



Illustration by Gaia Orion

Reiki and Theater

BY EILEEN DEY, M.A.

GROWING UP IN Northern New Jersey, I often went into New York City to see Broadway shows, and I was always envious of the dancers and actors. But my family's wishes were typical of many; they discouraged me from pursuing acting as a profession because it wasn't something you could make a living at. Instead, I went to college and then graduate school and became a professional career counselor.

I was soon disenchanted with traditional work settings and structure. As I completed my Reiki Master training I knew I wanted to create a career in the healing arts. After ten years running a Reiki training program and cultivating a successful healing practice I had achieved that goal. But all through that journey, the creative muse in me still begged for attention. I gave it space in a lot of forms, mainly in creating the healing practice, but occasionally through writing, drawing and painting.

Finally, three years ago, I took the leap and fulfilled that long time dream of entering acting school to pursue becoming an actor. I had reached a place in my life many others experience on the Reiki journey, unleashing yet another aspect of your full potential. Watching my first class at the Seattle Acting School, I noticed that the instructor sounded more like a spiritual teacher than an acting coach. He emphasized being in the moment and trusting the flow. He could sense when actors were holding back at expressing themselves.

That instructor turned out to be JD Coburn who had studied with the late Sanford Meisner, a pioneer in American acting tradition. Mr. Coburn was trained to teach acting in a similar way that we are trained to practice Reiki, by taking part in a disciplined approach to the craft that is handed down from Master teacher to Master teacher. Mr. Meisner passed on

his tradition of acting to Bob Carnegie, noted director, and Carnegie passed the tradition on to Mr. Coburn.

According to Wikipedia, "Sanford Meisner was an actor and the founder of an acting methodology that...assists the actor to develop an ability to improvise, to access an emotional life, and finally to bring the spontaneity of improvisation and the richness of personal response to text. The technique asserts that by emphasizing 'moment-to-moment' spon-



Eileen Dey

taneity through communion with other actors, behavior that is truthful under imaginary circumstances may be generated."

I found that as I embraced the techniques handed down by Meisner, I began to practice acting the way I had always practiced Reiki: being in the here and now, letting go of ego, responding to what was in front of me with an open heart and not being attached to the result of my efforts.

In the beginning my acting studies placed emphasis on listening, responding, and staying in the moment, all crucial skills for being able to express ourselves spontaneously on the stage. The basic idea is that you yourself are enough as an actor. Now be that. Or as my mentor, JD, would say, "Do that now."

This was the foundation for my first year of training. During that time I continued to teach Reiki at my school and several of the actors who were in my acting class expressed interest in healing arts and began to study with me also. It was an incredible experience, witnessing my artistic colleagues exploring their own spiritual truths. Not only did we have the language of the stage as common ground, but we also began to incorporate Universal Energy into that dialogue. Half the class eventually learned Reiki from me, and it wasn't uncommon to see some of the actors with their hands over their heart or solar plexus in preparation before going on stage.

One Reiki acting colleague, Richard Scott, put it this way about how he saw Reiki and acting:

Acting first and foremost involves working in an imaginary circumstance. For that it's completely different than any other work you can do, especially Reiki. And for that reason, acting does not apply to Reiki in any way that the average person thinks it might. In fact, I would say that trying to "act" in your Reiki sessions as a practitioner would be downright dangerous. Most people think acting is about putting on a show, and so it might be tempting to think an actor who does Reiki might walk into the room and "pretend" to feel what the patient is feeling or to just "look like you care." Nothing could be farther from the truth, however, about acting or Reiki. If you've got some crazy idea about acting you can downright hurt your fellow actors. The same is true with Reiki. If you've tried to get attunements off the Internet or have avoided learning under a good Reiki Master, you can mislead your clients.

In the second year of training, we were introduced to a technique that is called emotional preparation. It involves the actor imagining themselves in various emotionally charged situations (either very angry, depressed or happy) and living out the feelings truthfully as they begin the scene on stage. Emotional preparation was and is the most challenging technique to work with in my course of study. You deliberately bring on an intense emotional state which can leave your energy field feeling quite wired before and after.

