

Acting Class for

↻ ↕ △ ↔ ▽ ◀ ⇨ △ ▽ P ornstars

By C L Byrd

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor JANET EHRLICH COLSON writes... Lexi and DJ are aspiring pornstars, but before they get more than their feet wet they have to concentrate on the craft of acting – or do they? This is porn, after all (even DJ points out, that it isn't "Fences" with Denzel). Gosh, I didn't know how much I'd love this play, but Acting Class for Pornstars has to be one of my faves. So what if nobody gives a sh-t about acting references except actors? I think everybody will be interested in the porn/intimacy aspect regardless. CL Byrd's wonderful script is reminiscent of Annie Baker (Circle Mirror Transformation), but the porn angle and the humor make it uniquely its own. The play is hysterical, but not slapstick. It's thoughtful, not cerebral. And it addresses issues of artistic expression and sexuality that are surprising not just for a short play, but for any play, really. No worries about keeping up with porno-acting class jargon; this is about as hard as it gets (pun intended):*

TEACHER.

We call this packing in acting terms. You have to do a lot of *packing*. You have to know everything about your characters so that they seem like real people to you. If he doesn't like butt stuff, that's fine, but why doesn't he like butt stuff?

This is a feel-good show, and I'm not talking about a money shot. Not exactly family fare, but I'm sure you got that from the title.

Five Stars

(Spacing and format are playwright's own.)

Acting Class for Pornstars

Cast of Characters

LEXI	<i>Younger female.</i>
DJ.	<i>Younger male.</i>
TEACHER.	<i>Older, any gender.</i>

Scene:

A studio.

Time:

Present.

*A (/) indicates where the next speech begins.

ACT I

Scene One

“Talking and Listening”

AT RISE: (LEXI and DJ are sitting, watching a television screen that can't be seen by the audience. Sounds of moaning. The TEACHER stops the video.)

TEACHER.

Thoughts?

LEXI.

I thought it was a really good scene.

DJ.

Same.

TEACHER.

Specifics people.

LEXI.

Specifics?

TEACHER.

It's not enough to say that something was good; you have to have reasons why you thought it was good.

LEXI.

Reasons? Like, you mean...

TEACHER.

Anything.

LEXI.

Um...

TEACHER.

Characterization. Use of subtext. Conflict. Did they make any specific choices? Did they commit to their characters? Does this make sense? Why was the scene good? What did they do as *actors* that made the scene work?

LEXI.

I felt like they were really connecting with each other.

DJ.

Same.

TEACHER.

Any other thoughts, DJ?

DJ.

Not really...

TEACHER.

There must be something...

DJ.

It was a good scene.

TEACHER.

But why was it a good scene?

DJ.

It was HOT.

LEXI.

They were talking and listening to each other. They were both really present in the room, if you know what I mean.

DJ.

Yeah, what she said.

TEACHER.

Okay, so they were both really present. What else?

LEXI.

There was a lot of give and take...

DJ.

Yeah...

TEACHER.

Is there any room for improvements?

LEXI.

I felt like she was pushing a bit...

DJ.

He was pushing too.

LEXI.

Yeah.

DJ.

It was HOT.

LEXI.

Like when she was screaming...

TEACHER.

Okay...

LEXI.

It didn't feel justified.

TEACHER.

What else?

LEXI.

Also, I will say that she committed at first, but towards the end, right when she took the load on her face, you could tell that she dropped out of character a bit. I think it was just because it landed in her eye...

DJ.

Yeah, that was one of my favorite parts.

TEACHER.

Anything else?

DJ.

Do we have to let them...you know...

TEACHER.

What?

DJ.

You know...

TEACHER.

What?

DJ.

Lick our buttoholes...

TEACHER.

I don't know, DJ. What would your character do?

DJ.

I don't know.

TEACHER.

Who's your character?

DJ.

The pizza guy...

TEACHER.

Right.

DJ.

So no?

TEACHER.

What's his backstory? Does he have some type of sexual repression that would prevent him from engaging in such an act?

DJ.

I think he just wants to fuck...

TEACHER.

See, this is where specifics will help you flesh out your characters.

DJ.

Should we be taking notes?

LEXI.

I have...

TEACHER.

We call this packing in acting terms. You have to do a lot of *packing*. You have to know everything about your characters so that they seem like real people to you. If he doesn't like butt stuff, that's fine, but why doesn't he like butt stuff?

