

NATS/NOA Conference Review
by Sarah Oppenheim-Beggs

Nova Thomas's presentation was an energetic discussion about using Stanislavsky's systematic approach to developing the dramatic content in performance. She suggested having a specific order of working which could be broken into three parts; the preparation, the exploration and the performance. Her talk mostly concerned the first two aspects, leaving little time for discussion about performance; however she had some wonderful ideas for preparation and exploration.

In the preparation phase, which included the body and the voice and the academic, she discussed the necessity of starting from a neutral state in the body. A variety of processes were suggested, including relaxation, breathing visualizations and body scans. The vocal preparation included warm-ups that also extrapolated aspects of the vocal line from the score. The academic preparation included reading of the libretto, plays or literary discussions that pertained to the work.

In the exploration phase Thomas was adamant about allowing one self to be very open to discovery without rushing into making decisions about the character. She encouraged looking for the impulses and instincts about what is occurring at any given moment. She also encouraged focusing on the body when examining the text as well as investigating the score through dance and psychological gesture. Thomas suggested that at the points at which we breathe, new thoughts are forming which then becomes the line that we sing out upon, and she encouraged writing these ideas into the score at the breath marks.

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