



## E-Newsletter Issue #5

December, 2011

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#### From the Presidents...



Wow... December already... where did that year just go? Oh that's right ... doing lots of GREAT stuff like a NATIONAL CONFERENCE! Haha. Or should we say... Ho Ho.

We certainly have had a wonderful year and feel very proud of what our small but fabulous team has achieved. We have hosted a national conference, run workshops for our teachers and students, mentored new teachers, provided networking opportunities AND wait for it... currently in the process of developing some great resources to assist with the written and practical exams.

Next year DramaWest will host another State Conference so watch this space to see when and where! We thought we'd keep the 'production' theme going which began in 2010 with 'The Dress Rehearsal for the National Conference'. 2012's theme will be 'The After Party!'

It has been a pleasure working alongside our committee members and serving the WA drama community. We are in good shape to see in the National Curriculum and have loads of new and gorgeous committee members ready to make sure our association continues to thrive.

Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas.

*Christina Gray and Christine Adams*

P.S. As a special treat (and because we love Christmas so much), we asked our committee members to tell us what Christmas means to them. Here are their responses!

**Christina Gray** – *"I LOVE Christmas. I love everything about it. The lead up, the champagne, the frenzy of shopping, the Christmas parties, the Christmas tree, the search for a Christmas outfit, the menu choices for Father Christmas and his reindeers, the ham, the turkey, the champagne! Oh it's a glorious thing!"*

**Chris Lovering** – *"Christmas is...breakfast on Port Beach - champagne and croissants and a few strawberries thrown in"*

**Angela Zaknich** – *"As the child of European parents, it was customary for our family to celebrate twice; the first being 'German' Christmas and the second in January, now affectionately known as 'wog' Christmas. Food was very much the focus, way too much of everything and days spent cleaning the house in preparation and baking special treats. We have yet to celebrate either of these in Europe, which is on the to-do list! Have a wonderful Christmas everyone!"*

**Alena Tompkins** – “Christmas for me, means memories, old and new. I’m reminded of my earliest memories as a four year old in England – trudging through the snow to midnight mass with my family and returning to open presents. I remember dressing the tree in Australia with my mother and sister, my mother’s happiness at this shared moment – stubbornly resisting our pleas to put the tree up before Christmas eve – sharing ‘open sandwiches’ of continental meats and cheeses. Now my own weakness, putting up the tree with my two boys a week or so before Christmas. Letting them go nuts decorating in a lopsided fashion – and later me rearranging decorations so the tree is more pleasing to the eye. The upcoming joining of my sister and her brood of 5 with my partner’s entire family as we host Xmas lunch. My very being is alive and awash with memories for the entire festive season.”

**Courtney Johnston** – “Christmas to me is spending quality time with my family, reflecting on the busy year we have all had and looking forward to what the following year has lined up for us. It’s a time when I get to feel like a kid again, setting up the Christmas tree, singing carols about flying reindeers and putting milk and cookies out for the jolly man in a red suit :)”

**Jess Wilkey** – “Christmas is all about family for me....sitting around the BBQ, shelling prawns in Dad’s shed while the kids run around under the sprinklers in their undies to escape the heat, the mess of wrapping paper that gets flung around in the chaos of opening presents, and eating too much lovely food! My favourite part of the day is always around twilight, when the heat goes out of the day, everything starts to settle down and we ‘big kids’ get the chance to settle down to a chat and a good laugh.”

## New Members

At the AGM in November, we welcomed some new faces to our committee. We would like to welcome on board:

**Kristen Twynam-Perkins, Sarah Caminiti, Amy Loveless and Emma Payne** join us as general members. Welcome!

Our two student representatives, **Hayley MacNeill** and **Laura Carman** are moving on after fulfilling their duties; but Hayley isn’t going far! She will now also join us as a general member, and we are so happy to have her on board!

