

Acting for Animators Masterclass

Animation Studios
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General class description

The On-Site Masterclass is different from the kind of on-site training experienced by stage or movie actors. Except for a couple of voluntary improvisations, the animators remain in their chairs for the entire day, with me in the front of the room, lecturing, showing clips, inviting discussion and debate.

The acting principles included in this masterclass go back to Aristotle and Stanislavsky, and they apply to all styles and techniques of animation, from slapstick (*Croods*) to tragic (*Grave of the Fireflies*), from feature films to video games. Although the training is called Acting for Animators, it is going to be useful for every artist in your animation pipeline, from screenwriters to storyboard artists to mocap directors to modelers and riggers. Indeed, you will get the most value for this training if your entire production team is on the same page performance-wise. Especially in the CGI production pipeline, many artists are able to influence character performance at one time or another. All of them need to know as much about acting as do stage or movie actors, but the principles are applied in different ways because acting and animation are two different art forms. Acting is a performance art form, and animation is a visual art form.

The primary difference between the animator and actor is that the actor physically embodies a character in real time, for immediate audience feedback. When actors perform in movies, they still are interacting with the audience – in their heads. This is why the best movie actors usually have a strong stage-acting background. The animator, in a visual art form, acts remotely, manipulating and energizing an on-screen character that, in turn, interacts with the audience.

Regarding Video Reference, it is not necessary for animators to be trained as actors, but they should know how actors think. They should understand what it means to pursue an objective and to play an action without simultaneously thinking about how arms, legs and heads are moving. This topic will be covered in the masterclass.

Both the stage actor and the animator identify with the character in personal ways, getting to know the character's wants, desires, emotions and fears. The big difference is that Animators are trained to first think about physical movement, and actors are trained to first think about intention and objectives. In the Ed Hooks Acting for Animators masterclass, I will cross-fertilize and codify acting theory as it is understood by actors so that it can be effectively applied by all artists in your animation community.

Topics covered in masterclass

1. Definition of acting.
2. Thinking tends to lead to conclusions; emotion tends to lead to action.

3. Theatrical reality is compressed in time and space. Regular reality is what you see at the supermarket and mall. Theatrical reality is all about storytelling.
4. Audiences empathize only with emotion, not with thinking.
5. Empathy (feeling into) is different from Sympathy (feeling for).
A requirement of empathy is distance. You cannot empathize with yourself. A video game player cannot empathize with her own avatar to the degree that she can control its behavior.
6. Important theatrical formula: A character should play an action in pursuit of a provable objective while overcoming an obstacle.
7. A scene is a negotiation.
8. Character Analysis/Create a template.
9. Active listening (we take turns telling stories to each other).
10. Aesthetic differences between video games and feature films.
11. The Adrenaline Moment.
12. The Actor as Shaman (discussion).
13. The willing suspension of disbelief.
14. Expression of Emotion in the Human Face - basics.
15. Performance Capture - challenges for directors and performers.
16. Every character has a "power center". Anxiety is high in the body, above the shoulders. Confidence manifests itself in centered-ness, a feeling of being anchored.
17. Status Transactions: Most human interactions are negotiable.
Eye contact, for example, is negotiable - as is your personal space. The waiter in a restaurant is not supposed to physically touch you. The kind of bowing-from-the waist you see servants and slaves do is a status transaction that says, in effect, "I will not compete with you".
18. Blinking. We only need three blinks per minute to care for our eyeballs. All the other blinks are calibrated to our thought process.
19. Comedy vs. Drama

ONE-DAY OR TWO-DAY?

The Masterclass was originally designed for the working animation studio. I am mindful that management must pull artists away from their workstations in order for them to spend the day with me, and this class therefore offers a lot of "meat" in a compressed time. The one-day format is usually sufficient. Organizations that opt for the two-day on-site format are usually looking for something "extra", or are interested in having the second day address specific internal, job-related performance-animation issues.

Terms

ON-SITE (One Day)

EUR 3,750 per day + travel, accommodations, meals (see below)

10am - 5pm, with appropriate lunch and bathroom breaks

ZOOM Session

EUR 2,250 per 3-hour session x 2 sessions = EUR 4,500

Instead of a one-day, all-day format, Zoom training is broken into 2x 3-hour sessions, on consecutive days.

ZOOM Mini session

EUR 2,250 per 3-hour session

This is an abbreviated masterclass - Zoom only.

Travel - Accommodation - Meals

I live in Lisbon, Portugal. If flying is required for an on-site Masterclass, I travel Economy Plus or better. I must have firm reservations plus a guaranteed, assigned seat. Especially after COVID, airline service is generally awful. Therefore, I charge EUR 100/day so I can eat in airports. If overall travel-time (flights + time waiting for connections) is longer than 8-hours, I travel Business Class. That way, I can rest with some comfort while in the air.

