



Ottawa | June 7-9, 2011

missinglinks

Actor Training in a Changing Landscape

“There has been for some time now a feeling that a study should be done of theatre training in Canada...”

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aesthetic diversity

context:

So begins the Canada Council's 1971 Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Theatre Training in Canada. The report provides a snapshot of the state of acting training in English and French Canada, focusing on various areas of education and professional training including acting, design, directing, production, stage management and technical training.

And many of the suggestions the report makes about acting training — that training institutions should affiliate with theatres, that people who teach should be active in the profession, etc. — stand today. However, two important issues are not dealt with in any substantial way, issues that are even more essential today: the **cultural diversity** of the actors and the theatres they are training for, and the **aesthetic diversity** in the theatre work actors are engaging in during their training.

proposal:

Given the complex overlapping of cultural heritages in contemporary Canadian society, and also given that much contemporary creation works away from psychological realism: there is an urgent need for a discussion on the issue of diversity in acting training in Canada, with respect to culture and to theatrical styles, and any resonances that can be drawn between them.

We propose a three-day meeting with Canadian actor trainers, directors, actors and others to be part of Magnetic North 2011.

Avoiding the “Royal Commission” model, this meeting will not work towards overviews, summaries, authoritative statements or conclusions. Instead, each participant will arrive with a statement of provocation that will be used as a starting point for discussion. Deliberations will be guided by some key governing questions about diversity.

Participants will work through materials in both closed sessions and a final session open to the public. A studio will be available if discussion needs to become demonstration. From these engagements, a series of affirmations and possible actions will be collected and circulated within the Canadian theatre and acting training communities. Rather than serving a collective statement that all participants agree to, it will simply stand as a record of what has been spoken: traces that can serve to vitalize others in their work and creative training.

“Theatre schools seem to provoke many people, particularly theatre people, to hostility.” Michel St Denis

“The actor has to know that they are co-creating every stage moment with the author.” Maria Knebel

“For each new theatre project it is necessary to provide new lines of life, new aesthetics for the voice and body.” Włodzimierz Staniewski

missing links



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cultural diversity

sample provocations:

- The dirty little secret of Canadian theatre is that many directors know very little about acting or acting training.
- The erotics of insufficiency and self-congratulation haunt the green rooms of Canadian theatres.
- Whether or not fear has led them to deny, suppress, or ignore it, every actor has a powerful desire for their work to involve risk, expression, and accuracy.
- The poorly articulated and often technically imprecise notion of contemporary performance has eroded important aspects of acting technique as well as the discourse around acting.
- Significant numbers of young actors are dreaming of something different than what they see actors in the theatre giving Canadian audiences today.
- Young actors arriving in theatre training have, for whatever reason – be it pervasive technology, insidious suburbanization of the unconscious, etc – a less complex, less rich embodied relationship with the world and those around them.
- Any real acting training in Canada has to recognize that the very land we're training on has been stolen by somebody from somebody else at some point in the past.
- There is no new acting training under the sun.
- To be an actor you should have to get a license to practice your craft, just like a lawyer or an architect. It would save everyone a lot of embarrassment.

"Create a body and a state that would say the particular words of the play and then speak." Anne Bogart

"When we are possessed by the part and almost kill our partners and break chairs, etc, then we are not free and it is not art but hysterics." Micheal Chekhov

"Why begin with the 'jeu'. Because 'jeu, game and play is the source of everything: of the pleasure and desire to be an actor." Philippe Gaulier

"If we don't get lost, we never find a new route." Joan Littlewood

transmission

sample governing questions:

- What do Canadian theatres and directors need from actors in terms of aesthetic range (naturalism/realism, dance-theatre, Barba)?
- Does the community of directors and producers have a leadership role to play in encouraging cultural diversity in acting training programs?
- How much training outside the country should be encouraged?
- What are the values of exchange between the Quebec and Anglo acting training institutions?
- Where is apprenticeship happening? Is it working?
- Does the guru system work? Do we have any in Canada? Why are they recognized as such?
- What still needs to be written and said about acting training?
- What is the role of poetry in the actor trainer's delivery of their materials?
- Is there a 'paradoxe' of the Canadian actor?
- Is the notion of nationalism informing 'Canadian' as a useful designator, or just remnant semantics from the country's history of settler-invader colonization?
- Do we have to do more to promote the kind of de-urbanization that was so central to 20th century acting training (Stanislavski, Grotowski, Vakhtangov, Copeau, Brook, Staniewski)?
- Is there any epic theatre training happening anymore? Is it worth it? Does it work?
- How can we challenge each other to produce more viable, vibrant, demanding, ethical actors?

events schedule:

Symposium: June 7-9, 2011

Open Public Forum: June 9, 2011

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"Whenever there are great virtues, it's a sure sign something's wrong." Bertolt Brecht

"All prepared systems fail. Process is dynamic." Joseph Chaikin