

IMMERSION CLASSES IN THE CITY OF HUDSON DRAW STUDENTS WORLD-WIDE *by Jacqueline LaChance*

A THEATER LABORATORY

The most recent class at the Michael Chekhov School of Acting front row from left: Hadar Be'Hochma (from Israel), Thais Loureiro (from Brazil), Ted Pugh, Fern Sloan, Nancy Graham, Sergio Horteaga. Back row from left: Aoibheann Murphy (from Ireland), Kathryn Doshi (from India), Ty Hungerford (from Australia), Holly Chetcuti (from Australia), Salome Krell. Missing from photo: Ragnar Freidank, co-founder of the school and student Kate Udall.

MICHAEL CHEKHOV
SCHOOL OF ACTING

Students from Around the Globe

MichaelChekhovSchool.org



Twice a year, students come from around the world to participate in intensive immersion classes at the Michael Chekhov School of Acting at 360 Warren St. here. For the past three years, actors Fern Sloan and Ted Pugh, along with their colleague Ragnar Freidank, have been bringing students to Hudson for several weeks at a time, sharing their extensive knowledge of the Michael Chekhov Acting technique. Michael Chekhov (1891-1955) was the nephew of playwright Anton Chekhov. He worked with Constantin Stanislavsky who referred to him as his “most brilliant student.” The Chekhov technique proposes that the character has an independent life from the actor. “You still use yourself, but go through the psycho-physical approach where physical movement and the imagination call up the feeling life,” explained Sloan.

The students who attend each session at the Michael Chekhov School come from around the globe. The several-weeklong acting sessions take place in a shared space at Solaris, Camphill Hudson’s Center for the Social Arts. “We wanted to be in Hudson,” Pugh said about the decision to locate the school in the county seat. The high number of artists in the city and the proximity to New York by car or by train were leading reasons to establish the school in Hudson.

“A Practical Immersion in the Michael Chekhov Technique,” a five-week course recently wrapped up in Hudson led by Pugh, Sloan, Freidank and Joanna Merlin. Eleven actors ranging in age from their 20s to their 50s from six different countries spent this time living and working in Columbia County, getting to know the area in their spare time. “Hudson is so full of surprises,” said Pugh. “There’s always something going on.” Sloan added the caliber of the people that attend the acting school is high. “These are actors who are serious about the craft.” The most recent session saw students in class five days a week from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. “It’s really intense,” said Sloan of the program’s regimen. “We want the community to know we are here, what we are doing with the school,” said Pugh.

Founders of the Michael Chekhov School of Acting at 360 Warren St. in Hudson from left: Ragnar Freidank, Fern Sloan and Ted Pugh.

“It’s a rare opportunity to work in a small group with dedicated teachers in an atmosphere of openness and creativity,” said Merlin, faculty member and the last living direct student of Chekhov. All of the school’s faculty are seasoned actors and teachers for the Michael Chekhov Association (MICHA). “Michael Chekhov speaks to the spirit of things,” said Kathryn Doshi of India, a student in the most recent immersion course. “Rather than going on stage to receive the audience’s approval, I am going on stage to give a piece of myself as a gift for them. It requires the belief that you have something worth giving,” said Doshi. “Chekhov honors the intuition and the spirit of the artist and he empowers you. He’s the first teacher I’ve found who lays a path.”

michaelchekhovschool
Michael Chekhov School of Acting
A Theater Laboratory



Students work on an exercise in class space the school uses at Solaris, Camphill Hudson's Center for the Social Arts.

THE ACTORS' ENSEMBLE

In 1985, Sloan and Pugh and two colleagues founded The Actors' Ensemble in New York City inspired by Chekhov, working together to develop the art of the actor and to create theater ensemble. Since its founding, the Ensemble has created and performed theater productions across the United States, Europe and Russia and developed a two-year college level acting program through Sunbridge College.

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— MERLIN,
FACULTY MEMBER

way. She has taught the Chekhov technique in the United States, Europe and Canada. After training at the Michael Chekhov Studio in New York City, Pugh was on the faculty at the Studio for the last seven years of its existence. Sloan

In 1993, Pugh and Sloan relocated to Columbia County and in the spring of 2015 The Actors' Ensemble founded the Michael Chekhov School in Hudson. Currently, Sloan and Pugh are working with Australian actress Danielle Carter on writing a book about their work with the Chekhov technique.

Pugh has appeared on Broadway, Off-Broadway and in regional theaters around the country. He has also taught workshops throughout the U.S., Europe and Russia. He was a founding member of the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut and began his career at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. in 1962.

Prior to founding The Actors' Ensemble, Sloan played leading roles in numerous regional theaters in the U.S. and Off-Broad-

and Pugh were certified to teach the technique from Beatrice Straight, winner of the Academy Award for "Network," founder of the Michael Chekhov Studio in New York City and the one responsible for bringing Chekhov to America.

Friedank is originally from Germany and now lives in Columbia County. He studied the Chekhov technique in New York City with Pugh and Sloan and has been collaborating with The Actors' Ensemble for more than 20 years. He has been on the faculty of the acting programs of The New School for Drama, Columbia University, Sarah Lawrence College, Brooklyn College, Marymount Manhattan and the Michael Howard Studios in New York City.

All three are featured master teachers in the acclaimed DVD series, "Master Classes in the Michael Chekhov Technique," produced by the Michael Chekhov Association (MICHA) and published by Routledge (UK).



***The next session begins in July.
For more information, contact
Fern Sloan at (518) 392-5497
or go to www.michaelchekhovschool.org.***