

Top Hollywood Acting Coach comes to Riyadh

In the first event of its kind ever to take place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the dramatic art of acting was brought direct from Los Angeles, California, to Riyadh courtesy of top Hollywood acting and vocal coach Tom Todoroff.

Spread over a weekend in June, the event, staged at Salwa Garden Village took the form of an intensive three day training workshop called "Act Now". The workshop was open to both expatriates and Saudis alike, and the lure of the stage and the chance to "Act Now" with a renowned Hollywood acting coach proved to be popular with both.

Although aimed at aspiring actors, it was evident that the skills of communication taught at the workshop are just as important in the corporate world and Tom has since been hired by SAGIA to train their top flight, globetrotting executives.

Most were there to work on their self-presentation or were interested in pursuing a future acting career in film, stage or television. Others, amateur actors not unknown to those of you familiar with the Riyadh theatre scene, were there to hone their skill and craft and learn from one of Hollywood's finest. Some, maybe unsure of what they would find at the workshop, were there just to observe or perhaps just there to support husbands, wives or children, or so they thought, with many of these persuaded to take to the boards by Tom over the course of the three days. Persuaded not only by Tom but by the energy and excitement of the group, and the growing belief over the three days that as Tom puts it "your life is your own, it's your adventure, don't miss it"

Tom's advice for those who wish to pursue an acting career is "your most direct route to being a working actor is to study and train with those who have manifested professional work themselves" and for those attending the workshop this is certainly true of Todoroff who has an impressive and extensive resume of his own. Born and raised in New York, he graduated from the distinguished Juilliard School of Performing Arts, where he trained under Alan Schneider and later with Edith Skinner, Cicely Berry, Michael Shurtleff and Stella Adler.

He has acted in over fifty classical and contemporary roles in film, television and theatre worldwide. Working with many renowned actors and Hollywood greats such as; Peter O'Toole, Harrison Ford, Kevin Costner, Christina Ricci, Tommy Lee Jones and many others. Todoroff is also a director of note and has directed and produced a number of award-winning productions including "Working Shakespeare" – a broadcast series featuring Jeremy Irons, Emily Watson, Lindsay Duncan, Toby Stephens and other members of the Royal



Shakespeare Company alongside Hollywood actors Helen Hunt, Blythe Danner, Claire Danes and Samuel L. Jackson. He has also executively produced a number of Telefilms for CBS and co-written the Emmy bestselling Mini-series, "A Woman Named Jackie" and the Mini-series, "North and South" Part III.

Though a man of many talents and interests, luckily for us as his pupils Todoroff's true vocation and passion is undoubtedly as a teacher. His passion for teaching is obvious to all who meet Tom and it is no surprise that he has been coaching and directing actors and would-be actors in Hollywood, New York and around the world for the last 26 years, with his pupils including the likes of Liam Neeson, Jaqueline Bisset, Bob Hoskins, Rene Russo, Robert Wagner and Lukas Haas, among many others.

According to Neeson, "Tom's care, sensitivity and insight are second to none." Cicely Berry, Head of Voice and Speech at The Royal Shakespeare Company says of him, "Tom works at both a technical and an artistic level. He has that rare gift of giving the actor a belief in themselves so that they can explore the depth and motive of character, while at the same time giving them the means to convey this through language and voice. He is quite an exceptional teacher."

Apart from his original Acting Studios in New York and LA, Tom also runs regular workshops in Montreal, Vancouver, Toronto, London and more recently Dubai. An impressive list which from now on Tom assures us now includes Riyadh, for as it seems not only does Riyadh love Tom but Tom now loves Riyadh.

So what is it that brings a man like this to Riyadh? "I love traveling to new places and meeting new people. That is a real challenge to me." says Todoroff. But in his own words what really turns him on is helping people to realize their own potential and begin to change, or as Tom says "its amazing how much people can develop over the course of three days, so when they go for that next audition, or job interview

by
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