Once I arrive on your end, please arrange for me to be picked up and delivered to the hotel. The hotel should be at least 3-star, unless we are talking about China, in which case it must be 5-star (western style bathroom). Breakfast must be included. I hope to enjoy lunches and evening meals with you and perhaps some of your artists. If that is not in your plans, then I charge EUR 100 per diem so I can have dinner at the hotel or at local restaurants.

**NO VIDEOTAPING OR RECORDING OF THIS MASTERCLASS IS PERMITTED,
EVEN IF INTENDED FOR FUTURE PRIVATE USE OF THE HOST ORGANIZATION.
ALL ATTENDEES SHOULD BE ADVISED NOT TO RECORD THE CLASS ON THEIR MOBILE PHONES.**

Ed Hooks Bio

I am the author of the book *Acting for Animators*, which is currently available in a revised 4th edition published by Routledge (Taylor & Francis). I am generally recognized as the fellow that first created acting training especially for animators instead of stage or movie actors. That happened when I worked with the animators at PDI/DreamWorks in Palo Alto, California. They were making the movie *Antz*, starring Woody Allen, and that was where I first began experimenting with techniques for teaching classical acting theory along to the animation artists.

Prior to beginning work with animators, I was a professional actor and acting teacher for almost 30 years, working primarily in New York and Los Angeles. As an actor, I worked on TV shows good and awful, generally in supporting, guest-star or co-star roles. I also appeared in nearly 100+ TV commercials. And, of course, I was originally trained for stage and have acted on stage quite a lot over the years. Still do, when I get the opportunity, plus I direct the occasional stage play. My wife, Cally, and I recently celebrated our 40th anniversary, and we live in Lisbon, Portugal where we very much enjoy the European vibe.

The Ed Hooks' Acting for Animators Masterclass has been presented for the following organizations (partial list):

- PDI/DreamWorks (Palo Alto, California)
- SIGGRAPH (twice)
- Game Developers Convention (twice)
- Playgrounds (Eindhoven, The Netherlands)
- Ohio State University
- Framestore (London, England)
- CD Projekt Red Studio (Warsaw)
- Rooster Teeth Studio (Austin, Texas)
- Animation Workshop (Viborg, Denmark)
- Ballyfermot College (Dublin, Ireland)
- Oriental DreamWorks (Shanghai, China)
- Communication University of China (Beijing)
- Jilin Animation University (Nanyang, China)
- DeTao Masters Academy (Beijing and Shanghai)
- DQ School of Visual Arts (India)
- Technicolor (India)
- Walt Disney Animation (LA, Orlando, Florida, Sydney Australia)
- Rainmaker Studios (Vancouver, Canada)
- Sheridan Institute (Toronto, Canada)
- Makuta VFX (Hyderabad, India)
- Animex International Festival of Animation and Games (UK, multiple years)
- BFX Festival (Bournemouth University, England)
- Game Developers Conference (San Francisco - multiple years)
- Ruta (Medellin, Colombia)
- MONSTRA (Lisbon, Portugal)
- FMX Festival (Stuttgart, Germany, multiple years, serving on Program Board)
- Animation Institute at Filmakademie Baden-Wurtemberg (Ludwigsburg, Germany, multiple years)
- Catholic University (Oporto, Portugal)
- Game Connection (Paris, France)
- Centre National D'Animation Et De Design (Montreal, Canada)
- Ubisoft (Montreal and Shanghai)
- University West (Trolhatten, Sweden)
- Dawson College (Montreal)
- Valve Software (Seattle)
- Griffith Film School, Queensland College of Art, Griffith University (Brisbane, Aus)
- Cadritech Computacao (Sao Paulo, Brazil)
- CGCG (Taipei, Taiwan)
- Vancouver Film School (Vancouver)
- Asia Media Makers (Singapore)
- Nanyang Polytech (Singapore)
- Nanyang Technological University (Singapore)
- Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design (Vancouver)
- Warner Bros Games (Los Angeles and Montreal)
- Full Sail (Winter Park, Florida)
- Ohio State University
- Ringling School of Animation (Florida)
- Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles)
- Victorian College of the Arts (Melbourne, Australia)
- Animal Logic (Sydney, Australia)
- BioWare (Edmonton, Canada)
- Electronic Arts (US, Stockholm, Shanghai)
- Jilin Game and Animation Conference (Changchun, China)
- Epic Games (Cary, North Carolina)
- Microsoft Games (Seattle)
- Scanline Productions (Munich, Germany)
- Sony Games (San Diego, Santa Monica, California)
- Sony ImageWorks (Vancouver and Culver City, CA)