

ACTING ONE, DAY ONE

with Robert Cohen

ABOUT THIS VIDEO F981 & F981DVD

The most basic principles of acting, as taught by Robert Cohen, are four in number:

- (1) The actor inhabits the role of his character by pursuing that character's **GOALS**.
- (2) The character's goals that are most crucial to pursue are those that are pursued with (or against) **OTHER** characters. Such other characters include - but are not limited to - other characters in the play or scene.
- (3) In pursuing the character's goals with other persons, the actor actually tries to win his or her goals by employing real-world **TACTICS**. These tactics come in two basic forms: those that induce (invite, encourage, seduce - "if you do what I want you'll be pleased"), and those that threaten (intimidate, frighten, awe - "if you don't do what I want you will be unhappy").
- (4) In the act of acting, actors should have a positive **EXPECTATION** of actually winning their, goals, even if, in the play or scene, they don't.

Inductive tactics lend an actor charm and magnetism, threatening tactics lend the actor forcefulness and authority, and a positive expectation induces audience empathy - which makes a play thrilling when the character actually wins, and poignant when the character loses.

Putting together the first letters of these key words, Mr.

Cohen suggests the acronym "**GOTE**" as a simple way of recalling these four fundamental principles.

While this bare summary does not begin to explain the full nature of acting, Cohen believes that these principles underlie virtually all acting, whether in naturalistic, classical or postmodern drama, as well as in film, television, music theatre and opera. They may therefore be considered a starting point for the study of acting in all methods and styles.

This video documents a sample beginning college acting class, in which Cohen demonstrates these four principles in his signature exercise, during which students first recite the American Pledge of Allegiance, then learn to act this text as part of a dramatic situation. The video was taped, without rehearsal; with a eight graduate and undergraduate acting students at the University of California, Irvine.

Cohen's teaching of these principles is explored further in his books Acting One, Acting Power and Advanced Acting, each published by McGraw-Hill, and Acting in Shakespeare, published by Smith & Kraus. Editions of several of these books are also published or forthcoming in Hungarian, Estonian, Finnish, Korean and Chinese. Cohen is also the author of Acting Professionally, which offers facts and advice on professional acting careers: the seventh edition of this book, originally published in 1972 and fully updated with each edition, is now available from McGraw-Hill.

ABOUT ROBERT COHEN

Cohen is also the author of books on directing, theatre history and literature, and on French playwright Jean Giraudoux. He has published articles in over a dozen journals, several of which were collected in his More Power to You, and over 200 play reviews in Plays International.. He is also a professional stage director, with a dozen credits at the Utah and Colorado Shakespeare Festivals, and his original plays and translations have been professionally presented in Los Angeles, New York, Pittsburgh, Washington, Long Beach, Budapest and Accra. He is currently Claire Trevor Professor of Drama at the University of California, Irvine, a Master Teacher at the Actors Center in New York City, and has taught extended acting residencies in Finland, Hungary, China, Korea, Ghana, Costa Rica, Estonia, Sweden, Canada, Australia, and dozens of conservatories and colleges around the United States.

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