We asked them both to write a little outgoing message for you all:

**Hayley MacNeill** : Being a student rep for DramaWest has been an eye opening experience. Firstly was i able to be involved in the remarkable national conference that brought together drama experts from around the world and included so many creative and applicable ideas, that i can now use as an upcoming teacher. Secondly and what i personally valued most of all was the sense of community DramaWest embraces. I am now aware that as a new teacher DramaWest will be an invaluable source of support and information for me as they are for all DramaWest members. I am so happy to be given the opportunity to be involved and hope that the upcoming reps have even just half the experience that i had. Sorry DramaWest I am now moving from student rep to committee member, and there is no getting rid of me!!

**Laura Carman**: The best thing for me about being a student representative on the DramaWest committee was involvement in events, such as the National Conference. Here, I was able to meet many different drama teachers both Primary and High School from all over Australia. In addition, the organisation and leadership skills I gained from this event were invaluable. Being involved with DramaWest, in many ways, prepared me for my final practical unit. Through involvement in the exam workshops, I was able to work closely with the year 12’s from around Western Australia and learn a massive amount of information from the wonderful teachers running the workshops. I felt this experience provided me with more support, resources and confidence before my practical unit. I would like to thank DramaWest for this astounding experience and encourage all students to put their hands up and get involved.

So we now welcome on board two new student representatives, **Brooke Van Aalen** and **Conor Gregory**. Welcome to the team! We have asked them to write a little bit about themselves, which you can find in the [Pre-Service News](#) section.

## State Conference Update

Keep your eyes and ears peeled for news on our State Conference...‘The After Party’ ...coming soon!

### Registration Now Open for Drama Australia National Conference: Delve 2012 in Brisbane

Good morning Colleagues,  
I hope you are enjoying the final weeks of a long and busy term.

It is with great pleasure that I announce that the ‘Invitation to Attend’ highlights document and Online Conference Registration for the Drama Australia National Conference: DELVE 2012 hosted by Drama Queensland is now OPEN and available through our website [www.dramaqueensland.org.au](http://www.dramaqueensland.org.au)

This special three day conference will be held on Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th of March 2012 and is packed with special events!!!

Check out some of the highlights of the conference and the three day program at [www.dramaqueensland.org.au](http://www.dramaqueensland.org.au) or see the attached invitation. Detailed presenter biographies and workshop descriptions will be posted online very soon.  
I look forward to seeing you at DELVE 2012.

Warm regards,  
Drama Queensland

## What's On...

### **Filmbites Youth Film School (Lesmurdie) are taking enrolments for 2012!**

Filmbites Youth Film School, the unique and award winning after-school and weekend school for kids aged 5-17, is taking enrolments for our 2012 Acting for the Screen classes, to be held on Friday after school in Lesmurdie.

Choose from:

Beginner/Intermediate for 9-12 year olds or Intermediate/advanced for 13yrs +

Join us to learn skills in Term 1, then make a short film with your class in Term 2. You'll get a copy of your film to keep, and get to see it on the big screen too!

And....for some serious fun these January holidays, you can enjoy:

Acting for the Screen (7-9 yr. olds, 10-13 year olds and 13+)

Green Screen Video Special Effects "Invisibility Cloak"

Make up Special Effects "Creatures"

Screen Presenting

Screen Fighting....and more!

Places are limited so book now by contacting Peta or Ben on phone 9408 0362 or [info@filmbites.com.au](mailto:info@filmbites.com.au).

Find out more at [www.filmbites.com.au](http://www.filmbites.com.au)

## Curriculum Updates

*Have you downloaded the syllabus for 2012? Be sure to use this one with your students and not an old version. It will be the one named ... for teaching in 2012.*

*If you haven't registered for the Curriculum Council Extranet, be sure to get that done so you can access all the documents available.*

*In particular look out for the Drama Glossary which has been compiled to explain terms as they are used in the Drama WACE course. It is the wording in the WACE syllabus that is examined so the definitions in the glossary are important.*

*On that note. ... in addition to the course glossary, have you got copies of Drama and Theatre, Key Terms and Concepts (second edition) by Robin and Hannah Pascoe? For more information about how to purchase these: [www.stagepage.com.au](http://www.stagepage.com.au)*

## Upcoming PD

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Detailed presenter biographies and workshop descriptions will be posted online very soon.

