
NOTE:

Save Your Soul

If theatre emerged from storytelling and ritual, then acting is a cultural ministry. We don't act to please ourselves. It is an art form based on serving our fellow man. Whether on stage or on camera, our focus is on the other. In a scene, our primary focus is affecting our scene partner and ultimately changing the audience. Your artistic truth actively heals the audience. Your emotional courage guides the audience to a higher spiritual plain and this act of service is, in itself, a spiritual act. Theatre, in particular, is a redemptive art. Until the closing show, actors are given a second chance to redeem their performance, to strive ever closer to truth. By keeping your focus on service, you leave your ego behind and that's always a good thing.

There is also a religious-like ritual in preparing for a live performance that is both necessary and centering. At 7:30, half hour is called by stage management and the company assembles to prepare for the evening's show. Coffee, vocal and physical warm-ups, make-up, prop check, reviewing your lines, a moment's meditation, a prayer to the theatre gods, and you're off to the stage. Ritual creates a sense of expectancy and puts you in a state of readiness to connect with the text, the character, the situation, and the audience. Like everything in this book, rituals are very personal and as you grow, you will create your own. Most importantly, rituals and this time before performance **MUST** be respected.

When I was a graduate student at The Alabama Shakespeare Festival, I had a small role, Francisco, in *The Tempest*. I had

exactly fourteen lines but they were pure exposition (background information) so they were critically important. I was lucky to have the role as the MFA company rarely got lines in the professional shows. I should have been grateful. But at twenty-five, cocky and oh so casual, I spent half-hour joking around and throwing a baseball in the green room garden with my buddies. It was a Saturday matinée, and I was having a grand old time doing anything but warming up. I made my entrance, heard my cue and totally dried up. I couldn't think of a single word. My stuttering and fumbling had nothing to do with the play. It was a horrible moment that proved that I was a rookie, an amateur, and worse, I put the storytelling in jeopardy and made my cast-mates look like idiots. How was the audience to know that Ferdinand may be alive if I didn't say the lines? Not from me. I was humiliated. I left the stage and headed to my dressing room to hide. However, on the way, the senior character man, the lovely and oh-so-gentle David O. Petersen (who was the focus of my fourteen lines), stopped me in the hall. I made a joke and then David slapped me hard across the face. All he said was, "Don't mess with this show. Show some damn respect." I had failed to respect half-hour. That thirty minutes of precious transition from the civilian world to the world of the play? Without it, you're just pretending to be an actor.

NOTE:

Therapy

I highly recommend therapy! It's our job to ask "why." Why does Blanche's obsession to be admired lead her to sleep with dozens of lovers? What makes *Iron Man* tick? So, it follows