

# The M.A.D. Series

Franco D'Alessandro presents his internationally acclaimed master classes in dramatic text analysis of American classics: **The Masters of American Drama Series**

Franco D'Alessandro is an award winning playwright and teacher. He is the author of the internationally acclaimed play "Roman Nights" (about Tennessee Williams and Anna Magnani) and such plays as "Waiting Station", "Love Gun", and "Mothers' Day" and "The Shattering". Mr. D'Alessandro, whose plays often chronicle the Irish and Italian experiences in America, speaks English and Italian and was first produced and published at 26. He holds a B.A degree in theater communications and M.A. degree in Teaching Literature and Drama. His book *Stranger Love: Five Short Plays* sold 2,000 copies world-wide and was short-listed for several awards; it is available at NYC's famed Drama Book Shop and online at Amazon.

## DRAMA TEXT ANALYSIS – THE KEY TO MEANINGFUL PERFORMANCE

### THE PHILOSOPHY

Before an actor or director can approach a dramatic theatrical work there needs to be a profound understanding of the writing as a piece of dramatic literature. It is crucial to approach a nuanced and complex understanding of play's setting, characters, plot and conflict, and eventually the themes addressed in the work, before one can move forward to begin to perform the piece as it was intended. One must understand the social, economic, and political environment of the play. Only then can one begin to understand symbolism and motif (verbal and physical) as well as colloquialism and regional or dialectical expressions. Context is everything; and D'Alessandro approaches his classes with an intensely passionate reverence for the context and subtext; his analytical approach to dramatic texts has both anthropological and archaeological aspects with the goal of fusing the intellectual with spiritual to create a complete understanding.

D'Alessandro, playwright and professor, allows students to gain essential insight and understanding of these classic American dramatic texts through independent research and reading as well as intensive in-class discussions and explorations. Informed by the great teacher Stella Adler, who also saw plays as both literature and performance, these courses are intense exploratory experiences that meticulously examine the historical, sociological, political, psychological and emotional aspects of the play. All of this comes together to give the student (actor, director or writer) a clearer understanding of the various characters' motivation, intent, and emotional/psychological "place" from which they are operating in order to empower the performance and truly honor the play.

D'Alessandro comes from a very unique perspective that is founded on a strong belief in the collaborative effort that creates a profound and moving theatrical experience. D'Alessandro works in an exploratory fashion which has its roots in the Socratic method of each question leading to another question, with the ultimate goal being not one single answer but the cumulative knowledge gained from asking many questions. Over the past few years Mr. D'Alessandro has been quite outspoken in his belief that increasingly actors and playwrights are being phased out of the essential "process" which is required of both a moving performance and a meaningful production. Furthermore, this course operates from the belief that today's theater has become too much of an 'auteur' brand of theater in the tradition of today's filmmakers, who have total control over a production and view the writer and actor less than essential and not an integral part of the theatrical trinity.

What we will explore in these classes:

- Context: social; historical, political, ethnic, familial etc.
- Constructing the "first moment"
- Working from what you "know"
- Where are you, who are you, when are you living?
- The WHY is everything: Motives and Objectives
- The importance of beat changes
- Relationships to people, places, things and events
- Urgency –blood and heart on the stage
- Working from impulse/instinct
- The magic "as if" (finding the soul behind the words)
- Emotional preparation: backstory
- Balancing the literal versus the figurative: Parallels / Symbolism / Significance
- Accents, dialects, colloquialism, and speech patterns
- And all other elements concerned with "living in the moment"

Playwright and Drama Teacher **Franco D'Alessandro** will be available in Europe for up to three weeks of Master Classes in Dramatic Text Analysis.

## **The Masters of American Drama Series**

**EUGENE O'NEILL**  
**TENNESSEE WILLIAMS**  
**ARTHUR MILLER**  
**EDWARD ALBEE**  
**AUGUST WILSON**

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An Example of Specific Course Offerings:

### **Two Great American Plays: “A Streetcar Named Desire” and “Death of a Salesman”**

Considered the two greatest plays of the last 100 years, this course offers an in-depth analysis of two of America's greatest dramatic works.

This intensive lecture course offers actors, writers, directors a detailed look at the characters, their motivations and actions as well as analysis of theme and greater human/social meaning. The course will offer Italians and non-Americans a particular insight into the American experience by detailed discussion of the economic, social and political landscape of America at the time of these plays. A close examination of the setting of the plays will allow students to truly understand the play as both a modern classic drama as well as a timeless moral piece of theatrical literature.

One 4 hour session or Two 2 hour session  
(ideal class sized: 15-30 students)

Standard Lecture Fee: \$500.00-1,000.00 (per day = 4-5 hours of teaching)

### **The Roman Spring of Tennessee Williams**

This course will focus on the two plays the great playwright wrote for his muse and friend Anna Magnani: “The Rose Tattoo” and “Orpheus Descending”.

- Ideal for Italian and Italo-American actors and other ethnic actors

An in-depth analysis of both plays from various perspectives: author's message, major themes and motifs, understanding the setting and plot, understanding the characters' motivations. Setting, which is to say the keen sense of time and place that is so very key to understanding Williams' works, will be examined in great detail: the social and economic factors of the time and place wherein the drama is set. This will be an eye opening course for all students but especially non-American students for it will allow them to understand the psychological landscape of the setting of the plays, and in particular what that meant for the Italian immigrant population in the 1940s and 1950s. There will also a brief background about the playwright Tennessee Williams and the time he spent in Rome.