



NMCA, Inc. News & Information

January 2012

Wil Kilroy directs Don't Ask, Don't Tell

Wil Kilroy, Vice-President of NMCA recently directed the World Premier of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* at University of Southern Maine. Kilroy, Department Chair at USM, brought the production to USM to coincide with the recent change of DADT in the U.S. Military.

The original production shows an exploration of the military policy originally called "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass" in relation to gay and lesbian service members. The "don't ask" part of the DADT policy specified that superiors should not initiate investigation of a service member's orientation without witnessing disallowed behaviors, though credible evidence of Unauthorized harassment of women led to an "don't ask, don't tell,



"In talking with reviewing research the cast and I information which is Kilroy said. "One of this project was 'Soldier's Girl,' which that led to Pvt. Barry beating with a baseball bat in his Army barracks by one of his peers."

homosexual behavior initiate an investigation. investigations and suspected servicemen and expansion of the policy to don't pursue, don't harass."

military personnel, documentaries and various learned some surprising now depicted theatrically," the original inspirations for viewing the movie, was based on the incidents Winchell being killed via a

Kilroy said the incident in 1999 brought "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and all of its complications into the limelight. He searched for a theater script that dealt with the issues but, after he was unable to find one, decided to create an original piece based on real stories.

"Not only was this policy affected in the military, but it also influenced other segments of society which we cover in the play, including a high school scene and a corporate scene," Kilroy said.

Told with intensity and humor, Kilroy said the production is based on personal testimony and asks a question for which there may be no easy answer.

Excerpts of this article come from Portland Daily Sun. See the complete article online at: portlanddailysun.me/opinion/story/don't-ask-don't-tell-finds-its-voice by Michael J. Tobin

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The Darling premiers on West Coast

Two Chekhov's Productions presented a new translation of the Anton Chekhov short story, *The Darling*, at the Secret Rose Theatre in December in North Hollywood.



Interview with Josh Chenard, 2002 Certified Teacher

In preparation for the article written by Josh Chenard (See page 3), we interviewed Josh about his use of Michael Chekhov in his work as a theater professor and director.

NMCA: What was it that drew you to Chekhov training at? When did you take your first training and what did you get from that training that drove you to seek more?

I was first introduced to the techniques of Mr. Chekhov when I was an undergraduate at the University of Southern Maine in 1996. I took the summer intensive with Wil Kilroy, Lisa Dalton, and Mala Powers, and it changed my life. I was only twenty years old, and for the first time in my life, the creative process I was being led through and the language in which we were communicating coincided with my feelings and thinking. We were allowed to use words like passion, joy, and love...and the technique worked! Even at twenty years old, I felt like I was being let in on a major artistic secret. For me, there was no going back. I returned to several of the Summer intensives and worked privately with both Lisa and Mala at any opportunity I could.

NMCA: When did you certify? What created your interest in teaching it?

I was certified in 2002. My certification coincided with that time in my life in which I was moving away from acting and more towards teaching, which is a strange but important transition for me. It was difficult to move from my ego (I want to be an actor!) into spirit (I am meant to be a teacher!). Mala said to me once, "Josh, I am a fantastic actress, but I have a teacher's heart. I think you are also a fantastic actor, but have a teacher's heart." She was able to see in me what I was slowly discovering about myself. In any event, it was around that time I received my certification and have been teaching workshops all over the country and at a variety of schools and conferences ever since. I love teaching it. It is always exciting, always vibrant, always effective.

NMCA: How do you incorporate Michael Chekhov into other acting disciplines you've learned and teach?