I look forward to seeing you at DELVE 2012.

Warm regards,

Drama Queensland

*A copy of the Delve 2012 program and registration form is attached with this Newsletter.*

### **EOI Hilary Bell Scriptwriting Master class**

Hilary Bell Scriptwriting Master class

When: Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> December 1-5pm

Where: Black Swan

Cost: \$100

Email Alena Tompkins at [alena@bsstc.com.au](mailto:alena@bsstc.com.au) to register your interest. Places are strictly limited.

## ACARA News

*No news on this front for now...keep your eyes peeled for more updates early next year!*

## News for Primary

For all of those teaching Drama in Primary, here is a useful little tool from our friend, Patrice Baldwin! This is a contract she has drawn up the Drama environment:

### The Drama Contract

#### In drama:

- ✓ We all agree to pretend that what is happening is real and to keep the make-believe going.
- ✓ If we are finding it difficult to pretend we will stay with the group but 'pass' and not contribute until we feel able to join in the pretending.
- ✓ We will contribute if we can but we do not have to and if we 'pass', other people will accept this without comment.
- ✓ We will not do anything that will risk spoiling the drama for other people who are pretending, as this will break the make believe, which everyone is working hard to keep going.
- ✓ If any of us say or do something in role, then we agree that what is said or done belongs to the character and not the person who is pretending to be that character.
- ✓ When the drama is over we leave the characters in the drama behind and stop pretending.

Patrice Baldwin 2011

## News for Secondary

The exams have been marked thanks to the dedicated markers and once the results are out, the Curriculum Council will be working on the next edition of the Standards Guide for the 2010 exams. This is the best answers to each question and the answers at the mean score for each question. Look out too for the Examiners reports which will be included in the Standards Guide.

Performing Arts Perspectives will take place in March next year. Have you made your school booking yet? In the first weeks of January, the top students from the WACE Drama practical examination will receive an invitation to the Perspectives Audition in the last week of January. Performers are selected on the basis of their performance on the day and the needs of the performance, putting together a great evening that shows the brilliance, breadth and depth of student work. Adam Mitchell will be the Artistic Director and Master of Ceremonies.

### REGISTRATIONS FOR YOH FEST 2012 ARE NOW OPEN

The 2012 YOH Fest health theme is:

#### SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance abuse is an ever-present issue that young people can be confronted with in Australia and around the world. Students might explore how substance abuse such as drugs, alcohol, and tobacco can have a direct harmful or hazardous damage to one's health as well as its link to physical and emotional trauma. Encourage your students to be creative and really think outside the box.

**We must stress that the simulation and brand promotion of alcohol, drugs and cigarettes is STRICTLY PROHIBITED. Failure to abide by this will result in disqualification of your item.**

If you require further information – check out our website: [www.yohfest.com.au](http://www.yohfest.com.au)

Alternatively, feel free to give me a call on: 9581-4606 or by return email.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you all a safe, happy and healthy festive season – enjoy your well-earned break J  
See you in 2012!

Karen

A copy of the YOH Fest Newsletter, including registration forms and details is attached to this Newsletter

## News for Pre-Service

It is with great pleasure, that we introduce our two new Student Representatives, **Brooke Van Aalen** and **Conor Gregory**. We have asked them to do the honours of introducing themselves to you:

**Brooke Van Aalen:** A little bit about me.... 2012 will be my fourth and graduating year, at ECU and as well as loving my course I have a passion for musical theatre, local and community theatre and chocolate! I am a Perth girl through and through and love nothing more than to spend my weekends out and about or down by the river relaxing with family and friends.

