

Acting tips

Some pointers I've come across that can be helpful when you're thinking about characters. Different techniques work for different ppl so feel free to use what resonates with you

Wants

- Humans (and characters in plays) are always motivated by what they **want**. Trying to get a hold of what we want creates drama and gives life to a character. Wants create the conflict, drive the action forward, and are the energy of human life! If everyone got what they wanted it'd be a very short play
- Questions to think about: What do I want? How am I going to get it? What stands in my way? What happens if I don't get it?...these questions can be asked both for the whole play and within each scene (Motivation, Tactics, Obstacles, Stakes)
- "I want to _____" Try to state what the character wants in terms of a strong verb instead of a noun. For example, "I want a boyfriend" v "I want to win Demetrius' heart".
- It can be helpful to choose a simple/evocative verb that you can get behind (i.e. deify, destroy, exalt, charm, give 'em hell, overwhelm, glorify, inspire, crush)
- Try to embody those wants. It could be helpful to think of feelings you've experienced when you wanted something similar (inside-out approach) or how you would try to get what they want through a set of physical actions (outside-in)
- One way of expressing your motivation is to ask yourself how you want the other person in the scene to feel.... Are you trying to comfort? intimidate? encourage?

Suffering

- The human experience is one of suffering and the quest to end suffering. The **conflict** that arises when we try to resolve suffering is more important than the conclusion
- Imagine going to a football game and both teams are in their uniforms sitting on the field having a picnic. It would be funny to see for a little bit but ppl probably wouldn't stay for the whole three hours
- A character's plan, their choices, and the obstacles they encounter along the way are what's interesting
- Characters either change their circumstances or are changed by them
- The audience sees each journey and vicariously goes along with the characters for the adventure thinking "I sympathize with her" or "this guy's a jerk, why did he do that?" or "that's a smart idea, I hope it works out for them"

Character

- Try to understand the subtext of what your character is saying. It can be helpful to summarize the lines in a scene with a simple phrase (i.e. "I really hate you rn")
- The strength of a character is measured by the amount of opposition they overcome
 - Pounding your chest, flexing your muscles, and then picking up a pillow doesn't impress

- **Tactics:** how do we get what we want? There's a ton of ways to try and seduce someone. We can compliment, show off, bring them gifts, sympathize, etc. In real life if one strategy isn't working then we switch to something else. Same on stage.
 - Changing tactics adds interest to the character. For example, if we are trying to intimidate someone and then yell the whole time it reduces the power of the tactic because the audience gets used to it.
 - Sometimes a whisper can be more effective than a scream. Try to vary the ways you express what you want through tone of voice, physical actions, etc.
- **Listeners** are still acting.. Audience interest is only as high as the actors. The listener's feelings are conveyed through their bodies...i.e. i agree with what you said so I will smile and move closer
 - If character A and B are rivals and A makes an impassioned speech but B stands there being a good listener there's no resistance. B must want to try and end A's monologue from the start if he's an enemy
- Reversing the material: if you are playing a good guy, look for the bad in them, if you are playing a villain look for the good. Helps to add depth to the character
- Anger is always preceded by pain. Look back to see the moment when the character was hurt, that drives the action
- Energy levels: if you start at level 10 being in love or hate or another emotion you can't go any higher. Many times it's good to escalate (or vary the levels) of your emotions

Blocking

- Think about the reasons behind your physical actions. The text will give you clues on how to move... what do the words suggest?
- Is there something nice or nasty on stage? We move away from nasty things and towards nice things
- Audience follows **movements**. If you are standing still for a long period of time there should be a reason for it
- Every scene is a chase scene, someone wants something from someone else
- Space between characters creates tension that can be resolved by then moving closer or further away
- Imbalance adds interest (i.e. diagonals, uneven groupings, visual interruptions)