



ACTORS FROM THE LONDON STAGE

AFTLS IN THE CLASSROOM

During the teaching week, the actors bring their knowledge to a wide variety of classes, not only for courses on theatre and Shakespeare, but also anything from law to business to engineering. The suggestions listed below are intended to help you prepare for the class visits so you can get the most mileage out of the actors when they are in your classroom. These guidelines are particularly important if your class is not studying the play AFTLS is performing.

- The major requirement for a successful class is that the actor and the instructor be as flexible as possible. Problems arise when the instructor tries to shoehorn the actor into a tightly controlled schedule. E.g., an instructor once said an actor could come to his class only if he or she would teach *Troilus, 2.2*—the item in the lesson plan for that day. This kind of rigidity can be self-defeating.
- On academic matters, the instructor is the expert, the actor the amateur. Since the actors are not professors, the best results are achieved when they are allowed to play from their theatrical strengths and are not asked to pose as authorities on issues outside their realm.
- Although it may sound lovely in a British voice, bringing the actor into a class simply to read a scene or passage is generally not the best use of the class time. The actors excel at working with the students—getting them to read, act, and interpret a text.
- The actors are experts on play scripts—not all texts. They will be well prepared to develop classes out of their work with the play AFTLS is performing; they also have experience with other dramatic texts. The AFTLS office will provide you with the actors' CVs and stated teaching interests; please consult these when developing course plans.
- The actors' primary focus when working with Shakespeare and other dramatic literature is interpretation: interpretation of the text as performance and interpretation of the text as poetry. The actors get all members of a class involved in reading and thinking about the play. Sometimes the actor will talk the class through the lines in a variety of ways—by reading only the consonants, by reading only the vowels, or by stressing each word he or she wants to emphasize. This aids the students' understanding of character motivations and linguistic textures. The actor may ask a class to "act out" a particular scene from a play, or he or she may perform one scene in multiple ways to illustrate the effect of an actor's/director's interpretation on the performance.
- For classes where studying dramatic texts is not traditionally a focus (i.e., business, law, etc.), the actors are adept at illustrating how their unique skill set and approach to problem solving can be applied to the field. For example, in a law class, an actor once gave insight on how she prepares to speak before a crowd and how she makes the best use of her voice on stage. [This particular class session is included in the AFTLS informational video, which can be downloaded from the AFTLS Web site listed below.]
- If your class will be working from a text other than the play AFTLS is performing, please select and supply a 1 to 3 page scene/section with your Class Visit Request form.
- Please encourage the students in your class to attend one of the performances of the play. The students are generally very excited to see "their actor" perform.