

**THE ACTOR AS SHAMAN:**

**THE SPIRIT IN ACTOR TRAINING**

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## Abstract

This work springs from a search for ways to bring the sacred hidden depths of the inner worlds back into our theatre; a search for ways to train actors back towards the sacred. Does the language used in traditional actor training techniques affect the way an actor approaches the stage as a sacred space? Does this affect the way the audience relates to what's on the stage? If an actor is encouraged to develop the inner realms/higher self/spirit, does that affect the audience's level of participation? Taking this further, could an actor trained with a more spiritual approach touch the audience today in a more potent way?

One of the central concerns in rediscovering the spiritual aspect of actor training is with the alienation of the feminine by phallogentric masculine language and images of the past, particularly where the concept and language of 'spirit' is concerned. Some re-languaging needs to occur. In terms of actor training, the language of feminist writers assists us into the imaginary zone of the actor. By re-languaging this inner space as the 'Receptive Other', the feminine that has been repressed in all of us is opened away from the masculine imagery of the past and into the female principles of the future.

The production of *Alabama Rain* by Heather McCutchen is the practical component of this doctorate. It was performed over two weeks at downstairs Belvoir Street Theatre in January 1999. The four week rehearsal process for this production involved the developing and testing of specific exercises aimed towards the development of the 'Receptive Other' in the actor.