I find Chekhov pairs beautifully with other facets of acting I teach. I am responsible for year long acting courses at Virginia Commonwealth University where I often begin with a Stanislavsky base. I find Stanislavsky provides a fantastic groundwork for analysis and discussion, but that students often struggle with synthesizing their ideas and discoveries into doing and playable action; they are able to come up with a description, but not a prescription. I find Chekhov is the perfect remedy for this. They can take their character's objective of *I want to unnerve you*, and make it playable by weaving together molding, a veiled push or an expansion with a personal atmosphere of chaos. Suddenly, they can bring their decisions to live in a visceral and powerful way. I weave Chekhov into my teaching of Mythical Archetypes, pair it with Meisner's Repetition Work, utilize it with Anne Bogart's Viewpoints, and am now developing it as a companion piece with Fitzmaurice Voicework®. I guess Chekhov is like a good pinot noir; it pairs well with most meals and often enhances the flavor.

NMCA: How has the Chekhov work impacted your own work in theater productions, either directing or acting?

The Chekhov work finds its way into all of my work. I just directed a production of Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer* for a theatre company in Richmond as part of the Tennessee Williams Centennial Celebration. I was working with a variety of professional actors most of whom had not been exposed to Michael Chekhov but we did a lot of work with Contraction/Expansion and Atmospheres. I could see them questioning the work, then slowly buying into and then fully utilizing it! I loved as they discovered characterization or fully expressed acting moments that they were able to attribute it to the Chekhov work. It was a polarizing production; it was so visceral and evocative that I think some audience members struggled with it...which pleased me. I want to present challenging work that is deeply felt by an audience (for better or worse) whether it be in my acting or my directing. So, the Chekhov work has impacted my work in the theater by both demanding from me fully expressive, powerful, and visceral theatrical experiences and providing me the tools in which to construct them.

NMCA: Do you teach any students outside the college? During plays you direct? Separately as private coaching students?

I am teaching an undergraduate and graduate level of the Techniques of Michael Chekhov at VCU in the Spring. Outside of academia, I have taught workshops and classes all over the country including in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Boston, Birmingham, Baltimore, Lexington. I have taught student actors, professional actors, teachers, directors, lawyers, (Continued on [page 4](#))



MICHAEL CHEKHOV: BACK TO BASICS

Written By Josh Chenard



Currently directing the Virginia Premiere of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* for the Henley Street Theatre Company has been a challenging and transformative experience for me; but I will return to this in a moment.

I have had the pleasure of exploring Michael Chekhov's physical and powerful approach to acting for almost twenty years. As my understanding of, and experience with the technique evolves, so does my sense of invention. For instance, I have been teaching workshops entitled *Acting with Archetypes* in which participants go on a guided, active journey exploring the movement qualities, sound, breath, and feelings of a variety of mythological archetypes including the Warrior, the Child, or the Trickster. Though the work did not begin with Chekhov specifically in mind, I have successfully woven in Imaginary Body and Leading Center to deepen the work. I am teaching a workshop in March entitled: *Performance Polygraph: Utilizing FBI Tactics to Inform and Clarify Your Acting Choices*. Though the workshop is based in discussions of the limbic brain, autonomic nervous system and nonverbal intelligence, it is also a marvelous opportunity to discuss Chekhov's approach to Emotion: Qualities, Sensations, and Feelings. From re-defining Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* as an acting guide, to presenting the elements of the Periodic Table as an approach to character, I love exploring a variety of unusual texts through the lens of performance technique. The common denominator in all of this exploratory play is the dynamic, flexible, imaginative techniques of Michael Chekhov. His work invites play, experimentation, and adventure.

So, there I was about to start rehearsals for *Lord of the Flies*. After casting the show, my creative brain kicked into high gear plotting how I can use Chekhov to illuminate themes of social and moral collapse, injustice, religion, and the darkness contained in the souls of man. I began to read or re-read Hemingway, Joseph Conrad, the *Jungle Book*, National Geographic, and the Bible looking for links between these texts, my themes, and Michael Chekhov. Oh, the possibilities! I could weave together Palaces, Imaginary Animal Bodies, Native American Chanting, Expansion, Mantras, Chakras, Totems! Then I went to my first read through. As I began to wax poetic about all of my ideas and concepts, I was met with blank stares from a room of young actors ranging in age from twelve to twenty one.

