

TOM GREDER / OSKAR

2011

School theatre studies, drama and creativity workshop overview

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Photo: C. Raguzzi



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School Workshop Introduction

The workshop is based on “Play” as being the fundamental expression of human exploration, creativity and the basis of meaningful communication. This state of “Play” promotes a freedom of fantasy, movement and speech and encourages the use of a complete creative palate. Furthermore, it promotes an enjoyable, productive and trusting learning environment where participants feel safe to explore.

Although focusing on the discovery and exploration of new techniques and insights, participants are encouraged to utilize pre-existing skills and abilities. This is particularly useful when integrating the workshop with other school programs such as music, dance or social studies.

As a qualified movement teacher (BHMS Ed.), Tom Greder has been conducting creativity, communication and contemporary clowning workshops throughout the world for the past 20 years. His wealth of experience as teacher and award winning performer allow him to offer a rare experience in creativity and the language of theatre. The workshops are designed and conducted to make the exploration of theatre an enjoyable, informative and inspiring experience.

Workshop Pedagogy

Ground Elements of the Workshops:

- **Pleasure:** discovering the pleasure in expression and performance;
- **Curiosity:** developing a questioning mind and body in regards to the group & stage experience, and, to the creative process;
- **Generosity:** sharing physical & emotional impulses with the group and audience;
- **Complicity:** developing a deeper communication with others;
- **Rhythm & Timing:** discovering and developing the language of theatre;
- **Theoretical discussions** on the history, philosophy and significance of theatre, creating a performance and a character, costume, voice, status, rhythm and timing will complement the practical elements.

Outcomes: The participants will explore and develop:

- the full range of their creative abilities;
- techniques for maximizing personal and creative expression;
- interpersonal communication skills;
- an understanding and appreciation of group dynamics;
- individual and group problem resolution techniques and abilities;
- skills and techniques for optimising group dynamics;
- movement and voice performance skills and techniques;
- a confident, liberated and empowered stage presence.

Towards achieving the outcomes, participants will:

- create and be part of role playing and improvisation exercises;
- devise, create and choreograph individual and group performance routines;
- utilise pre-existing skills and abilities within the tasks and performances;
- be responsible for creating and maintaining a productive learning environment;
- demonstrate voice and movement skills;
- provide feedback and constructive criticism on their own performances and on the performances of others;
- contribute to theoretical discussions complementing the practical work.

Brief information about the workshop:

- Duration: 2 to 5 days*
- 6 hours per day*
- Number of participants: 12 to 18*
- Conducted in English, German, Swiss-German, French (or other languages with translator)
- Possibility of conducting 'in-servicing' programs for teachers

**possibility of adapting the workshop to the specific needs & expectations.*

Workshop Teaching History

Europe:

Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts, Masters course, Sweden
Nouveau Clown Institute (NCI), Barcelona, Spain
Budapest University of Theatre and Film, Hungary
Flemish Centre of Circus Arts, Antwerp, Belgium
Performance d'Acteur Festival, Cannes, France
Festival of New Circus, Zagreb, Croatia
Comicodeon Festival, Kapfenberg, Austria
CIPA (Centre for the Investigation & Pedagogy of Acting), El Espinar, Spain
Jyväskylä Arts Festival, Finland
Tampere International Theatre Festival, Finland
Valencian Circus Association (L'Espai de Circ) Valencia, Spain
Festiclown Masterclass, Santiago De Compostella, Spain
International Clown & Comedy Series, Bern, Switzerland
Festival International Clownbaret, Tenerife, Canary Islands
New Orleans Fringe Festival, USA
"Work in Progress Arts Meeting", Srebrna Gora, Poland
International Puppetry Festival of Mallorca, Spain
Studio Teatralne Theatre School, Warsaw, Poland
Coimbra Clown & Creativity Workshop, Portugal
Gdansk Clown Workshop Teatr ZNAK, Poland
Merida, Spain
Vienna, Austria
Graz, Austria
Segovia, Spain
Wales, Cardiff
North Wales, Bangor, Wales

Australia:

Fremantle, Western Australia
National Circus Festival
Tasmanian Circus Festival
Margaret River Circus Festival
Woodford Folk Festival
Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne & Hobart Finding Comedy Workshops
Northern New South Wales Play and Creativity workshop
Ulverstone Clowning & Creativity Workshop
WOW Wolongong Womens Circus
Adelaide Fringe Festival

School & Youth Workshops:

La Marelle Festival, France
Samford Valley Steiner School, Australia
King George 5th School, Hong Kong
Sommerville House Girls School, Brisbane, Australia
Brisbane Girls Grammar School, Australia
Bardon, Nambour High and Upper Brookfield State Schools, Australia
Out of the Box youth festival, Brisbane, Australia
Hands On Arts Inc., Australia. Regional schools workshop tour
Metro Arts, Brisbane Australia. Primary school holiday program
Spaghetti Youth Circus, Australia
Warehouse Youth Circus, Canberra, Australia
Slipstream Youth Circus, Hobart, Australia
Sir Lesley Wilson Youth Detention Centre, Brisbane, Australia
Queensland Theatre Company, Brisbane, Australia 'Theatre Experience Week'

School Workshop Reference

From:
Meg Arvier
Flipstream Youth Circus
Tasmania 2004

I had seen Tom perform on a number of occasions over the past few years at various festivals and in street performance and I have always thought that he was brilliant – A very serious clown!!!

