

Introduction to Rasaboxes Workshop/Lecture Demonstration

Participants will be led through an experiential introduction to the theory and practice of rasaboxes, one of several sets of exercises invented by Richard Schechner over the course of his career as experimental theatre director and deviser of performer training techniques.

Rasaboxes is a physical practice that integrates the ancient theory of *rasa*, (first identified in the *Natyasastra*) with contemporary emotion research and performance theory.

The Sanskrit word “*rasa*” can be translated as “juice, taste or essence.” Rasas are also distinct flavors of energy and emotion, such as *sringara* (erotic love) or *karuna* (compassion/sorrow), that the performer can *taste* and embody, express and *share* with other players and the audience.

Practiced within a nine-box grid labeled with the names of each *rasa*, the exercises range from simple and personal explorations of each *rasa* - by means of drawing, breathing, gesturing, acting and vocalizing - to complex combinations of rasas performed by several people simultaneously. From composing the body and guiding the breath, the work leads step-by-step through sound and movement exercises to the use of objects, texts, music, masks, songs and more.

Using rasaboxes in its advanced forms, artists can explore plays, compose scenes, create choreographies or music, and invent entire performances.

The original exercises have been taught and developed into a training process and a rehearsal and performance methodology by members of East Coast Artists Michele Minnick, Paula Murray Cole, Rachel Bowditch and others, since the late 1990’s.

About the Authors

Michele Minnick is an actor, director, teacher and developer of performer training techniques, a researcher-writer, and an occasional translator. As a master teacher of the rasaboxes approach, she has been developing this pedagogy primarily in the US and Brazil since 1998, and is now also training teachers of the work in both countries. A longtime member of Richard Schechner’s company, East Coast Artists, she has performed, directed and served as co-director of education for the company, also co-conducting the “Performance Workshop with East Coast Artists” at NYU since 1999. Since the fall of 2008 Michele has been teaching a variety of practical and theoretical courses for MFA and BA students at Towson University in Maryland. Most recently, she has begun developing a semester-long course for acting majors based in the rasaboxes approach. This year she has

also been performing in Baltimore and D.C. with Naoko Maeshiba/Kibism, whose work is based in Min Tanaka's approach to training and performance, and with Iron Crow Theatre Company, of which she is an associate member. Michele is a Certified Movement Analyst, a practitioner of the Laban and Bartenieff work, holds an MA in Performance Studies and is currently completing her dissertation on the performance and healing practices developed by Leeny Sack, Lygia Clark and Anna and Daria Halprin. She is an associate member of the International Society for Research on Emotion.

Paula Murray Cole (MFA, LMT), is an assistant professor of acting at Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY. She has taught rasaboxes workshops at New York University, Ithaca College, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, Central Washington University, and The Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre and the Hangar Theatre. As co-director of education for East Coast Artists (ECA), she developed rasaboxes training methodologies and programs with colleague Michele Minnick based on the work of Richard Schechner. She has presented rasaboxes for Indo-American Arts Council's *Erasing Borders* Dance Festival at Asia Society (2010), ATHE (2009), the International Society for Researchers on Emotion Conference (2004), the Association for Theatre Movement Educators Colloquium (2005), and at conferences in Montreal, Turkey and Singapore, among others. She has taught acting and/or directed productions at Hofstra, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Interlochen National Arts Camp, and the Governor's Magnet School for the Arts of Norfolk, Virginia. She co-authored "The Actor As Athlete of the Emotions: The RasaBoxes Exercise" with Michele Minnick for the book *Movement For Actors*, and contributed a sidebar article to "Rasaesthetics", by Richard Schechner. She is a producer for the documentary video *Crossing the Line: Inside Schechner's Performance Workshop*. Her research interests include assessing the benefits of bodywork in facilitating the progress of performers-intraining; comparative studies in emotional and psychophysical techniques in actor training practices; studies on emotion and the brain, body, and senses as they pertain to the practice of acting, actor training and theatre making. She is a member of Actors Equity Association, The International Society for Research on Emotion.