During the summer of 2008, I was invited to participate in a 2-week teacher development program in NY, NY. The workshop was hosted by the Actors Center, an organization formed in 1996, bringing together leading teachers from America, England, Russia and other countries. While their intent was to provide established actors with access to Master Teachers throughout their careers, they soon realized that these same Master Teachers should also be made available to other teachers. The teaching of acting is an art in itself. Among their initial faculty were four acting teachers who embodied that definition: Earle Gister, Michael Kahn, Lloyd Richards and Ron Van Lieu. Those who joined them in ensuing years included: Maria Aitkin, Robert Cohen, Slava Dolgachev, and Olympia Dukakis. The art of teaching involves helping each uniquely gifted student discover and take ownership of his/her possibilities as an artist. The standards of artistic achievement that teacher holds to is key to the lasting effect. While there are more and more people teaching acting these days, there are fewer “Master Teachers” than there were fifty years ago. The Actors Center is doing everything it can to address that issue.

Participants in the workshop were introduced to some of the most interesting and respected teachers in America and abroad. The goal is to re-enforce the tenets of the craft the participants would impart to their students. While the workshop was offered as a seminar for the benefit of established teachers and established actors who are starting to teach, it is conducted essentially as an acting class. Everyone worked on his or her feet every day. Questions were answered in "the doing." Issues of teaching methodology were examined first through experiencing them, then through specific hours set aside to discuss their particular merits. The faculty of the workshop were:

Christopher Bayes, Head of Physical Acting, Yale School of Drama
Slava Dolgachev, Artistic Director, New Theatre of Moscow
J. Michael Miller, Founder, The Actors Center
Ron Van Lieu, Chair of the Acting Program, Yale School of Drama

The workshop was an intensive two-week immersion. Classes ran Monday through Friday from 10:00am to 10:00pm with additional acting classes on Saturday morning. Enrollment was limited to fourteen (14) participants, all of whom were both actors and teachers of acting, like myself.

The workshop came at a crucial and important time for me in both my work as an actor and my work as an acting teacher. I had been aware in my performance and teaching that I was developing my own methods and approaches, but many of my ideas were a direct result of the training I had received many years earlier. Though this wasn’t a “negative”, I was feeling ready to break from my training and discover some freshness in the
approach to performance, to “shake things up” in some way. The workshop introduced me to the approaches, ideas, and theories of three very different and talented teachers that continue to inspire my work. Additionally, it was a great gift to meet people “like me” from around North America. As an MFA in a sea of PhD’s, it was important for me to connect with other teachers of acting, to share ideas and to develop lasting relationships for future collaboration and support.

I have been directly applying much of the work I did during those two weeks to various classes and rehearsals, ranging from single exercises to whole focused units in particular classes that have allowed my to develop in my teaching and broaden the ways that I am able to work with student actors. I am very grateful and continue to be inspired by my time there. Thank you!

Expenses:

• Round trip flight
• Two week sublet of studio apartment
• Food for two weeks in NYC
• Incidental books and misc. costs