

# 'Method Acting is not about losing yourself in a character'

**Q** Says David Lee Strasberg, son of the legendary Lee Strasberg who is discovered Method Acting

**ANANYA GHOSH**

ananya.ghosh@mid-day.com

**&**  
**A**

ACE Productions has roped in The Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute, New York to conduct two two-week-long certificate course in Method Acting in the city starting May 23. And David Lee Strasberg, the CEO and creative director of the institute, will be in town to conduct the courses.

Lee Strasberg, the founder of the institute, developed and propagated method acting in America that eventually came to be known as The Lee Strasberg Method®. The Method and his list of students included the likes of Paul Newman, Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, Dustin Hoffman, Sidney Poitier and Jack Nicholson, among others. Today his son David has taken over the reins of the family-run institute. Excerpts from an interview with the scion:

**Q. For beginners, what is Method Acting?**

**A.** Method Acting is about bringing 'You' to a character. Your true behaviour, under imaginary circumstances, is the starting point. It is not about losing yourself in a character. You can't share what you don't have, so don't lose yourself anywhere. Bring yourself to the character. Bring your human heart, your soul, and your body to the character. Share that 'You' with the character, and with the audience.

**Q. How has Method Acting evolved?**

**A.** Method Acting becomes more and more important as the industry develops. As shooting becomes faster and editing more powerful, the actor is required to be inspired and creative in circumstances that are even more demanding than ever. This requires craft. The technique to commit,

focus and generate magnetism is essential, and it needs to happen fast. And that's what The Method is all about.

**Q. The Lee Strasberg Method is inspired by the training method developed by Russian director Konstantin Stanislavsky, called The System. How different are the two?**

**A.** Stanislavsky raised the key questions that every actor struggles with. My father went on to answer those questions. He added structure and sequence to a training process that can otherwise be confusing and overwhelming. However, the two methods are not different. Our work is the most accomplished articulation of what Stanislavsky searched for.

**Q. How does a course in Method Acting help an actor?**

**A.** If you want to call yourself just an actor, you can do whatever you like and pretend to act. But if you want to be great at it, you must train. A course in Method Acting can put your feet on the path towards great acting. You can choose whether to walk on it or not, but you can get a glimpse of the possibilities.

**Q. How have you contemporised the courses offered at Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute?**

**A.** Human beings have not changed very much since the last several hundred years. We learn, we love, we fight in much the same ways as our ancestors. Method Acting deals with human beings, not their computerised accessories. Classes utilise new technologies like green screens, actor websites, social media, and digital cameras, but the underlying premise of the training has not changed.



David Lee Strasberg will be teaching The Method to aspiring actors of the city

**Q. How relevant is Method Acting today when world cinema has moved more towards realism?**

**A.** Truth always resonates like a bell. Realism is one context for truth, but so is dance, or animated film. Can you bring truth to that style? If yes, then you are doing great. If not, then start training.

**Q. Tell us about some of your favourite Method Acting performances in recent years.**

**A.** All great acting is Method Acting. The Method was simply an approach designed to reach the state of 'Great Acting'. According to me the best acting in the world is currently happening on television. Watch Claire Danes on Homeland - she does the most unselfconscious work I have ever seen. Bryan Cranston in Breaking Bad is just as brilliant. And of course, Meryl

Streep in August Osage County was superb. Julianne Moore in Still Alice also mesmerised me.

**Q. Today, acting schools are mushrooming in every nook and corner. What is your take on the quality of training?**

**A.** The dream to be an actor is as strong today as ever. But one should think twice before entrusting someone to nurture that dream. Find the best guide you can, but at the same time, be aware of the fact that it is all about your own potential. A teacher can only show you the way, but you have to walk the walk.

People willing to enroll for the courses can register on [www.bookmyshow.com](http://www.bookmyshow.com). However, only those selected on the basis of their audition tapes will get the opportunity to train under David Lee Strasberg

## PUTTING METHOD TO MADNESS

### Marlon Brando



The Godfather and poster boy of Method Acting, Brando, who has the rare distinction of getting eight Oscar nominations between 1950 and 1990, was one of the first actors who advocated the Method and

mastered it by stripping away the grandiose theatricality in favor of a deeper psychological approach. For his role of a paraplegic veteran in The Men, he spent an entire month confined to a bed at the Birmingham Army Hospital in Van Nuys, California. Apart from his ability to channel his inner torment into spectacular onscreen performances, he was famous for his eccentricities on set that included rehearsing and reshooting scenes endlessly.

### Daniel Day-Lewis



Boxer, to contracting pneumonia by refusing modern medicine on the sets of Gangs of New York, to getting himself wheelchair-bound to play Christy Brown in My Left Foot, to spending nights locked in solitary confinement in an abandoned prison for In the Name of the Father, and more recently, demanding that everyone on the set of Lincoln address him as 'Mr President', the actor who has already won three Oscars in the Best Actor category has done it all.

### Heath Ledger



Talk about taking it to the extremes. Ledger's turn as The Joker in Christopher Nolan's The Dark Knight was scary, jarring, yet brilliant. However, a few months after the shoot was over, the actor died from a drug overdose.

And it was his total immersion into the dark world of the Joker that was blamed for this tragic turn of events. According to a source while the filming Heath had refused to talk to anyone out of character. The actor had also locked himself in an apartment for a month before the shooting started, slept an average of two hours a night, and even created a diary filled with images of clippings from Batman comics, pictures from Stanley Kubrick's A Clockwork Orange, etc.