I have been involved in a youth circus for 4 years as a trainer, and this year (2004) when I found out that Tom Greder would be in Hobart for some clowning workshops, I filled my car with some of our young participants and drove them down there for a very seriously funny weekend.

The workshop catered well for the wide variety of age groups enrolled, and it was jam-packed with surprises and thrills. Very quickly all inhibitions fell, and the group seemed united in joy, laughter and some tears – but above all, we were all focused on the serious business of developing our own individual clowns. What amazed me the most was Tom's ability to quickly gain the trust and attention of all the young performers – some of these young people can be very suspicious of adult driven activities. I still don't know exactly how he managed this, but he seemed to handle gently the quiet sensitive issues that evolved, yet he was tough with the boundaries that he wished to maintain. At all times he was respectful of us all, and he seemed to delight in all our human differences and foibles. He even managed to encourage me to sing alone to the group – absolutely no-one ever hears me sing "publicly" – not pretty!!!!

For me, time spent with Tom was more a journey than simply a workshop. During our 4 hour journey home there was plenty of time to reflect on what had happened and amidst some of the excited chatter were the following comments.....

Jesse (12 years) – "I like hot donuts and I like talking – so eating and talking – that was cool!"

Andrew (12 years) – "I liked the way Tom was really friendly to us all. I like acting, but this was the best clowning workshop that I have ever been to"

Hayden (13 years) – "It was all great. Listening into the radio ear-phones and trying to copy what was said was so funny – I wasn't nervous at all"

Chris (14 years) – "The whole workshop was fun, but doing the market commentary was a buzz – I just couldn't stop and the words just kept coming out of me. I liked the faces Tom could make, and I felt that he really thought that we were important to him"

Meredith (16 years) – "Tom was great. It was really interesting to learn about the funny things that happen naturally – it was a relief to know that you don't have to really try and be funny".

Cheers,

Meg Arvier

Performance Workshop Reference 1

From:
Lilly Blue
New York City 2001

I have spent my life suspecting that there is something hidden just beneath the surface of our interactions. Something behind the selves we desperately endeavour to be in order to satisfy misunderstood expectations, and misplaced dreams.

At some point in my life that suspicion became so overpowering that everything I did seemed touched with a sense of both mystery and investigation. So often we think that searching is about finding things, discovering paths and partnerships, and reaping the abundant rewards of our endeavour. Yet there is a different kind of searching as well. There are the uncoverings that help us to lose things, that support tiny ego deaths, and unravel our contorted costuming so that we can undress. The gifts of loss. The beauty of vulnerability. The pleasure of egoless complicity. The bliss of unreasonable joy. The strength that comes from solitude. The power of simplicity. The value of fear and of taking risks. The comedy of humanbeingness.

These are just some of the discoveries I encountered in a week of working intensely with Tom Greder in his Master Clown workshop.

Clown work is incomparable with any other performance training because it pretends to be easy, and yet for me it is the most challenging and fulfilling work I have ever done. Tom has the sensitivity and insight to create a safe enough environment for his students to take risks, venture into unknown territory, and discover the pleasure of "not knowing". This may seem simple enough, but as performers we have such heavy bags of tricks and ornate masks that we rely on, that it can be a terrifying and exhilarating journey to let go, and uncover the power and beauty of our own ordinariness.

My experience of working with Tom was nothing less than transformative. I am cautious of diluting the experience by using grand language, but the reality is that my work with Tom was intrinsically related to the life changing choices I made after that week. The experience of standing unveiled in front of an audience and inspiring joy and laughter gave me a deeper belief in the place of truth and play in my work.

He helped me to unravel innocence and interest from the chaos that had overtaken my creativity. I remember spending months after the workshop feeling as if I had been born to a new planet. I became intrigued by everything. I wanted to experience life directly and I was no longer prepared to compromise for the sake of acceptance or applause. My sense of play deepened and I became committed to making courageous choices as a performer even if it meant failure. And my relationship to failure changed. In fact failing became such a hilarious and enriching experience that, as a clown, it no longer really existed.

Today I am living, performing, and teaching in New York. I continue to believe that everything is possible and every time I experience that delicious feeling of happiness for no particular reason I think of Tom and smile.

