

Spotlight on **ACTING SCHOOLS AND COACHES**

BACKSTAGE

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They
Don't
Call It



'Show
Art'

PHOTO BY ISABELE DANIELA
Penny Templeton with students

Spotlight on ACTING SCHOOLS AND COACHES

Teaching the business side of an acting career

By Mark Dundas Wood
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When it comes to the age-old dilemma of art versus commerce, young actors are likely to hear advice that falls anywhere between those two extremes. No wonder they're confused.

“Success is transient, evanescent. The real passion lies in the poignant acquisition of knowledge about all the shading and subtleties of the creative secrets.”

—Konstantin Stanislavsky

“If you wanna make it/ Twinkle while you shake it.”

—Electra, in the musical *Gypsy*

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Most have at least some spirit of the artist in them and want to approach their craft with sensitivity and integrity. Yet there's rent to be paid. Especially in today's volatile economy, business is business—and that includes show business.

Back Stage recently spoke with four acting instructors who teach the business side of the craft while also encouraging their students to find and love the art in themselves.

Do Right by the Writer

Amy Lyndon (www.coldreadingclasses.com) is an actor and teacher in Los Angeles who owned a talent management company for nine years. She also recently wrote a book, *The Lyndon Technique: The 15 Guideline Map to Booking*. In her teaching, she shares what she learned—on her own and from mentors—after moving to California from Syracuse, N.Y., in her early 20s.

“When I came out here,” she says, “I had all this great juice flowing, but I had no idea how to get a job. So I had to learn the hard way.”

Lyndon teaches “booking classes” rather than acting classes. They're geared toward helping actors land film and TV work, though she thinks some of her principles would be just as useful for theatre. Students come to her sessions as if they were going to a gym, dropping in and working out as needed.

Her 15 guidelines are designed to help actors analyze a script in order to get to the writer's intention. Acting choices meant to “stand out” at auditions are pointless and damaging if they run counter to the intent of the script, Lyndon explains. Actors need to know exactly what they're auditioning for. “You don't want to go in and read for *Scrubs* with a *Law & Order* read,” she says.

Part of Lyndon's technique involves recognizing who you are as an actor, so you're not trying to sell qualities you don't possess. This is not to say she necessarily endorses typecasting. After working with actors for a time, she'll “stretch them,” she says, enabling them to play a variety of roles within the boundaries of their particular “essence.”

Lyndon acknowledges that her classes emphasize results over process—a focus that would be anathema to many acting teachers, particularly those at the college level. Yet she claims she's helped Yale and Juilliard graduates harness their formal training to get better results at auditions.

There is a no-nonsense element to Lyndon's approach that actors steeped in a particular acting orthodoxy might find refreshingly concise. Her students, she says, are “there to do the work, book the job, and get the hell out.”



Amy Lyndon