and separated for this purpose everything’s frozen. I arrive in my apartment and I have to go look for him. I feel like it’s not what I expected. This shit is wild. (All of these questions and the energy you have right now, that’s what should be going on in this scene. The point is you’re both downloading. The depth of you and the fact that it’s a simulation, can’t be played on top. It has to be covered.

#2 Critique: I think you’re doing a beautiful job playing all the layers.

Allie, “Anastasia” (1st repeat)

Recall #1: I feel all over the place. I didn’t hate it, didn’t love it. I had a hard day today. Psyched myself out a lot. Got some devastating news yesterday. I thought about not coming today because of it. I couldn’t let myself be there in rehearsal and here because I was thinking about it. Even walking from my car I thought oh fuck. I didn’t want to cancel. I love performing. The second I got here I felt so much better. Brought me back down to life. Seeing Elliott and seeing AJ and Jane, so great. I’m so glad I came. I felt good about prep. First time w/ Stuart was vocally good but not engaged. I think too much the first time about how I sound and not how I’m feeling (circumstances). Stuart had me do it a second time. I rushed it first time. That was there this time. It grounded me in circumstances. I felt mostly better than I thought. But right before I came out, when I was alone for a little too long I kind of got back in my head. Then I came on stage and I saw Eiffel Tower. I felt grounded in what was going on. After beginning minute or so I started feeling not so great again. I got taken out of it a little. I forced myself back into it. It was choppy. I felt good about it at beginning and then intrusive thoughts crept in. But then I felt myself in other moments. This song is more hope than fear.

Critique #1: I appreciate you being here and giving to the group. If class can pull you out or inspire you, that’s great. It got you out for a minute, maybe prep wasn’t as strong or maybe you needed to feel what you’re feeling. I get calls about horrible things and I have empathy, but why does it need to pull you out of it? Now that you’re here in Paris, you’re terrified. In you talking about this thing, you come alive. You are strong. You can channel what’s inside you and put it into story. As long as I’ve known you, you’ve had a lot of trials and tribulations. Everyone’s got their shit. Work toward a strong prep. Whatever feelings come up will work. On next take, the Eiffel Tower is right fucking there. 20 minutes ago you were standing back there thinking I can’t get through this. You can change your POV and own the power.

Recall #2: It was a lot better. Just talking about it beforehand grounded me. I took more time exploring the space. I felt less like me and more like her. Her circumstances were more real for me. It felt more there. The desperation was there. I want a family and someone to love me. It can be even better and I can spin on it more. I only had a few minutes. I didn’t love the way it sounded, but it didn’t bother me.

Critique #2: You made a decision after first take, whatever happens to me emotionally, that’s part of the story. It didn’t fuck with you. Work it in. Make that decision. Allow whatever happens to happen. The thing you most worry about won’t fuck with you. If you swat at the bee it will sting you. You bought the circumstances. I heard the words more clearly. It’s 99.6% hope and 0.4% fear. I got chills. There’s so much hope. Now I’m finally here. There it is. I see you shrink after you see the Eiffel Tower and I would say be careful texting-wise. I don’t have musical notes for you. Your voice is beautiful. What I notice from an untrained ear, when you are thinking about the music, I can tell, but when you’re in story I am swept up. The more you think about the voice the more we think about the voice.

Katie, “Promising Young Woman” (new)

Recall #1: (She gave him a fake number. Is that part of the equation?) I don’t know what’s next for me in story. I’m unhappily happy. I go after specific people, but I trust him. I have the bottom. (make him work hard)

Critique #1:

Recall #2: That felt a lot better. He had to win me. He still had to work.

Critique #2:

Recall #3: I liked the third one best.

Critique #3: You understand how what you’re doing applies to them. This piece bums me out, but I know enough about it to know what the bottom is and what the deal is.

Sam, “Promising Young Woman” (new)

Recall #1: On this take I knew too much, I need to up how excited I am. I knew from first time meeting her that we have good rapport and I know she’s going to say yes. I need to take steps back and reassess.

Critique #1: She gave you fake number so only thing to do is to move on. You can give a shit and play with it a bit. But you’re coming back in in place you’re not wanted.

Recall #2: It was great because nothing was working. Everything was falling flat. It was nice to lose. Both times Kristin was playing for me. Second time was auditioning for two.

Critique #2:

Recall #3: I had a lot of gifts from take one to take three.

Critique #3: Your charm is your superpower. The first one plays and it’s beautiful. You’re hard to say no to. It’s charming, but not creepy. There’s a genuineness to this. You’re forced to bring charm and modesty and humility. Third one is the one I’m gonna use. You won her with banana Fredericks. It’s beautiful. You were never daunted.

Kristin, “Promising Young Woman” (new)

Recall: It felt weird to leave in first two takes. I wanted to check in more with her. Her giving him a fake number should have been like “is he creepy? Is she okay?”

Critique: You’re in a whole different place. You feel different, you look different, your work is different. Each take was different. Your certainty is gorgeous. It’s a burst of light. I’ve seen you in other moments. Whatever you’re eating right now, keep eating it.