Another one of my Reiki acting colleagues explained it this way:

the best work when done through the heart chakra. What an incredible complement to the acting problem. Not only was I able to relax better during my preparations, but also I was able to retain my focus for the duration of the scene which helped give clarity to the words I was reciting, getting a better connection with my working partner (fellow actor) and to the emotional depth that goes along with the words. I found that it made my work all the more truthful. In addition to utilizing Reiki before preparations, I found I would give myself Reiki after these particularly emotional scenes to smooth out my energy field and to get myself grounded again in this real-



Lisa Skvarla and Kevin Cook

When I started to (emotionally) prepare for such moments, I found I would get intense anxiety (albeit, somewhat helpful to the role, but it didn't help me to relax and get focused to do the work). The result was the anxiety made me incoherent and I, more often than not would lose focus in my objective in the scene. But, when it was suggested to me by my Reiki teacher to try using Reiki before my preparations, it worked great...

Tom Brophy, Reiki Master and actor, said:

Reiki and acting are a perfect combination. Both are done instinctually and provide

ity and to enable me to let go, more freely, any residual negative emotional angst.

Hana Porobic, a Level II student and fellow actor put it this way:

As a Reiki student, I learned (in Level II) the powerful way to shrink my dream/wish into the palm of my hand, and visualize this dream in my palm. I drew a parallel between emotional preparation and distant healing. I have used Reiki when I prepared in the beginning, it helped me in intensifying my emotional preparation. It stretched my imagination that much more because the imaginative process of both can be a synergy.

Both Tom and Hana have used the distant healing technique to send to auditions to make for a more calm and relaxed audition and in many cases, by having the healing intention for the highest possible outcome they have manifested various roles.

I had a similar experience. As I eventually attended auditions, and after years of being the “good witch” as a Reiki Master, I was not surprisingly cast as that in a local production of the *Wizard of Oz*. But I also wanted to explore the opposite polarity, so I put it to the Universe. A few days later, there was a cancellation in the cast and they also asked me to be the “bad witch,” and I could feel the joy that comes from freedom of expression! Eventually I was cast as an ensemble performer in *Tony and Tina's Wedding*, an off-Broadway production that comes to town each year. In this production, I play another polarity figure from my Reiki Master self. I am the floozy dancer girlfriend to the groom's father. Think of the girls at Tony Soprano's nightclub. Not at all Reiki realm! I find using Reiki as a self-treatment helps me to go in and out of character, especially when the characters are often so foreign to my day-to-day existence.

Scott also had this to say:

Solving the acting problem provides a person with empathy skills that can also translate to Reiki. When practicing Reiki, you are allowing a person's innermost feelings to tell the truth about what they're feeling or experiencing. So, you have to be able to look at a person, try to understand what's going on under the surface, and be able to empathize without judgment. It's a skill that many suppress in their lives, and one that acting forces you to master. That's good for any Reiki practitioner.

After almost two years of training, I kept getting the impression that I wanted to merge the two disciplines of Reiki and acting together, not just in using the healing technique to reduce stress or align in manifesting roles. I wasn't sure what it would look like, but I “held space.” My first effort toward that goal was gaining the confidence to do my own recording of meditation CDs for my students.



Kevin Deaton and Jessica Langley (Monica Zipp).

Then, in my third year of pursuing acting, an opportunity came that began to fulfill that greater vision. I became the artistic director of the Seattle Cold Readers, a show that had been started by two writers in the previous year. Local play and screenwriters could submit their

scripts and actors would read them in front of a live audience. This format gave unknown writers a chance to be heard and an opportunity to see their own work read live. With all the connections I had made in acting school, especially of those actors who had