DJ.

Well, uh, I guess...

TEACHER.

You have to know the answers to these questions, or it won't be clear to the audience.

DJ.

So I don't have to let her lick my butthole?

LEXI.

I don't know about that either.

TEACHER.

Don't worry about that stuff, guys.

DJ/LEXI.

Okay...

TEACHER.

These are professionals. They have spent years perfecting their craft.

DJ.

So no butt stuff?

TEACHER.

Not for today.

DJ/LEXI.

Good.

TEACHER.

Is there anything else before we move on?

DJ.

I have a side question...

TEACHER.

Yes?

DJ.

We don't have to do step-brother, step-sister stuff, do we?

TEACHER.

No, that's another course.

DJ/LEXI.
Good.

TEACHER.
Anything else?

DJ/LEXI.
No.

TEACHER.
Okay, so moving on. Now, Lexi brought up pushing, and as we learned yesterday, pushing is where we are showing the audience emotion.

LEXI.
Emotion...

DJ.
Pushing?

TEACHER.
We are broadcasting how we feel to the audience, and this comes across as forced. So the answer to this is the Stanislavski method, which says that “all characters must have something they are doing...an action, a motivation of some kind.”

DJ.
Like fucking?

TEACHER.
Yes, that is part of it, but it’s more than that.

LEXI.
So like when the girl was putting on lipgloss at the beginning?

TEACHER.
Exactly!

LEXI.
That was an action...

TEACHER.

Right! And what might be her motivation for doing that?

LEXI.

I don't know...

TEACHER.

There are no wrong answers.

LEXI.

She, um...

DJ.

She wanted to look pretty for the pizza guy.

LEXI.

Yeah, she wanted to look pretty.

TEACHER.

But what's the subtext?

LEXI.

Subtext?

DJ.

She wanted to have those dick sucking lips...

TEACHER.

DJ...

DJ.

What?

TEACHER.

Can you take this seriously please?

DJ.

But I thought...

TEACHER.

Is this a joke to you?

DJ.

No...

TEACHER.

Go ahead, Lexi.

LEXI.

You were saying something about subtext...

TEACHER.

Right.

LEXI.

We talked about that last class, so that's what's going on underneath the surface. I think that's what subtext is...

TEACHER.

Yes, you're absolutely right.

LEXI.

Maybe she's insecure?

TEACHER.

Go on.

LEXI.

And her parents never loved her...

TEACHER.

Keep going.

LEXI.

Her mother always told her she was ugly.

DJ.

Really?

LEXI.

Her older sister was prettier than her, so she developed an eating disorder in her teenage years. A vicious cycle of vomiting and self-harm destroyed her psyche. She was a broken vessel. So she turned to drugs. She turned to alcohol. She turned to sex. Anything that would make the pain go away. Finally, she got the help she needed, and she turned her life around, but still...she didn't feel good enough. She didn't feel like she was worthy. She felt ugly. So her lipstick was her comfort. Her lipstick made her feel beautiful again...

DJ.

Or maybe, and this is just a shot in the dark...

TEACHER.

What DJ?

DJ.

Maybe she just wants some good dick and a slice of pepperoni pizza!

TEACHER.

Is that what you want, DJ?

DJ.

I just don't think it's that complicated...

TEACHER.

Human beings are complicated creatures.

DJ.

I'm talking about the scene...

TEACHER.

No scene is simple.

DJ.

But we're not...

TEACHER.

What?

DJ.

This isn't "Fences" with Denzel; it's porn!

TEACHER.

So what?

DJ.

You talk about all this stuff that goes on beneath the surface, but the audience doesn't care about that. They just want to see people screw.

TEACHER.

How do you know what they care about?

LEXI.

Yeah...

DJ.

Because I am the audience!

TEACHER.

You are?

DJ.

Young men!

LEXI.

Women watch porn too.

DJ.

Not as much...

TEACHER.

What are you running from, DJ?

DJ.

I'm just trying to get a paycheck, man.

TEACHER.

Why don't you like butt-stuff?

DJ.

It's gross!

TEACHER.

Do you know where the male G-spot is?

DJ.

Yes, I do, and that's fine, when I'm drunk, whatever...but right now, I'm just trying to get my dick wet.

TEACHER.

You have no other motivations?

DJ.

