

AGT Testimonial – Maya Jordan

I can honestly say that my work with John Basil has been some of the most fulfilling; fun and fruitful I've had as a classical actor. John has the ability to help actors respect and revere Shakespeare, while at the same time demystifying his work and making it relatable to the actor, and thus by extension, the audience. This work is crucial for any actor regardless of their path be it classical, contemporary, musical, stage, screen, comedic, dramatic etc. Just like a house, no matter what new materials it may be constructed from, it must always have a solid foundation, and that foundation is always made from stone, from rock, from concrete: as an actor, what you can learn from John Basil is that very same rock solid foundation from which you can concretely build your skills and techniques. Though other directors may have had different theories and visions for a particular role or play, and thus directed me to portray something in a certain way, when I am given the freedom to do so, I always use what I've learned from John as my touchstone. It has never failed me as an actor when I tap into my experience from what I've learned under John Basil's direction.

As a young multi-racial (and curvy ☺) female in this industry, it is easy to be marginalized as an actor, and personally, it was so incredibly rewarding to be able to explore and portray a variety of roles that traditionally, I may not have gotten a chance to, John gave me that opportunity. John also creates a wonderful atmosphere in which the actors that he works with feel like equals on a team who support each other, have faith in each other, and cheer each other on. John's direction and tutelage is insightful, inspiring and indispensable.

Some of my favorite moments with AGT have been full circle moments. When taking John's class, I had the opportunity to stage and choreograph my own scenes. By using the tools I learned from John, I set to work on my scenes. The result was not only the positive response from my fellow actors who were entertained and engaged, but also John's praise of "this is how it's done" was immeasurable. It is something that I chose to muscle memory and I use the same practice and technique in all of my acting endeavors since then, including in a fundraiser last year at AGT for a member of the AGT community. I once again delved into the grab bag of skills I learned with John, expanded on an idea I had for a scene I did when I took his class, and staged and performed in a comedic scene with AGT actors. A year later, people are still talking about it, I have even had requests to film it and release it online because people enjoyed it so much. Full circle.

Another fantastic aspect to John's direction and teaching is that it is engaging and enthralling for everybody, from novice to enthusiast. I often take friends with me to productions at AGT.

Whenever I take someone who isn't very familiar with Shakespeare, or perhaps has avoided Shakespeare because they "don't get it", when the show is over they say things like "I totally get it!" or "That was awesome, why haven't I been able to experience a Shakespeare show like this before?" At the same time, if I attend a performance with a Shakespeare buff, they are excited about what they saw and found new gems in the play they had not previously experienced. That is the gift of John Basil's direction and teaching and both his actors, and his audiences receive it.

The American Globe Theater under the direction of John Basil is, vital and valuable and I hope that the work, instruction and productions at AGT will continue to grow and continue to be an important part of classical theater in New York City.

- Cheers!

Maya Jordan