An Actors Code of Ethics.

Part of the great tradition of the theatre is a code of ethics, which belongs to every worker on the legitimate stage. This code, while tacit, has been observed throughout the centuries and will continue long after us. It is neither superstition, nor dogma, nor a statute enforced by law. It is an attitude toward craftsmanship, a respect for associates and a dedication toward the audience. This code outlines a self-discipline, which far from robbing one of individuality, increases personal esteem and dignity through cooperation and common purpose. The result is perfection, which encompasses all that is meant by “Good Theatre”.

The Show Must Go On!! I will Never miss a performance.

I shall play every performance to the best of my ability, regardless of how small my role or large my personal problems.

I will respect my audience regardless of size or station.

I shall never miss an entrance or cause a curtain to be late by my failure to be ready.

I shall forego all social activities which interfere with rehearsals and will always be on time.

I shall never leave a theatre building or stage area until I have completed my performance.

I shall remember that my aim is to create illusion; therefore, I will not destroy that illusion by appearing in costume and make-up off stage or outside the theatre.

I will not allow comments of friends, relatives, or critics to change any phase of my work without proper authorization. I will not alter lines, business, lights, properties, settings, costumes, or any phase of the production without consultation with and permission from the director.

I shall accept the director’s advice in the spirit in which it is given for he sees the production as a whole and my role as a portion thereof.

I shall look upon the production as a collective effort demanding my utmost cooperation, hence I will forgo the gratification of ego for the demands of the play.

I will be patient and avoid temperamental outbursts, for they create tension and serve no useful purpose.

I shall respect the play and the playwright, remembering that “A work of art is not a work of art until it is finished.”

I shall never blame my co-workers for my own failure.

I will never engage in caustic criticism of another artist’s work from jealousy or an urge to increase my own prestige.

I shall inspire the public to respect me and my craft through graciousness in accepting both praise and constructive criticism.

I will use stage properties and costumes with care, knowing they are tools of my craft and a vital part of the production.

I will observe backstage courtesy and shall comport myself in strict compliance with rules of the theatre in which I work.
Ethics & Aesthetics for Actors: Part 1 – Work Ethic

Success as an actor is a matter of work ethic and working aesthetics. This tricky balancing act is what gives your average acting-shmo more than a fighting chance. Of course, there is a place for luck in this equation but without a solid, killer work ethic and a workable, practical aesthetic, you will not produce the conditions for or opportunity to capitalize upon that luck.

Today’s blog is about developing a killer work ethic and it starts with an Atlantic Theater Company-inspired guidelines for success in work and training. At Acting Coach Scotland, we call it, The Minimum, it is the least you can do to prepare for class, coaching, auditions or work.

There are 5 parts to The Minimum:

Be Prepared

Be Early

Wipe Your Feet at the Door

Don’t Complain

Help Your Fellow Actors

Let’s go through each one at a time:

1) Be prepared
Preparation is an essential minimum. Yet many actors adequately fail to prepare then blame everyone else, finally chastising themselves when their failure to prepare only prepared them to fail. This is the widest and deepest of the Minimums, because it includes taking responsibility for everything that is within your control. In the blame culture in which we live, the dog ate my homework and other excuses are just failures to accept responsibility. Be prepared, no excuses, remember that our industry is liberal and often indulgent but equally unforgiving in equal measure.
2) Be Early
No one ever thought badly of you for being early but being late is a crime in time based arts. If you are due to start work at nine, plan to arrive early, plan to overcome car trouble, rail strikes and snow on the line. Cultivate the habit of always being early and you will cultivate a professional working ethic. Don’t expect anyone to indulge your real but irrelevant excuses. Stella Adler used to make late students bring flowers, I’d prefer chocolate, but in the real world just be early. As the folks at the Poor School used to say: on time is ten minutes late.

3) Wipe your feet at the Door
What the heck? Well, what I mean is that you should leave it all at the door, your outside concerns, your bills, your financial or boyfriend troubles, leave it at the door. We will indulge you but no one really cares. Leave the drama for the room, leave your shit at the door.

4) Don’t Complain or Moan
What is the collective name for a group of actors, it might be a company, an ensemble, even a cast, but more likely it’s a moan, a moan of actors. If you don’t like it, do something about it or shut the fuck up and don’t bring the while group down with your pessimistic shit. This is an essential minimum, you have no entitlement to moan. Turn up, do your job, go home. If you don’t enjoy it, leave.

5) Help Your Fellow Actors
This might seem obvious, but we are a very self centred type of people. Cultivate in yourself the habit of helping each other, supporting each other, we’re in it together.

This is the Minimum. The Minimum. I would add to this:

Don’t leave your common sense at the door.

Do more than is expected of you.

Tomorrow’s blog will cover successful working aesthetics

To You, The Best

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