



Application Assignment: "GREAT OPERA"

Please read the following core concepts of storytelling and scene structure and be able to explain them using your own words.

Goal i.e. "What do you want/need from your scene partner?"

Every character, in every scene, in every story ever told is driven by this concept. This is the "motivation" behind everything that is said and done by the character. What do you want your scene partner to either do, feel, or understand? And what do you lose if you do not get it? Your scene partner will generally fall into one of the three classic forms of conflict (person vs. person - person vs. self - person vs. environment). Your goal is always the most specific and simplistic idea you choose. Remember this is something you choose and there is never a right answer. This is where the actor's choices and their skills come in to play.

Result A trap many newer performers often fall into is trying to be everything to everyone and thus they do not make a definitive choice on whether or not they achieve their goal. It is always better to make a definitive choice one way or the other and to be directed the other way than to choose somewhere in the middle and appear unable to make a commitment to your scene. We should know if you achieved your goal or not just by looking at you and not requiring dialogue to confirm your choice either way.

Emotion There are four basic human emotions; mad, glad, sad, and scared. At the end of your scene your level of emotion in any of these four categories should be the visual indicator the audience needs to know if you achieved your goal or not.

Assertion You must know who you are and your paradigm, or how you see yourself in this world, in order to behave truthfully in a scene. A wonderful exercise is saying aloud the following "I am (character's name) and the world is (one word to describe the world as you feel right now)"

Tactics This is the step where you navigate around the obstacles. Every scene has conflict, or words and actions that are preventing you from achieving your goal. Every time something gets in your way you try to get around it. An actor uses transitive verbs, or actions you can do to people, to navigate these obstacles. These are words that fall logically into this phrasing "I (blank) you"

I hit you, I compliment you, I threaten you, I flatter you,...

Phrases like "I flirt you" don't work as they don't fit in this phrasing. But what is flirting? Complimenting? Seducing? (see above)



Obstacles Scenes can be broken down into two basic forms of communication; what we see and what we do (or “words” and “actions”) Every scene has conflict. Every single one. And this is in the form of the words or actions that prevent you or delay you from achieving your goal. Your tactics are often the obstacles for your scene partner, and vice versa.

Personalization Find anytime time in your life where similar events, people, and most importantly the stakes were similar and draw upon these experiences to recreate the same feelings for your scene. When you can't find an actual experience, you can draw upon an “as if” experience and imagine what it would be like in a personal experience.

Environment Where are you? Inside? Outside? Is it a safe place? Is it a place that makes you feel uncomfortable? Is it hot? Cold? Other?

Relationships Who are you specifically talking to? Who is your scene partner? What is your history together? How do you feel about each other? Why? How do they make you feel? Why?

If you are in a scene with a police officer for example:

Do they intimidate you? Do they comfort you? Why?

Are they good or bad at their job? Why?

Is this your first experience with this person(s)?

This list can go on and on and your answers to each question you come up with can lead into further details with a series of “why” questions.

e.g.

Are they good at their job? Yes.

Why are they good at their job? They really care about being a police officer.

Why do they care so much about being a cop? They come from a long line of police officers.

Why does their lineage contain so many cops? Their role in their community is very important and always has been to this family.

Why? (You get the idea)

Age (or time) There are basically three ways to describe “time” for a character

The Period: Is this modern day? The future? From a time long gone?

The Life: What milestone or time in your life is it? Are you just graduating high school and transitioning from teen to adult? Is this right after a divorce? Is this your mid-life crisis?

The Day/Season: Is it morning? Noon? Night? Summer? Winter? Spring? Fall? All of these can affect your energy, your mood, your environment.



These are not the only things an actor needs to assess and build for their scenes, but they are the core foundations for which all of the other special skills and ideas you will learn will be built upon. You should know your GREAT OPERA for every scene your character is in, whether they have words or not, whether it is for an audition, a rehearsal, or a performance.