Throughout my time being a student representative I hope to bring through the voice of pre-service teachers and what can be done to help and support their journey throughout their time on both professional practices and Uni and as well as this I look forward to relaying advice and ideas from DramaWest back to my classmates.

I can't wait and am looking forward to meeting and getting to know the DramaWest community. Until then I wish everyone a happy and safe Christmas and look forward to getting to meet and know everyone in the New Year!

**Conor Gregory:** My name is Conor Gregory, and I'm in my third year of the Second Ed Drama course at ECU Mt Lawley, minoring in S+E. Originally living in England for over the first half of my life I have an inherent love for not only theatre but all of Drama. I fed my passion for Drama throughout high school in Baldvis even though it wasn't offered at a TEE level, which meant that when I first came to university it was a mind blowing experience opening the flood gates of knowledge and resources available to me in the field. Over the past few years I feel that I have developed a much greater understanding of Drama, but more importantly the purpose of Drama and the value it serves in the Curriculum. If nothing else, I hope that my experience as a Drama West Student Representative provides a rich network of contacts and friends that share my belief in the value of Drama for students of all ages and the delicacy and pride that should be taken when teaching it. I'd like to thank Marion Palmer for her guidance and mentoring in the very early stages of my teaching career and the wealth of knowledge and resource she has already shared with me. Her passion and zest has been a large part of my inspiration to get more involved in the Drama community. And finally to Christina Gray for her constant smile, patience, and faith in others that means so much to many. I look forward to becoming more acquainted with you all and working together in the future.

## Regional Update

*A word from our Industry Liaison (and Black Swan's Education Liaison), Alena Tompkins:*

This year my role was expanded to include Community Access. This meant that I travelled regionally and nationally nine times, mainly in regional WA to promote Black Swan to our vast state. We conducted free workshops in schools and community groups' in conjunction with our Live Broadcast of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I spent time meeting with teachers and amateur theatre groups. Black Swan took these meetings very seriously. We have listened to what the regions need and in 2012 we will be embarking on a new era of regional engagement for the company.

In conjunction with our regional tour of Tim Winton's *Signs of Life*, and live broadcast of *Managing Carmen*, we will again be conducting free workshops in each town we visit.

We will offer two regions each year free, weeklong workshops that will be tailored to the community's needs.

Finally, one region each year will receive the free WA Stories program, consisting of artists working with the community to find 'their story', helping them produce a script and performance for their town. Any stories that we particularly like the result of will be produced by the company for a professional production in the future.

We have appointed regional ambassadors in Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Geraldton. As we engage with more regions in 2012 we will develop relationships with communities and appoint more ambassadors. The ambassadors will help promote our activities in their community and will receive tickets, workshops and another new initiative – video conference artist workshops.

## Spotlight On...

*In this brand new section, we will be featuring interviews with, and articles by, local, national and international Drama practitioners from all areas of expertise. This month, we put a spotlight on Hannah Pascoe, who writes to us from wintery New York about the Practical Aesthetics approach, an evolution of the Stanislavski system developed by David Mamet and William H. Macy. Thank you Hannah!*

### **The Practical Aesthetics Approach to Acting**

**By Hannah Pascoe**

In September 2009 I spent 6 weeks studying at the Atlantic Acting School in New York doing their summer intensive in acting using the Practical Aesthetics method. At the end of those six weeks I was accepted into the 2.5 year conservatory program, I jumped around for joy at the prospect of spending a few years living in the greatest city in the world, then slowly realized that there was no way in hell I could afford it, so I asked the school if they would hold my place for a year, went home to Perth and worked 5 jobs to save up enough money to return and study full time. Crazy sure, when there are excellent acting schools within Australia, but for me this technique allows me to access a deepness to my work and an honesty that I haven't found with other techniques.

