



Faculty Spotlight: Natasha Mirny



NCDA is pleased to welcome Natasha Mirny as our newest faculty member. Natasha is an accomplished movement performer, deviser, and teaching artist. We asked her to tell us more about her methodology and theatre experience.

NCDA: Welcome again to NCDA! How has it been so far?

NM: I am really happy that I joined. Amazing faculty! Amazing students! And amazing atmosphere!

NCDA: We love having you! You are currently teaching Voice and Movement to second semester students. You have extensive experience in puppetry, pantomime, and movement-based theatre. When developing a show or a role, how do you incorporate motion into the story?

NM: I ask my body what it wants to do, and in most cases it has very interesting answers. It is just a matter of me listening to my body...and using a couple of techniques invented by great theater practitioners.

NCDA: On your website you discuss developing a character by "physicalizing lines of [a] script." Can you speak more about this method and how you've been applying it in class?

NM: I started developing this technique when I was teaching choreographers and actors in the Russian Theater Union Professional Development Program. It frees the body for creative movement by physicalizing sounds and words. I have used it to help actors find a character and its physical life on stage, to help actors work on their lines, to guide dancers in creating original pieces, and as a unique and effective approach to the Michael Chekhov technique.

NCDA: That sounds like a fantastic way to approach both existing scripts and to create new work. Indeed, your own company, Happy Theater, has produced many new shows since its inception. Most recently, you and fellow NCDA faculty member Tia Shearer toured *AntiCone* throughout D.C. as well as at the Philadelphia and New York City Fringe festivals. What is it like to create your own work and share it with others?

NM: For me theater is about love and happy endings, or at least searching for a happy end. So when I create and share it, it is also all about that process of finding love in myself, in people who are on stage with me, and in the audience. It is about being present, connected, and curious.

NCDA: Your work often focuses on an audience that those pursuing careers in theatre don't always think about: very young children. A play you recently wrote, *To the Clouds*, was nominated for Outstanding Production - TYA for a Helen Hayes Award. What draws you to children's theatre?

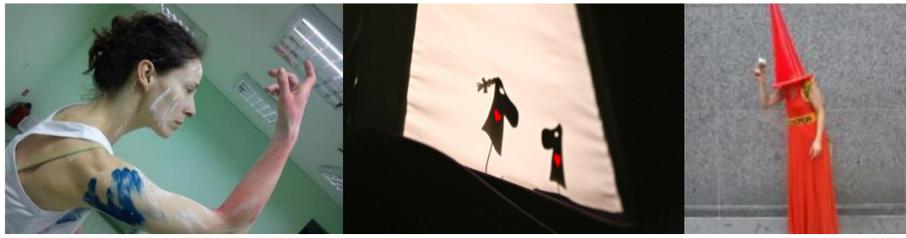
NM: I think that babies and toddlers are the best audience. They see you as you are, you can't trick them, you can't NOT be present when you are performing for them, and they also give you back so much. It is this amazing exchange of energy that draws me to TYA, as well as the challenge of making a show that is like a piece of music, a show that is an experience that keeps the babies' attention for a while (25-30 or maybe even 40 minutes). Sometimes I feel like if you master directing for young audiences, you can direct anything.

NCDA: If you were given just one minute to warm up before going on stage, how would you spend it?

NM: 30 seconds doing my quickest warm up ever (find me at NCDA and ask me about it) and then 30 more seconds hugging my fellow actors.

Be sure to stop by and say hello (and ask about that warm up)!

Keep an eye out for Natasha's latest projects on our [Facebook page](#). You can also learn more about her on [her website](#).



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