

# Training the Actor's Instrument

What do Peter Brook, Whoopi Goldberg and Mike Nichols have in common? They use *Awareness Through Movement*® for actor training.

Over thirty years ago, director Richard Schechner interviewed Moshe Feldenkrais for the Tulane Drama Review. He concluded that Feldenkrais' idea was to achieve a kind of potentiality which

“...will allow the actor or dancer to assume whatever characteristics he wishes for the role.” He added that it would be “very interesting to see a generation of actors... fully trained in this technique.”

Since then, reports Barbara Leverone, a *Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner(cm)* in private practice in Sarasota, Florida, the *Feldenkrais Method*® has been incorporated into actor training in institutions across the United States including Chicago's DePaul University and University of Wisconsin . In addition, Barbara taught “Movement for Actors” for 12 years in the graduate acting program for Florida State University.

The emphasis in *Feldenkrais*® lessons on noticing “how” a movement is done, attending to the quality rather than the quantity, teaches the actor to reduce effort and strain. This lead Kristen Linklater, internationally acclaimed voice teacher to write that the method could aid actors in

“the release of limiting, habitual tensions” and in re-establishing connections “between instinctive emotional impulses and muscles that reflexively react to them.”

The resulting potent state allows actors to extend their heightened awareness to their fellow actors, to their environment, and to truly listen and be present on stage.

Linklater wrote,

“To have immediate access to emotional sources and to allow emotional energy to flow unblocked through a free body demands some re- ordering of the brain's priorities. The *Feldenkrais Method* offers a detailed road-map with which to explore one's territory and make conscious decisions about its use.”

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