Clearly my enthusiasm was not infectious. Was I not describing my ideas effectively? Were my ideas bad? Were the actors simply too young to understand? Then it occurred to me; I was in concept overload. What should be homage to Golding's tale of innocence lost, I was turning into a Julie Taymor spectacular. After the read through that *(Continued on [page 4](#))*

Though Chekhov's work is pliable and able to supplement, accent, and reinvent, the real power exists in the brilliant standards, exercises, and concepts as originally conceived and designed by Mr. Chekhov himself, who asks for nothing more from us than our ease, passion, and joy.





(Back to Basics Continued from [page 3](#))

night, I went home and took out my binder of Michael Chekhov notes and journals I had been keeping since I was first introduced to the work in 1996. It was time to get back to basics.

After pairing the themes down to innocence, power, fear, and loss, I paired down what and how I used the Chekhov work. Suddenly, playing with nothing but Contraction and Expansion provided us an entire afternoon of exploring power and fear. We spent an afternoon playing in an atmosphere of Jungle; another in an atmosphere of plane wreckage. The work had become moving, simple...authentic. The actors could barely contain their excitement from day to day and were clearly sad to be moving from workshop based rehearsals into the technicalities of blocking and choreography. Alas, I look forward to blending it all together in January.

I hope all of us continue pushing the boundaries of Chekhov's work, keeping it fresh, inventive, and new. The very spirit in which the technique was created lends itself to constant and imaginative re-envisioning. I also hope as we explore, play and discover, that we remind ourselves and each other to revisit the basics as I was reminded of in my current rehearsal process. Though Chekhov's work is pliable and able to supplement, accent, and reinvent, the real power exists in the brilliant standards, exercises, and concepts as originally conceived and designed by Mr. Chekhov himself, who asks for nothing more from us than our ease, passion, and joy.

Lord of the Flies runs January 26 through February 25 at the Henley Street Theatre in Richmond, Virginia. (804)340-0115.

(*The Darling* Continued from [page 1](#)) *The Darling* is a touching



love story and philosophical inquiry as well as a masterpiece by one of the world's greatest writers and playwrights, Anton Chekhov. Called "a pearl" by Leo Tolstoy, it provokes a highly controversial attitude embodied in its hero Olga Semionovna Plemianikova.

Dalton's finest bit of acting, as she...digs into the emotion. Throughout, she has no problem getting to the heart of the character and Chekhov's story ... an evening of quality storytelling.
-Special to the Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Find details of this production and performance at TheDarling.org.

NMCA, Inc. Returns to USM



NMCA, Inc. will present its annual Summer Chekhov Theatre Institute at the University of Southern Maine in Gorham on July 1-7, 2012.

This marks a return to its origins. CTI began in 1994 at USM and has been running each year since.

"This opens the CTI to people in the Northeast who want to experience the teachings of Michael Chekhov but can't travel to Texas each year."

(Interview Continued from [page 2](#))

doctors. One of my favorite experiences came when teaching lawyers how to present information with a sense of ease in the courtroom! Five grown men in suits, swinging chairs above their heads and rolling on the floor. I loved it; they loved it! I also coach actors on film and television sets and find Chekhov to be the perfect anecdote in an industry in which actors are often in need of a quick, effective fix. So, clearly I believe in the work and am an advocate for putting it in the hands of anybody who can be served by it.



NMCA calls its teachers home

Initiatives aim to radiate support to Certified Teachers and Candidates

A long-time goal of National Michael Chekhov Association, going back to the founders, Mala Powers, Lisa Dalton and Wil Kilroy in 1994, is to support Certified Teachers and Teacher Candidates to radiate the use of Michael Chekhov's tools. With the formal incorporation of NMCA Inc and the rebuilding of the NMCA website with a new focus on NMCA's mission, a set of initiatives to support the Teachers are being implemented. A website portal is evolving to create a space for Teachers to present their accomplishments and communicate with each other and with their students. New social media groups make communications possible. And NMCA is developing an advanced program for advanced students.