Lilly Blue

Performance Workshop Reference 2

From:
Laurie McLeod
Brisbane 2001

Dear Tom,

Please treat this as my personal recommendation for your workshops. There are many aspects of your workshops which I would like to recommend and which has my greatest priority is difficult to decide but I have to start somewhere and really what I respected most was the safe environment you created right from the outset. You also managed somehow to keep this safe and creative space open for the entire workshop period, I was amazed. I have attended many workshops in various areas of theatre: Mask, movement and acting training so I am not a new comer to theatre however, my own participation in the workshop can vary tremendously depending not on the subject but on the quality of the teaching.

I think there are two aspects to teaching. That knowledge is passed on and that a safe environment is created so that participants can feel within their boundaries and still feel free to express themselves to the greatest extent of their creativity. I have no idea how you did this but you certainly managed both - a rare occurrence as far as I am concerned.

Perhaps the benevolence of the naive clown and his world and the energy level needed to operate within this world create an atmosphere very conducive to creative expression. More power to the clown if you ask me. Still I think it was your devotion to the workshop process your confidence and experience with that process which caused them to run so smoothly. I was after all a complete beginner when it came to clowning but felt confident to participate fully in all your workshop activities and since have developed projects of my own in clowning (including an application to the Australia Council) feeling confident to carry them out and your workshops only finished a few weeks ago.

While I say you created a safe environment I would hate anyone to think you were soft on us. I don't remember ever being so challenged in my life and the confidence gained by being so challenged has turned my professional life around as well as my personal life. Congratulations.

The result of all this I think great art and good entertainment. Tom your workshop not only gave us skills to be entertaining but also a deeper understanding of the human condition and where clowns live within the realm of commenting on what we humans experience. I feel just that step closer to achieving the goal I mentioned on day 1 of your workshop:- paradise to me meant being more light hearted. So while the workshops dealt with the practicalities of clowning they also had sufficient intellectual content and quality to be whole in their training.

Anyway I can only wish and hope the best for you and your wonderful workshops and hope that more performers can experience them. Thank you and I hope you can have this positive influence on performers where ever you travel in the world and where ever you teach for you are a true teacher.

Yours sincerely

Laurie

Additional Workshop References

From:
Sarah Fotheringham
Cardiff 2000

To whom it may concern,

I would like to introduce you to an artist and who recently came to my attention. I discovered him by accident twelve months ago when a friend twisted my arm and encouraged me to participate on his first weeklong workshop in Britain held in North Wales.

Tom Greder is a performer and teacher working with a potent mixture of intuition, skill and perception rooted in experience exploring the world of the clown. His biography lists his considerable performance and personal training however this will not tell you of his abilities as teacher and guide. Having participated on a number of workshops I feel that Tom Greder's method and style in teasing out, revealing and supporting the shyest to the most competent of 'clowns' in all of us deserves a wider audience. He is a teacher who enthuses the uninitiated with passion and challenges with humility. You will not feel short changed from this week of many changes!

Since Tom's workshop I have trained with Didier Danthios and Angela de Castro in London and Jonathan Kay in Scotland. I rate Tom Greder's work up with the best of them.

If there is anything else I can answer for you about the work of Tom Greder, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Sarah Fotheringham

From:
Lauren Flannery
Theatre director
Hobart 2005

The workshops really opened up a new understanding of performance, something I think was already there but suddenly became clear.

From:
Wayne van Wijk
Clown Doctor
Brisbane 2005

Tom gives great insight into the nature of the clown. His training reminds me to slow down, keep it simple, and most importantly, build an honest relationship with the audience. In addition to this I have been armed with several "tricks" to throw myself out of the controlled mindset of the performer and into the chaotic and wonderful mystery of the clown.

Tom Greder: Formation

- 2010:** Stephen Motram: "The Logic of Movement", England
1998: Stephan Teuwissen, 'Slapstick', Switzerland
1997: Justus Neuman, four week private clown tuition, Australia
1995: Alex Pinder, 'The Clown and Mask', Australia
Anna Yen, 'Freeing The Body', Australia
Russel Dykstra, 'Movement for Actors', Australia
1994: Angela De Castro, 'The Clown', Australia
Daniel Stein, 'Movement for Actors and Corporeal Mimes', Hong Kong
Tang Shu Wing, 'The Clown', Hong Kong
1993: Philippe Gaulier, 'The Clown', Ecole Philippe Gaulier, London
Sean Gandini, 'Juggling and Movement', London
Company Philippe Genty, 'Movement and Complicity', London
1988: Bachelor of Human Movement Studies (Ed.), University of Queensland, Australia



Photo: M. Salmi



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For additional information and resources on Tom Greder's work as performing artist, workshop facilitator, dramaturg and director, please visit his website.