Acting 101

How to build confident, successful student actors
Welcome!

At the start of any rehearsal, we want to build energy within our students and ourselves. Before we get started, let’s join in a circle to do a quick full-body warm up!
Focus first on the body

Students often don’t know what to do with their bodies and end up acting only with their voices. The results can be awkward and unfulfilling.

Instead, have students do a “molding” activity. In pairs, students are instructed to mold a partner into an expression of an emotion, starting with the face and moving on to the rest of the body. The partner doing the molding must step back and engage others in a discussion of those choices and the results, make adjustments as needed, then have the character say a line with the assigned emotion while maintaining the posture.

Let’s try it!--Volunteers?

**Continue building by molding groups, to discover ways to show relationships and interactions among characters onstage--all without any words! Small groups can make use of cameras so they can try things out and then evaluate the images.**
Second, build empathy

Actors should develop an understanding of character emotions and background. They need to empathize with the character they are playing. As Mike Myers shared on Inside the Actors Studio, “The villain thinks he is the hero in his own story.”
Third, find a purpose

Have you ever seen a student wander aimlessly on a stage or shift back and forth in position? Every movement on stage should be motivated by a purpose. Directors and coaches need to help students discover why a character is behaving a certain way in the moment. Tie this understanding back to your work with the body. (Tip: don’t just tell students to make something “bigger.” Help students understand their characters’ objectives by giving them statements of character intent or by asking more experienced actors to come up with those statements.)

Let’s try an exercise in developing purpose!
At every step, encourage collaboration

Help students learn to work in harmony with one another and to respond to one another. One way to do this is with a version of “yes, and.”
Resources

Books about acting:

- A Practical Handbook for the Actor
- Stella Adler, The Art of Acting
- Konstantine Stanislavski, An Actor Prepares
- Uta Hagen, Respect for Acting
- Viola Spolin, Improvisation for the Theatre

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