

Narrows Community Theater, Inc. presents “Act Up!” – Acting Classes

Calling all couch potatoes (or, as us ladies prefer to be known as, couch “to-ma-toes”)! You can have a rollicking good time while learning the fundamentals of acting at Narrows Community Theater’s “Act Up!” Class, taught by John Stillwaggon, professional actor and seasoned instructor with national teaching experience.

I decided, after hamming it up style “au natural” for the past few years, to see what it takes to be a real actor. So, off I went, a little fearful and equipped with only a desire to learn more about the craft, to my first “Act Up!” session.

There were eight of us in the class, all ages, each with their own reasons for being there, but all sharing the same love for theater. My reason for wanting to perform is simple. Acting affords me the opportunity to be so many different personalities and characters that I can never be in real life. Corny, eccentric, murderous, stingy, prudish, sophisticated, sexy, yes, each show allows you to become that person for a little while. I admit, I have always harbored a hidden desire to be a gun moll. Now, where’s that western?

The two hours flew by! It didn’t feel like learning since you are having so much fun, but, in retrospect, you really did learn. The session started with a little stretching to loosen up, then went on to some tongue twisters which got us started on the art of articulation. Then the real fun began. We started playing improvisational games. The first game gave us a feel for fast reaction. We stood in a circle and had to either pass an imaginary Zing, Boing, or Pow to one of our fellow classmates. You “zinged” the person next to you, they then had the option to either “zing” the person next to them, “pow” a person across from them, or “boing” back to the person who zinged them. Sounds easy, huh? Well, at lightning speed you found yourself boinging when you should be zinging and powing when you should be boinging. Great fun!



Act Up! Students, comprised of both NCT members and non-members, take a break from class to pose for a photo with instructor, John Stillwaggon (third from the left).



Act Up! Students improvising a scene.



Act Up! Students & instructor, John Stillwaggon, at work.

We then went on to some more improvisational games, each with a lesson to be taught. A game where we could only communicate with our eyes taught us to connect with our fellow actors. A game where we needed to traverse a maze with our eyes closed and only our partner to talk us through taught us to trust our partner. The game of “hot seat”, where we had to speak on a topic for one minute, taught us to think on our feet. One of the lessons you walked away with is that you do have it in you. When it comes down to the wire and you think that you do not have another original idea, somewhere within you the idea appears. It was an amazing lesson. I guess, maybe, it was also a lesson in self-confidence.

Oh, yes, getting back to the couch potato theme. Oy! Did my body ache after the first session. I learned, the hard way, how physical acting can be.

The classes will not be all games. As we move along the 10-week session, I suspect there might be some conventional teaching involved. I do know that we will start doing scenes that will culminate in a final mini-performance for our closest family and friends. For now, I just can't wait for the next class. I will approach it armed with enthusiasm and anticipation.



Dance Instructor, Bieje Chapman, posing with students of the “NCT Kids Musical Theatre” dance workshop.

For anyone interested in exploring the art of acting, the classes are held Friday evenings, 7pm to 9pm, at Salem Lutheran Church, 450 – 67th Street, Brooklyn, NY. No previous experience is required. Cost is \$200 for the 10-week 2-hour session. There is also a children's acting class, Fridays from 4pm to 6pm (also \$200 per 10-week 2-hour session) and an “NCT Kids Musical Theatre” dance workshop, taught by nationally certified instructor (and great dancer!) Bieje Chapman, (\$100 per 10-week 1-hour session), Fridays from 6pm to 7pm. All classes are at Salem Lutheran Church.

For more information, or to register, please contact Narrows Community Theater at 718-482-3173, or email NCT@nctheaterny.com, or visit their website at www.narrowscommunitytheater.com.

Photos courtesy of Christopher Sirota.



Acting students getting direction from instructor John Stillwaggon.



Dance students during rehearsal of “America” from “West Side Story”.