

Madness to the Method

By

Javi Mulero

[javimu111@yahoo.com](mailto:javimu111@yahoo.com)  
[mujavier2000@yahoo.com](mailto:mujavier2000@yahoo.com)

ACT I

Scene 1

*(A Bare Stage, Rehearsal Space, or "Black Box.")*

*There are two people on the stage: "A" and "B."*

*A third person, the "DIRECTOR", could also be on stage with them. Or he/she could also reveal himself/herself and make an entrance later.*

*NOTE: Any of these three roles can be played by either a male or a female actor.*

*"A" seems very agitated. "B" is trying to tolerate "A". The "DIRECTOR" listens:*

A

*(to the Director:)*

You know, the thing that was so fucked up is that back when I was five years old, my father would lock me up in the closet. Very often. To punish me. That's how he would punish me. Me and my brother. Over and over again. No matter how much we cried; no matter how much we screamed. That's why I...

*(Suddenly he breathes in and out -- spasmodically, panicky, hysterically; then, suddenly, normally again:)*

... that's why I have to breathe like this for about ten to fifteen seconds just before I do a scene. So that's my process as an actor when I rehearse.

B

But this is a comedy.

DIR.

No, this is good. Go on.

A

*(to B:)*

Yeah, but I NEED to know where I came from. Where I'm going. What I'm wearing.

B

And what groceries your character bought on Tuesday?

A

Exactly. Though not necessarily in that order.

(CONTINUED)

B

It's Shakespeare!

A

It doesn't matter! That's my process.

DIR.

(concerned:)  
How does it FEEL?

A

(Feeling it:)  
Good. Really good.

DIR.

(to B:)  
What about you? Did you work on your Emotional Background Preparation? You know, your bio of the three years previous to your character's first entrance in the play?

B

(deep breath)  
Yes. Though - I am not sure where exactly my character sits in the "Stress Triangle."

DIR.

Interesting.

A

Wow.

DIR.

Okay. Let's do it again. Not from the beginning. Let's start later.

A

(concerned)  
How later is "later"?

DIR.

Just the second scene.

B

(to A:)  
Can you handle that? Not starting at the beginning?

A

I think so.

*(Suddenly "A" begins doing some "violent" breathing out of his mouth, scaring the shit out of "B".)*

DIR.

(to B:)  
Are you okay?

B

Oh, yes. I only react like that when I'm really scared.

A

I'M sorry! I was just getting ready!

B

I'M sorry. I spent time getting ready at home, just so I'd be ready to rehearse here. What was I thinking?

DIR.

(to B:)  
Okay, what's up?

A

You know, we need to relax. I think we should do that exercise we did the first week and a half of rehearsals.

B

WHICH one?!?

DIR.

The one where we played animals?

A

Right. And we were doing both the sound and the physicality of whatever animal, vegetable or mineral we were representing.

DIR.

(to B:)  
How about it, what do you think?

B

This is a small matter, but: We open in TWO WEEKS!!

A

No, let's do them. I think it'll really help. Last two times I was a gazelle, and then a lion. I think next time I should be something more "airy."

B

Like what?

A

Like "wind."

(CONTINUED)

B

(to DIRECTOR:)  
Maybe I got it all wrong. Maybe I should've just  
rehearsed at home and brought my bullshit to WORK!

A

I resent that.

B

Good! "USE it"!

DIR.

(to B:)  
What's up, what's wrong?

B

What's wrong?!? Hello?! Am I the only one here who  
sees all this crap that's going on?

A

You're so unprofessional!

B

Unprofessional?!

DIR.

Oh, that's good. That's good.

B

WHAT is good?

DIR.

The whole tension; what you guys are creating!

B

We're not even doing the scene yet!

DIR.

No, but it's already working! All we gotta do is bring  
the scene INTO this mood!

A

That's more like it. (to B:) That's more like my  
process. You have to respect my process!

B

I respect process. I also respect "Rehearsal  
time." Your "process" doesn't belong here.

A

What does that mean?

(CONTINUED)

B

It means: come here prepared. Jack off at home, okay? We have a script. Why don't we rehearse the script? What a concept, huh?

A

What about rehearsing the life behind the script?

B

Fine. I just don't want to spend every second of rehearsal rehearsing YOUR life behind this script.

DIR.

May I say something here?

B AND A

NO!

DIR.

(Beat)

I was gonna say -- think "ensemble." You need each other in this scene. If there's any problems, speak now.

B

I thought I DID.

A

You are beyond unprofessional.

B

I know MY lines!

DIR.

Now, now!...

A

Just because I want to practice a few drills that would help! (to B:) And, you know - they would help you a lot too if you only relaxed!

B

I wouldn't know. I've only been in the Theater for twenty-three years. But, why don't you go in that corner over there, get into a fetal position, and LEARN YOUR FUCKING LINES!!

A

This character is quite a jump for me. It's totally unlike me. I need some time so I can "live" this character.

(CONTINUED)

B

You cannot - and will never be - ANOTHER person. That would be a psychotic episode. What we have to do is "Make Believe."

A

That's BULLSHIT. If I don't believe it for myself, they'll never believe it out there.