Growing up and studying specialist Drama at John Curtin College of the Arts I was taught Stanislavski's fundamental questions and Laban's movement analysis, as well as some of the more obscure acting methods, Michael Chekhov's work for instance, but in general mostly focussing on what you could call a 'method' based acting technique, accessing the psyche to create character. And while this worked for me when I was young, as I grew up I yearned for a technique that wasn't so much about plumbing the depths of my soul and more about really interacting with another human being. And that's what I found in Practical Aesthetics.

Developed by David Mamet and William H. Macy, Practical Aesthetics was created as a reaction against 'method' acting in America, as Mamet as a writer and director found that actors were becoming too self-involved in their own emotions and losing sight of the stories being told. Famously the technique was summarized by a group of students who whilst sunbathing during summer-school raised their hands when asked by Mamet 'Who feels summery?' The Practical Handbook for the Actor by Melissa Bruder et al, is still the decisive text on the technique though it was written over 20 years ago now and the technique has evolved since then.

**So what is the technique? Well it begins with the analysis, four questions designed to unlock the essential nature of the play.**

Question 1: What is literally going on in the scene? - A succinct, one sentence, statement on what is literally happening in the scene. Most importantly, the literal must not be in anyway judgmental. It is just the most basic description of what is happening in the scene or beat of action - a beat only occurring when character enters or exits a scene or when the character becomes aware of new information. This is definitely the hardest part of the analysis and it can take a while to find the best wording for a beat or scene, without making any judgement or interpretation, putting exactly what the playwright wrote into a concise and accurate sentence.

Question 2: What does the character want? Again, this needs to be succinct. Your character can only want one thing in the scene. Importantly you have to know who they want this from. Is it the person, who is with you in the scene, someone who has just left the room, an object in the room or the audience? Additionally, the 'want' must be something the other character can physically do rather than say. This is the sub textual part of the analysis and the question that has been added to the analysis since the development of the technique. A lot of Mamet's plays are often not super sub textual so this step can be skipped, but works of Pinter and Chekhov can be extremely sub textual and that is when this step becomes significant.

Question 3: What is the essential action? This is the crux of the technique, but you cannot just pick an action out of thin air, you have to take into account the playwright's intention and the subtext to get to this point. Actions are universal and essential human actions that all human beings are capable of and that are physically capable of being done. Not everything is an action; there are conditions which make actions actable within the technique

1. Be capable of being done
2. Be in line with the intentions of the writer
3. Be fun
4. Be specific
5. Have its test in the other person
6. Have a 'cap' (that is to say, have a recognisable end point, something that lets you know you've achieved what you want.)
7. Not be emotionally manipulative
8. Not be an errand
9. Not presuppose any physical or emotional state

As long as an action fits all these criteria it can be used. But it must fit them all!! Examples of actions are

- to beg for forgiveness
- to get what's rightfully mine
- to get someone to see the light
- to get someone to join my team
- to put someone in their place
- to get someone to join my party
- to get someone to be my ally
- to teach someone an important lesson
- to inspire someone to greatness
- to get someone to take a change

Mamet says there are only 4 actions, sometimes even; he says there are only two. I tend to think as if there are four categories of action: vulnerable, teaching, harsh and inspirational. The action that you pick for the scene or beat, must be one directly linked to the rest of your analysis. It cannot just be a reiteration of the literal or want, it must be something that takes that information into account and distills it into something that is capable of being done and gives you something interesting to do on stage. The only time there would be reiteration is in Shakespeare, as in his own words when acting Shakespeare you should 'suit the action to the word, the word to the action'. Although acting Shakespeare with this technique is obviously a lot more complicated than that.

The action is what you are pursuing in the scene. You are using the words of the playwright to get that task done during the scene. You may succeed (in which case your action will change/there will be a beat change) or you might fail. But you must always, always, always be pursuing that action.