NMCA Inc incorporated as a non-profit organization in 2010 with the mission to radiate Michael Chekhov's teachings. National Michael Chekhov Association, Inc. (dba NMCA, Inc.) produce Theatre Institutes and other programs. It maintains websites and administers programs to support Teachers. These programs both enhance the dissemination of Michael Chekhov information and documents in an way and standardize the information so Teachers can refer to and use them.

The NMCA websites are in transition to a complete Michael Chekhov Portal, with a full slate of multi-media and social media tools, Chekhov information in printed and AV formats, and other tools for Teachers and actors. The current website is accessible through Chekhov.net. In the next year we will split the current website into 3 different portals for different functions. The current website already contains useful features, including a growing list of available PDF articles. As Certified Teachers write and submit articles for the new NMCA Newsletter, those will be posted to the Articles database. In addition, a new set of pages on Certified Teachers have already been published, providing a photo, profile and information for each Teacher. By February, these will be accessible to Teachers to post their own photos (through Admin for now) and profiles and articles. We will notify Teachers how to see their profile and provide updated information soon.

NMCA's Board of Directors, **Lisa Dalton**, President, **Wil Kilroy**, Vice President, and **Charlie Bowles**, Secretary/Treasurer are creating a new Advanced Institute for Certified Teachers, Teacher Candidates, and select advanced actors. The Advanced Institute will take each tool in the Chart of Inspired Acting and develop it in deeper ways to explore and enhance our use of the tools. The goal is to create a deeper understanding of techniques and how they can be used most effectively in teaching and acting.

To that end, the Board is interested in hearing from Certified Teachers on what types of exercises would be most supportive of continued development for Teachers. For some it might be a reconnection and a re-study of the system, since it has been enhanced by nearly two decades of evolution. For those, consider attending the Summer 2012 Institute in July in Gorham, Maine For others, there are questions to be answered, techniques to explore and further development of practical use of techniques. Whatever the motivation, we want you to be involved and welcome your input.

If you haven't already joined one of our focused, closed Michael Chekhov Facebook groups, send an email to the address below and we will add you. One is for any participant of any Annual Theatre Institute since the beginning and one is for Certified Teachers and Teacher Candidates only. Or search for the National Michael Chekhov Association, Inc. open group on Facebook and add yourself.

The new NMCA Newsletter will publish regularly, quarterly at this point, with news and articles by and about Teachers. You are encouraged to write your thoughts about articles you'd like to see or contribute and these will be shared with the world in the Email and Print Newsletter and online on the website. We are always interested in how Teachers have integrated their learning about Michael Chekhov with their lives, their work and their teaching, acting and directing.

If there are any other ways we can support you in your professional, artistic or personal use of the Michael Chekhov techniques, please contact us at the email or website. And at least drop a note and let us know how you're doing. We look forward to hearing from you.



Certified Teachers receive diplomas during Winter Theatre Institute



Charlie Bowles, Lisa Dalton, Gail Cronauer, Wil Kilroy

NMCA certified two new teachers and issued diplomas during the recent Winter Theatre Institute. Gail Cronauer and Merri Brewer completed the requirements of their Teacher Candidacy during 2011 and are now officially Certified Teachers of the NMCA pedagogy.

“This certification is well-deserved for Gail and Merri,” said Lisa Dalton, President and Founder of NMCA, Inc., “and shows their excellence in teaching the techniques Michael Chekhov developed over his lifetime.”

The NMCA Teacher Certification Program provides teachers a clear path to teaching the entire Circle of Inspired Acting, the basis for NMCA training.


Those interested in beginning this program can find information at Chekhov.net.



Charlie Bowles, Wil Kilroy, Lisa Dalton, Merri Brewer

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National
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