B

The audience doesn't give a shit if I am "feeling" what the character is feeling. It is my job - and my only goal - to make them feel what I want THEM to feel!

A

Oh my God!!

B

Since when did a painter forget he was painting a canvas? Since when did a virtuoso pianist forget that there was a piano right below his fingertips - just because he was "feeling" a lot of bullshit?!

A

Are you gonna tell me that Brando, Rod Steiger, and Shelly Winters never felt what they were feeling when they were on the screen? Are you gonna tell me they were not great actors?

B

Okay. I grant you: every single one of those people you mentioned IS a great actor.

A

See?

B

And each one of them was also fucking nuts.

DIR.

Time out, time out. Shall we compromise? Shall we do some other exercises? How about some Meisner? You want to do some Meisner?

B

Do I wanna do some Meisner?

DIR.

That's what I just said.

B

I know. I was doing "Meisner."

(CONTINUED)

DIR.

Oh. I get it.

A

I don't.

B

Let's just work on the Play!

A

On our FEET?

B

Yes! On our feet! Not at a table! Not in a chair! Off-book! As if we were doing a Play! -- Oh, wait a minute -- we ARE!

A

I detect a lot of resentment from you.

B

Then I guess between Intention and Action I had a Straight Throughline!

DIR.

So you don't want to do any exercises?

B

Noooooo!

DIR.

(throws hands up in the air:)  
All right, all right. No exercises.

B

Thank you.

A

I don't know.

DIR.

(to A:)  
How can I help you here? Just take your time. I'm getting a great idea on how to stage this scene, once we get to it.

A

Well... Last year, when I played 'Don Juan', I found it very helpful to walk around like a panther for three days.

(CONTINUED)



B

(beat:)  
Male or Female?

DIR.

(to B:)  
Oh, come on. Be nice.

B

Just asking. I didn't bring a rifle.

A

(to B:)  
Man, don't you have any sense of Fantasy?

B

Absolutely. Right now I fantasize being somewhere else.

DIR.

Okay! No more fighting here! We're wasting time!! --

A

(to B:)  
Theater is Self-Exploration!

B

Yes! But it's not Therapy!

DIR.

Brilliant! Brilliant! Remember all that anger and tension and let's apply it to the scene. (to A:) Okay, I need you to make bolder and faster choices. (to B:) And you, we're not through exploring all the "beats" of the scenes yet. And next week is not going to consist of only "run-throughs", okay?

B

All I'm saying is -- look: I used to be a good painter. But not anymore. And you know why?

A

Because you stopped taking classes?

B

No! Because I stopped PAINTING! Because I stopped DOING IT! Not because I didn't go into a trance and come to terms with my childhood, or forget who I was or what I was doing, while I was painting a frigging canvas!

*(Momentary silence.)*

(CONTINUED)

DIR.

Let's take care of our canvas here. (to A:) We're not going to force you to emote fully at the drop of a hat, but I will ask you both to come here prepared to plunge into work. And that includes: do your warm-ups and your preparation on your own time. Okay?

A

Okay.

DIR.

Okay. Let's take it from the top of the second scene of the Act. (to A:) Just bring into the scene a sense of what has just happened before, without having to act the entire previous scene.

A

I'll try.

DIR.

All right. Whenever you're ready.

*(No one moves. Silence.)*

DIR.

Somebody start, please!

A

(to B:)

It's you! It's your line first!

B

Oh, I'm sorry... I'm sorry, I wasn't concentrating.

A

I thought you came here totally prepared.

B

I did. It was OTHER people's preparation that I wasn't prepared for.

DIR.

Do you need more time?

A

Of course not; he's ready. At the drop of a hat.

B

Shut up, will you?

A

(to "DIRECTOR":)

He can't talk to me that way!

(CONTINUED)

DIR.

(to B:)

Come on, RELAX! No more directing the other actor!

B

I'm sorry. (to "DIRECTOR":) Then, will you please tell him to shut up?

DIR.

Okaaaaay! We got derailed here somehow. Let's get back on track now.

B

Are we gonna settle this first?

DIR.

Yes. Like this: I'm the Director. You two, just do what I say. The Theater is not a Democracy. Am I clear??

B

Okay.

A

No input from the actor whatsoever?

DIR.

No input today. Only output. MINE. And we can't have any tension in ourselves. Only in our Art. Otherwise, we won't have any decent access to our subconscious. Are we ready? How are we feeling?

B

Let's do this thing!

A

I'll try my best.

DIR.

Okay. Quiet. We can only listen to others -- and to ourselves -- from a place of Quiet. Okay??... So, are we ready?

(No answer.)

Hello??

B

Yeah, I am...

A

Me too, I guess.

(CONTINUED)

DIR.

Okay. Now. Take a breath. Relax: Breathe in. Breathe out. And why don't we start it in the middle of the little speech you have right after the letter. I'm talking about the END of the previous scene instead, just so we can ease into this one. Now, take your places for the top of the scene. Breathe in. Breathe out. Good. Okay.

*(They all have been following these directions:)*  
We're starting now -- aaaand -- whenever you're ready!...

*(The actors are about to begin. Then, after a moment's hesitation, they both call out, frustrated:)*

A AND B:  
LINE?!?

BLACKOUT