



**THE JASON BENNETT
ACTOR'S WORKSHOP**

THE NEXT GENERATION OF ACTOR TRAINING

**The World is Your Acting Class
(Volume 3 of 10)**

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Great Actors Are Energy Masters

Acting is an extremely high-energy sport. Great actors are energy masters. The best actor training helps you deepen your energetic awareness, stamina and vocabulary. Ultimately, all effective storytelling is a high-stakes exchange of energy between actors and the audience. Many aspiring actors come to actor training blind to these energy exchanges and unable to call forth intense and sustained levels of performance energy. In this article, you will learn things you can do on your own to become a master of energy.

Acting is a highly intelligent, specific exchange of energies between actors and audience members. Talent can be defined as the ability to manifest the specific energies the audience needs to receive from the story being told. Actors feed audiences energy. Every human interaction is, in fact, an energy exchange. Master actors are master communicators and are experts in manipulating energy.

In acting terms, energy is difficult to precisely define. Other words that are similar, but not the same, are impulses, moods, qualities, emotions, states-of-being, archetypes, points of view and vibrations. Energy encompasses all of these.

Audiences receive an energetic “feeding” while attending any kind of performance event. In fact, as you read this article, you are “feeding” on the information in it – a relatively limited kind of energy exchange. This information triggers associations and fantasies within your unconscious; the information you are receiving is a catalyst for energetic reactions within you.

When it is most intense, the energy exchange between actors and audiences feels like magic. Actors are like magical scientists. The best actors facilitate audience members’ access to all kinds of intense or repressed archetypal energies. Audience members’ ordinary lives may not provide the opportunity to experience these energies. Connecting with energy is the fundamental reason audiences attend performance events.

When a performance is successful, the audience is literally getting to know themselves through these energy exchanges. In this sense, as an actor you are a teacher, helping audiences reconnect with energies they probably had more of a connection to when they were children. As we “grow up,” we are “socialized” out of the connection to many universal energies.

Because of all this, you must expand your imagination as much as possible in your training to be an actor. Your imagination is the most sophisticated playground of all kinds of energy. The imagination can be organized into archetypes. Archetypes are the universal “energy patterns” hard-wired into your brain. You can read about archetypes in articles on our school’s web site. There are all kinds of archetypes successful actors must easily access.

An “archetypal education” is a fundamental goal of actor training. The more archetypes you learn about, the more you can communicate with specificity and dimensionality. Thus, the better your acting.

Each major human archetype within you is a specific energy pattern – expressed uniquely through your body and voice. The voice and body must be connected to the imagination, freed from tension, and “stretched” so it can call forth and release all kinds of archetypal energies. And ultimately, this must happen with no conscious effort, spontaneously and profoundly.

This kind of energy training is intense. Most actors are not born able to do this in the manner of a professional actor. Some actors’ life experiences have well trained them for this kind of energy mastery. But the great news is that energy awareness and mastery can be taught, to a large extent. Access to a wide range of energy was always a goal of most traditional actor training, although teachers of the past often were simply unaware of the energy dynamics of their training. They didn’t have the vocabulary to talk about this – things were not as evolved. Today, actor training that leaves out the cultivation of consciousness about archetypal energies should be evolved, because scene study classes sometimes leave out this essential work.

You can work on energy consciousness on your own. Start paying attention to the energy exchanges between you and others. Notice how some people “change the room” when they enter with their powerful energy. Perhaps you can change the atmosphere of a room with the energy you radiate. Experiment with altering the energy you radiate as you interact with people.

Find adjectives to describe energies you see people radiate as they interact with others. Notice how energies evolve when interactions get intense. Play with energy. Find as many words as you can to describe the diverse energies you experience in yourself as you journey through your life. Any descriptive word or phrase is fine if it has meaning to you – from energy that is “like a lion” or “like Britney Spears” to energy that is “frantic” or “lonely.”

Imagine yourself radiating intense energy into the world. Choose what kind of energy you are radiating at different times of the day. Notice how different activities elicit different kinds of energy within you.

Notice your dreams and daydreams. Notice how each image in your dream “feels” differently from another. Each image in your dreams represents an archetypal energy pattern within you. As you are working on a character, the dream images you have will correspond to different energies the script calls for. Sometimes, the connections will be symbolic and not overtly logical or obvious. The energetic intelligence of dreams is profound.

You can practice “acting” from the different images within your imagination. Perhaps you have an image of an elephant in a dream or daydream. What does it feel like to move down the street “from” the energy of the elephant? How does it change your voice to allow the image of the elephant to influence your vocal energy? Where can you feel this elephant energy in your body as you connect to this image?

All this might sound unusual, but your psyche is actually made of images. In other words, you are made of images – fantasies and memories. Anything you can imagine is a part of you, and it can change the way you think, feel, speak and move. Your imagination creates your reality. That’s an

amazing concept with profound ramifications for your life and acting. The best actors know this, and use it in their acting. You can practice connecting with the energies of your images all day long.

As an actor, you have to be able to choose to experience specific kinds of energies, at extremely high intensities, for long periods of time. This takes training. We have all kinds of exercises in our classes designed to cultivate these kinds of energetic muscles. And these exercises are more effective than traditional 20th century actor training. This means our work helps many more actors.

Anthony Hopkins, Angela Bassett, Daniel Day Lewis, Denzel Washington, Dustin Hoffman, Meryl Streep – these are energy magicians. They are energy masters. They understand and can communicate what it means to be human on the most profound levels. They are teachers and their teaching is, in large part, energetic.

The processes they use in pre-rehearsal, rehearsal and in performance can be taught. The actor's ability to harness, manipulate and express energy is more teachable than ever before.

Look for actor training that is far more profound than simple intellectual analysis of a character's objectives and obstacles. This type of old-fashioned training can be shallow compared to modern actor training that integrates all the great acting methods into an approach that includes growing energetic consciousness. Look for acting teachers who do work on themselves to learn about the energies within them, who are accountable and practice what they preach.

Please write to me with any questions you have. I love that our school receives questions about acting from all over the world.

Finally, acting is play! It is high-energy play. What an exhausting privilege it is to play like this. But it is vital play. Our culture could not survive without the arts. And we need the performing arts now more than ever.

It is we artists who are "speaking truth to power" with our vital storytelling. I'm so proud of the myriad movies released in the past few years that deal with so much of what our world is grappling with. As actors, our lives are devoted to exploring humanity, to exploring right and wrong, to exploring what is really going on right now on this planet. But to do that, you need to master your own truth – which is ultimately an imaginative, energetic truth. Master the energies within you, and you are well on your way to being a successful professional actor.