



AATE + Westtown School

Theater Anywhere: A Cookbook of Activities

Alex Ates interviewing Dan Safer

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>> Alex Ates: Hi, everyone! My name is Alex Ates with the Westtown School, I'm joined by Dan Safer. Dan, it is so great to have you!

>> Dan Safer: It's so great to be here.

>> Alex: I'm curious what your recipe is.

>> Dan: Okay, so my recipe is for a—I could call it a dance or a scene—it's like a performance event that happens for a camera. And, I just have a list of things that have to be in there, and there's a few rules.

No one thing is a big scene unto itself, each thing is like a moment, and all strung together, they make a big scene. I think it should be less than three minutes long, but I also that you should always break every rule that anybody gives you, so maybe that's okay, maybe not. And then, what you make has to feature the following things in no particular order. Standing, sitting, a moment of contemplation, a moment of explosive anger, a statue of your routine these days, the same shape three different ways with your body, a disturbing death moment, walking on a grid, a statue of bravery, repetition, discord, one side fights with the other side, a moment of stillness, way too much action for a little bit too long, one side takes care of the other side, and an element of what you're wearing has to have changed by the end.

Once you've figured all that out, the most important part has to happen three times, maybe in three different ways, maybe in the same way—it's up you. The whole thing should have a clear beginning, a clear ending. And you should make some choices, like what you're wearing is a choice—it's not just whatever you had on and where you film it is a choice. Like, there's a difference between your bedroom and the football field, or the roof of your building, or the hallway. And how can you do it in that space? So, the difference between, like, me shaking my head like this and me shaking my head like this—on the couch. How can I actually use the environment that I'm in? And, it can be a single take or you can edit it—up to you—and it can be as simple or complex as you like. And, that's it! And, do all of them or do half of them and add some and see what—by doing it—what it tells you that it's about, as opposed to going in with an agenda. And that's the recipe!

>> Alex: Oh, that's superb. So, Dan, I'm wondering do you have a preference or any insight on whether this should be performed asynchronously or synchronously. And what have you found in your practice?

>> Dan: I have found that giving people an assignment and letting them go off and make it and coming back with something, to me, feels like they can focus and invest more. I find that I get fatigue with the synchronous work, although it is important to do, an overload of it, you just begin to check out. I'm very invested in what I'm doing and I will still send someone a text message or look at Facebook once in a while in a long meeting or a long class. So I try to keep it that—and also with the way we're working, someone might be in Japan, or in Hawaii, or in Australia, or in California—you don't always know, the time zones don't always line up, so, how can you give stuff that people can make in their own time, in their own way, and then come back and share it? Seems to be, to me, a really effective way of letting people, kind of, own what they're doing.

>> Alex: Dan, thank you so much for sharing that insight. And thank you for sharing your recipe. Your creativity and insight is just really—it's a big help. So, thank you.

>> Dan: You are welcome! I would love to see what anybody makes with this!

>> Alex: Oh, that's great! Well, thanks for your time, and, Dan, I wish you well in these really turbulent times we're in.

>> Dan: Thank you so much. Right back at you.