

ARIEL ONLINE LESSONS - ORSINOS & TEMPESTS - ACTING THROUGH SONG AND MINING THE TEXT

Intro:

- This session will help you to begin to build a tool kit for approaching any new song that you learn
- It is especially useful for those of you preparing for auditions but it will also help any of you preparing a song for any purpose
- We will be looking closely at the text and context of a song and this kind of detail will give you the edge and help you to really make the song your own
- This is the difference between being a performer (learning to sing the right notes and make it sound good musically) and an actor (really connecting with the words, making your own choices about how you sing those words and making the character you're stepping into both truthful and believable).
- It's so important to put all of this ground work before you fall into the vocal habits of the singer on the recording that you are learning the song from.
- It's not to say that these recordings aren't good and that these artists haven't used their acting skills to come to those vocal choices, but if you just copy the riffing and vocal qualities of Idina Menzel then what individual stamp are you putting onto your rendition of that song.
- This is especially important in an audition as no casting director wants to hear someone trying to be someone they are not, they want to hear you.
- The same goes for when I go and see any show, I don't want to hear something that I've a hundred times before on a cast recording, I want to hear that actor telling me their story as if it was the first time they were telling it and the first time I was ever hearing it.

Session: Part One

ARIEL ONLINE LESSONS - ORSINOS & TEMPESTS - ACTING THROUGH SONG AND MINING THE TEXT

- Choose a song from a musical that you know well! Any song that you want, just make sure that it is a solo and a song that tells us something about the character singing it and moves the story forward in the play.
- Record yourself singing the first verse and chorus of this song as you would usually sing it, don't think too much about it.
- Pause the video to go and do that now.

We Will Look at:

The Given Circumstances:

- Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?
- Look into the context of the whole play and work out for this song...
- Who you are talking to...
- What are you talking to them about...
- When is it? What time of day? Where in the timeline of the play? What has happened before this moment to cause or trigger this song?
- Where are you? Where is it set? Will the surroundings affect how you can speak to this person or how you sing?
- Why has your character decided to say these things...
- How have they decided to bring it up? How has the conversation started? How are they talking?
- Pause the Video and write these things down.

ARIEL ONLINE LESSONS - ORSINOS & TEMPESTS - ACTING THROUGH SONG AND MINING THE TEXT

The Magic 'If':

- This is a technique first coined by Stanislavski and the whole idea is that an actor must fully immerse themselves into a character at the exact moment in which that character is placed in the play
- You must be able to imagine how you would act and react 'if' you were in this situation.
- Now you can think about how it would make you feel personally and use that emotion to create some characteristics especially if you have personal experience of the situation in the song you have chosen.
- However be careful not to allow yourself to get caught up in your own thoughts and emotions, you must keep in mind all the given circumstances that tell us a lot about the context of the play and the character already.
- This is just something for you to think back to as you build a character

Mining the text:

- The idea of mining the text is go through it with fine tooth comb and pick out specific moments, words or phrases that you think that writer has specifically chosen to include to develop the character or the plot.
- They can be words the you feel highlight the purpose of the song, the reason why it's being sung. It could be something that emphasises the characters objectives or the emotions felt in the song.
- Go through and highlight anything that you wish to emphasise!

Categorise these into three things; Story, Emotion and Connection.

ARIEL ONLINE LESSONS - ORSINOS & TEMPESTS - ACTING THROUGH SONG AND MINING THE TEXT

- Think about how you will emphasise it, will you change your pitch or volume, will you give that moment in the song a very clear emotion, will you change your vocal quality to show that emotion?
- For instance, a very pained or sad expression you could use 'sob' quality
- Something very sweet and soft you may use Falsetto
- Or something powerful and angry you may choose to Belt
- Vocal qualities;
 1. Speech (conversational, informative, storytelling)
 2. Falsetto (sweet, innocent, vulnerable)
 3. Sob (sad, desperate, pleading)
 4. Twang (loud, energised, clear)
 5. Belt (powerful, aggressive, defiant)
 6. Opera (dramatic)

Note: These are just some basic descriptive words to help you with what vocal qualities to choose in building a character and portraying an emotion! The actual definitions and functions of these qualities is far more complex and is another separate lesson entirely so don't get too caught up on this for now!

Beats:

- Now that you have identified and highlighted these moments think about how the mood of the piece shifts as these moments happen
- Each of these shifts or changes in emotions are what we call beats
- Have a think about how you can show this change of emotion and transition between each beat so that the audience know your now moving onto your next thought or your next point.
- This can be as simple as standing up or sitting down, taking in a deep breath, changing what are you are looking at or focusing

ARIEL ONLINE LESSONS - ORSINOS & TEMPESTS - ACTING THROUGH SONG AND MINING THE TEXT

on... it can be very subtle and we don't need to see a huge change in character, it just needs to be something that changes the energy of your character.

- Pause the Video and write these things down.

Objectives and Super-Objectives:

- What is your characters objective in this scene?
- What do they want?
- Are they wanting someone to listen to them?
- Are they wanting a reaction or something to be done as a result of what they are saying?
- Are they seeking help?
- Are they telling something important to someone?
- Do they want something?
- Also think about the super-objective, what does your character want in the context of the entire play
- It will be different for every play and every song, of course, so it's important to research the piece and find these things out.

Obstacles (internal and external):

- What are your internal obstacles? Your emotions, what you think is right and wrong, your instincts and impulses?
- What are your external obstacles? People/Characters standing in your way, physical obstacles, are you the person your trying to get to separated by something. Romeo and Juliet metaphor for both types of obstacle.
- Pause the Video and write these things down.

ARIEL ONLINE LESSONS - ORSINOS & TEMPESTS - ACTING THROUGH SONG AND MINING THE TEXT

Speaking and then singing the text:

- Now that you've made your acting decisions and given great thought, and attention to the text and context of your song, I want you to start speaking the words out loud with all the work you have done so far in mind
- Do not sing at the moment, just speak and treat it as a monologue
- Film yourself doing the same verse and chorus but this time as a monologue
- Once you feel that you have really got to grips with the emotions and acting choices that you have made for this song, begin to sing it again, adding in all of the things you have worked on today
- Now record yourself singing the first verse and chorus again
- Watch back both videos of yourself singing and see if you can see a difference between the two and write down what has changed, what has improved?