In pursuing an action you can use a million different tactics, going from berating someone to begging them to joking with them. There is no right or wrong, just working moment to moment with the other actor/actors to see how close or far away from getting your cap (i.e. succeeding in doing your task) from the other person. This is the tricky part; staying on your action always, always working to see what the other person needs in that moment which will make you successful in achieving your goal. Never ever give up or get defeated. If your character does (give up) in the scene, that doesn't mean that you the actor have to give up on getting what you need from the other person. You're going to be a much better actor and more interesting to an audience if you can keep trying and trying and trying even when the script is telling the audience that you're failing.

Question 4: It's as if...? This step is purely personal. It's about you getting to understand what the action that you've chosen for your scene means to you. How you in real life would play this action. This is called the 'as if'. Say my action is to beg someone for forgiveness, then my 'as if' would be along the lines of:

– 'It's as if my dog has viciously mauled someone out of nowhere and is going to be put down and I'm begging the ranger not to do it.'

This immediately triggers a response in me. It might not in you and that's fine. It's about what gets you going viscerally. Having found an 'as-if', you connect with your need to talk the situation out to yourself, imagine that you're in the situation and find out what you would do in that situation. I would probably get on my knees and cry and then perhaps flatter, then yell at them, then go back to begging and a whole range of other things in between. The 'as if' is designed to wake you up to the possibilities of the action. Most importantly, the 'as-if' CAN NOT be something that has happened. It must be something purely imagined but not to the point of ridiculous. You have to believe that it could happen and how you would react if it did. It's not about reliving past trauma or joy; it's about using your imagination to unlock creative possibilities as is the 'method' sometimes. You never bring the 'as-if' into the scene. The only things you need to think about is the action, what the other actor is doing in that moment and how far from, or close you are to succeeding in getting your cap.

So, once you've done the analysis you then use it as a launch pad into the scene or play, knowing what you are physically pursuing on stage and habituating, working moment to moment with your fellow actors so that the scene feels like a structured improvisation each time you do it. You have the lines and the action but you have to react off what the other actors are giving you and take into account where you are in any particular moment so that there is a truthful connection to the text and the other human beings on stage with you which hopefully will give the illusion of character to the audience. That's the dream anyway.

This technique – which allows actors to think before they act so that on stage they can act before they think – allows me to tell the stories I want to in interesting and creative ways, as me, Hannah, living truthfully under imaginary circumstances. I have seen this technique produce the most astounding work. Pieces that I've seen done a thousand times are unlocked simply by being acted from one actor's perspective to another. Every human being is different and every actor has something new to give to a role. Coming to the end of my 3rd semester of training at the Atlantic, I know I have a lot more to learn about this technique and myself as an actor, but this technique even in its most basic form, is in my belief, a great tool for any actor to have under their belt.

#### Interesting Bits

*One of our fabulous committee members, Alena Tompkins, writes a regular blog. She recently featured a review of Black Swan's When The Rain Stops Falling. Check it out here:*

<http://vintagetwists.blogspot.com/2011/11/when-rain-stops-falling-produced-by.html>

*Angela Zaknich as found a useful little gem of a book for new (and experienced) teachers:*

#### Drama Games

##### For Those Who Like To Say No

by Chris Johnston

published by Nick Hern Books Limited

*A book designed to guide teachers through the drama process 'with so-called difficult groups'. With a foreword by Ken Livingstone and introduction by Chris Johnston, it is a mini drama course in itself. Definitely worth a read; I purchased my copy through Currency Press.*

#### Classifieds/Swap Mart

*Buy, Sell or Swap your costumes/props/etc. here! We have For Sale, Wanted, Free/To Swap and Miscellaneous sections!*

*Email your Classifieds items to [newsletter@dramawest.com](mailto:newsletter@dramawest.com) with the subject line: CLASSIFIEDS ITEM.*

*Want us to feature your school production? Found a great resource lately? Offering workshops/PD?*

*Send us your info and suggestions to: [newsletter@dramawest.com](mailto:newsletter@dramawest.com)*