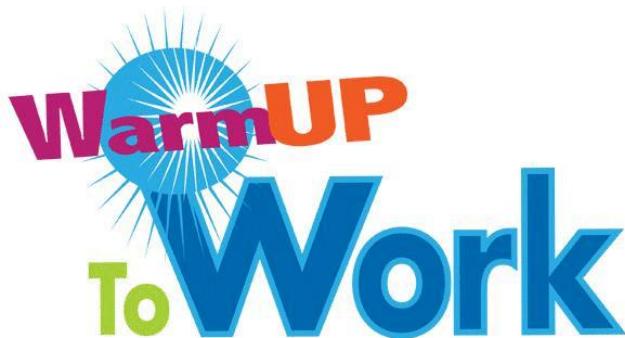


Book That Job eZine

Somewhere Along the Line, Warm-Ups Got a Bad Rap



Oh, relax now! I don't mean the requisite warm-ups for athletes or musicians. Heavens no! And I'm not talking about the crucial warm-ups that dancers or singers must do to be at their best. Certainly not! If you fall within any one of these categories, feel free to warm up to your heart's content.

The warm-ups with the bad rap belong solely to actors.

Ballerinas do their plié's, pianists play their scales and actors have a cigarette and a cup of coffee. Okay, that might be a bit dramatic (or extremely truthful), but

sometimes our first inclination when we see an actor warming up is to assume he or she is an amateur.

I deeply believe in the actor's warm-up. In fact, I believe in it so much so that I begin every one of my acting classes and private coaching sessions with a warm-up.

What I know for sure as an acting coach is that for actors who take the time to do a warm-up, great gifts await. I continually see busy, tired and stressed out actors transformed into openhearted, energetic actors by the end of even the briefest focused warm-up.

For an actor, a warm-up executed with commitment and concentration accomplishes several things:

#1: A warm-up can act as a magic erase board by providing the time and space necessary to transition from a "beta mind" to an "alpha creative flow state."

Our beta mind is the chatty, grounded in the here-and-now part of ourselves that keeps our schedule together and our lives running smoothly. We need our beta mind to get us from one place to another on time and prepared. However, it is our alpha mind that induces a creative flow state which is where our acting lives.

Ever find yourself shocked at how quickly time flies by during a rehearsal? That's the magic of the alpha mind, the state where time becomes suspended and creativity and productivity flourish.



#2: Another hallmark of a powerful warm-up is that it contains many of the components that comprise acting: sound, movement, expression, truth telling, presence and energy. This kind of a preparation goes beyond a few minutes of stretching right to the very heart of the actor's work. I teach my students a warm-up called Clearing the Space which includes all of these elements and more.



#3: The third thing a good warm-up does is act as a reminder to the actor's system that...ding ding...it's time to act. This is incredibly powerful especially in times of stress or high stakes such as an audition or an opening night.

But in order for this type of reminder to have an effect, the actor must be taking the time to warm up regularly. I'm always baffled when I see actors who have been repeatedly rehearsing a project sans warm-up go through an elaborate opening night prep. Why just tonight, I wonder? Didn't you need the same level of readiness during the rehearsal process?

I want to be absolutely clear that I'm not making the case that an actor should walk into an audition room, for example, and spend time warming up and preparing while the auditioners wait. There are times and places where launching into a warm-up is not appropriate and would be professionally out of place.

However, I am addressing actor-centric environments such as classes, coachings, and time before rehearsals, readings and performances etc. Even in those environments—where everyone should know better—the actor who takes time to warm up often feels conspicuous.

When it comes to warming up, taking the time to do even a little bit of something verses nothing will make all the difference in the world. Challenge yourself to go against the grain with a warm-up that serves you and your acting. If we all embrace this challenge, maybe warming up will become the new gold standard for professionalism.

About This eZine

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