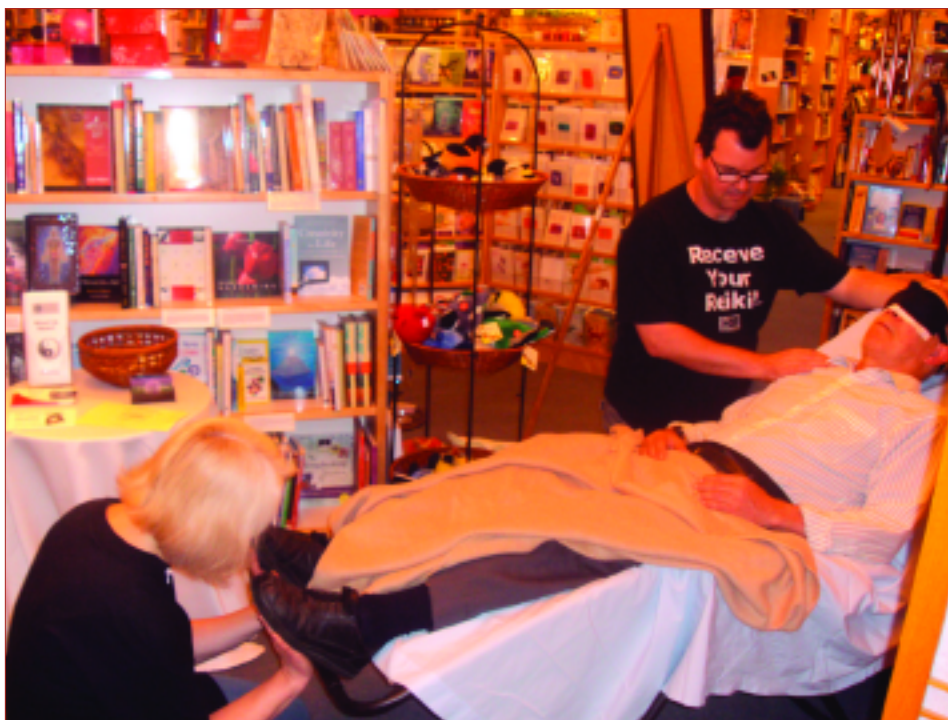
trained in Reiki, I knew we could take this show to the next level.

Fast forward to now. The Seattle Cold Readers has become a one-of-a-kind show still incorporating the scripts and actors, but adding variety talent such as dancers and singers into the mix. Scripts are chosen for both originality and unique content. Some explore spiritual themes such as cults or magic. Others are more traditional dramas; some are outright hilarious comedies. As my script supervisor and I are both Reiki Masters, we are quite sensitive to the energies that come through the various scripts we select for each show.

Sometimes writers are very attached to their stories, and have a difficult time editing material to fit our show. We'll often send Reiki to help facilitate the process, as always, for the highest good. Other times, the synergy isn't there, and similar to what happens in working with energy, that which does not serve, falls away, and the writers take their scripts elsewhere.

The basics of our training, "working off the other actor," "reacting to what is in front of you" and what I would call "Reiki Theater"—trusting the flow of a scene—are all put forth in an enjoyable and unforgettable production. Since several of the actors selected for each show are also Reiki practitioners, the healing energy is transmitted through their lines and interactions with each other. Not only are audience members captivated by quality acting and engaging dialogue, but they are also receiving the flow of Reiki as it transmits from each actor and the Cold Readers Team who support and hold space for the show.

Before each show, all the members of the Seattle Cold Readers team, who are all advanced Reiki practitioners, send positive light to the space in which we perform and to the cast, crew and talent. Scott sends light to future performances as well as to current performances. And to the simple things too, like finding a free parking space in downtown Seattle, which can be challenging. Sometimes, a person might be



Monica Zipp (Jessica Langley) and Tom Brophy.

having a schedule conflict that can affect whether or not they can do the show in the first place. Reiki can help in all these ways.

As Tom Brophy put it:

Lately, I have begun doing stage work in a show called Seattle Cold Readers. The show emulates for the actor a similar circumstance as the actor would find when they go on an audition, except this is a show, and you are performing the audition before a live audience. Reiki helps with performing these shows in the same way it does with any other acting work mentioned above. When I give myself Reiki before the show, it helps to calm (not completely but more than 90%) the butterflies I usually get before a performance. I simply tap into the Reiki flow and it provides the right amount of clarity and focus to say my lines, while permitting me to keep the connection with my (fellow actor) working partner.

There is nothing like live theater for energizing the soul. Our shows have been attracting groups of fifty people or more, charging the audience in a very dramatic and uplifting manner. Seattle Cold Readers has been featured on public access TV, and we have had our story printed in our city's arts magazine. My vision is to see the Cold Readers gain national exposure and to be duplicated in major cities with other Reiki actors.

Since I wear the hat of Artistic Director, most patrons are surprised to learn



Kevin Cook, Richard Scott and Eileen Dey.

that my “day job” is being a Reiki Master. Which is kind of fun, because both pursuits, Reiki and acting, are perceived as “dream jobs” by many patrons. I have always believed in the adage that if you can dream it, you can manifest it.

Combining these two disciplines into the Cold Readers show is like a living laboratory each time we perform. How can we adjust the sound, the lighting so the audience will be able to take in that much

more of what we present? What about creating Reiki stand-up comedy? Or a short play on Reiki? These are untapped resources, and I feel proud to be able to hold the space for this new art form's evolution—hopefully coming soon to a city near you!



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