

## Backstage Interview with actor Robert Davi

LISA DALTON: How many years have you been a professional actor?

ROBERT DAVI: Since '77, nearly 60 films, and many TV shows including 4 years on Profiler.

LD: You've trained with the masters, right?

RD: Yes

LD: What is it that brings you to me? To study Chekhov at this stage?

RD: I just know that inside of me there is a sense of destiny unfulfilled and I'm here as a creative artist wanting to expand.

LD: You think this work can lead you to that potential?

RD: I'm almost positive it can. I went through layers of working: Stella used to say the truth is in the imagination and there were exercises for that. There was Strasberg, then the Actors Studio. Then you have the Meisner work. But there's something that the Chekhov work transcends. When Stella talked about "breaking down your action," Stella would say "Go to life. Go to nature to get an action". The verb, the incorporation of it, in the psychophysical response, wasn't there. The Chekhov work seems to draw upon, like you say, the force of the totality of nature in a certain way in terms of your creative imagination.

The psychophysical- taking it out of your head – I'm already cramped up in here and putting it in the imagination. Working now with you, you have a terrific understanding of Chekhov and that's not easy to find. Chekhov's system seems the most--seems? It is the most complete. The actors I love, from Gary Cooper to Marilyn Monroe, Anthony Quinn, Jack Palance and a score of other people, Chekhov trained when he was alive. I knew at some point in life that I must find this Michael Chekhov.

There's a different level of expressiveness that I think is found...I feel is found in Chekhov. And separating thinking, feeling, will--that simple concept of breaking that down and what leads to inspiration. This makes the instrument electrifying!

With this technique, there are so many different areas you can tune up for expressiveness. He took what Stanislavsky did and added, for the aliveness, having the body vibrate and then radiate. Chekhov really is terrific.

LD: He clarified the necessary elements.

RD: Yes. If you read Stanislavsky in Rehearsal, when Stella went to Paris to talk to him, he was no longer there (where American method was). It was physical actions, psychological actions. Now you have psychological gestures-- putting the action into the body, the objective into the body. How powerful is that! Then, being able to visualize that. It's just a complete technique. Albeit, unless someone knows what they are teaching and how to communicate that, when you read the book, you could be scratching your head a lot. I read those books and I scratched my head a lot but I said "My

God, how brilliant!” My inner creative self knew how brilliant this was and to be able to find a school that teaches it, someone who teaches it and understand it-- that’s exciting.

And also in today’s day and age, it’s a spiritual journey. He’s very deeply spiritually rooted in his higher power in the creative power. The whole idea of summoning up the forces of nature and radiating them out to the world, that one famous exercise where he talked about the jewels-

LD: Quinn brings up – he did it on Inside the Actors Studio.

RD: Yeah. And that whole thing is basically summoning up the jewels of the universe and giving them to the world- the expansion/contraction. His whole thing is about giving and radiating a truth and a love. A technique based on that kind of selflessness is good.