Shakespeare meets Stanislavsky

Contextual Work of the Script

Read a detailed synopsis of the play (*Spark Notes or another similar internet resource*) and take notes answering the following prompts. These notes will become your foundation for future round-the-table work and “work on role” items – the more detailed and specific your notes the better your preparation of the character will be. So take really, really good notes to help you! Remember, “The concept ‘in general’ is the bane of theatre.” So follow Stan’s advice and don’t be ‘in general’!

Bring your notes and script with you on deadline to class and be ready to work and play hard with them.

**What is going on in the play?**

*“Often we see (or read) a play without clearly understanding the logic of events and their dependence on each other. And that is the first thing which must be made clear in any play, because without it, it is hard to speak of the play’s inner nature.”* Stanislavsky

Create a list of events of the play – hit the main events that move the entire play/story along, but dive into detail the events in the scenes just before, during and after your piece. What exactly is happening with whom and when (and maybe even why if the text gives you that)? Be specific and detailed here…the more you know about the play the better. So if you’re not going to read the entire script then study the storyline in depth and know exactly what is happening in the story.

After creating the list of events, jot down impressions about your character’s role in the play. Why are you there? How do you contribute to the story of the play?

**What is your relationship with other people in the play?**

*“Reading a script is like reading an x-ray: A doctor looks at an x-ray and sees things in it that you don’t see. Why? Because he is a doctor. When an actor looks at a script he sees things in it as an actor.”* Strasberg

List the key people in the play and note how you interact with them, your relationship with them, and how you feel about them (if you interact with them).

**What is the setting for your scene/mono?**

*“Stanislavsky asked actors to think and behave as their characters would logically do in the circumstances of the play.”* Carnicke

Where does it take place and what time of year? What kind of effect does the setting have on your character – how does he/she feel about being there?