No, I really don't. I thought this was a place I could come and be free, and be open about the fact that I'm a man, and I just want to fuck and have a good time, and that doesn't make me some misogynistic animal, or pig, it makes me a human being. I'm not sorry, that's just the way it is, and every time I've ever tried to open up with a girl, she rejects me because I'm too skinny, or my dick isn't long enough, or it hurts when I stick it in, so I can't win, and I haven't had sex in a WHOLE FUCKING YEAR, and I feel like a castaway on some pussy-less island, but yet, I'm surrounded by girls, everywhere I look, and this bullshit Tinder dating culture, where they keep your matches from you on purpose, because they want you to spend money, and even when you do match up, it's awkward, and there's no connection, and the dating scene is so fucked up, and I can't take it anymore!

TEACHER.

I am sorry that you are going through all of that.

DJ.

I don't even think sex will make me happy...

LEXI.

It won't.

DJ.

I know.

TEACHER.

But you're not the character, DJ.

DJ.

I'm not...

TEACHER.

Bad actors think they have to use their own trauma in their acting; really, they're just making it about themselves. If you can't leave your issues at the door, then this might not be the place for you. You have to use your imagination.

DJ.

You're right.

TEACHER.

So do you think you can do the work, or not?

DJ.

I think so...

LEXI.

I'm ready whenever...

TEACHER.

Slow your roll...

LEXI/DJ.

Sorry.

TEACHER.

Let's do a Mesiner repetition exercise first, and then we'll try your first scene. We have to make sure you're present...

DJ.

Okay, um...

TEACHER.

Turn and face each other.

They do.

DJ.

So...

(Pause.)

Hey.

LEXI.

Hey.

DJ.

How are you?

LEXI.

I'm good.

TEACHER.

No pushing...

LEXI.

Sorry.

DJ.

You're really pretty.

LEXI.

Thanks.

TEACHER.

That was real.

LEXI.

You're pretty cute yourself.

DJ.

Thanks.

TEACHER.

That was real.

DJ.

I'm really nervous...

LEXI.

So am I...

DJ.

Okay good.

LEXI.

Yeah...

DJ.

I've never done anything like this...

LEXI.

Me neither...

DJ.

That makes me feel better.

TEACHER.

Repeat.

LEXI.

What?

TEACHER.

Repeat: "that makes him feel better."

LEXI.

That makes you feel better.

DJ.

I feel better.

LEXI.

You feel better.

DJ.

Now I'm feeling nervous again...

LEXI.

Yeah...

TEACHER.

Repeat.

LEXI.

You feel nervous again...

DJ.

I feel nervous again.

LEXI.

I don't know what to say...

DJ.

Yeah...

TEACHER.

Repeat.

DJ.

You don't know what to say.

LEXI.

I don't know what to say.

TEACHER.

Don't push.

DJ.

So, um...how many people have you slept with?

LEXI.

Around ten.

DJ.

Nice.

LEXI.

What about you?

DJ.

About the same.

LEXI.

Nice.

DJ.

Yeah...

LEXI.

What's the best sex you ever had?

DJ.

Well um...

TEACHER.

Don't think.

DJ.

With a girl named Samantha. We had sex in the bathroom at a party. It was so good, but we didn't really know each other.

LEXI.

That sounds nice.

DJ.

It was.

TEACHER.

Repeat.

LEXI.

It was nice.

DJ.

It was...

LEXI.

It was.

DJ.

What about you?

LEXI.

The best sex I ever had was with this girl from college. It was my first time with a girl; I didn't know that someone could make love to me like that.

DJ.

What was good about it?

LEXI.

She was soft...

DJ.

Yeah...

LEXI.

Every guy pulls my hair...

DJ.

You don't like it rough?

LEXI.

Not really...

DJ.

Not really?

LEXI.

Not really.

DJ.

So you prefer girls over guys?

LEXI.

It just depends.

DJ.

It depends.

LEXI.

It feels like...when I'm with guys, they're just trying to prove themselves to me. Like this one guy, he'd always ask me if I came yet, and if I didn't, he would get sad, but if I did, he would feel like it was this big accomplishment. I guess what I'm saying is...every guy that I've had sex with...they make it about themselves, and not about me. And that might sound selfish, but girls, they make love to me. They talk and listen to me. Guys just want to "pound the shit out of my pussy."

DJ.

I'm ashamed to say that I've been that guy.

LEXI.

You have?

DJ.

Yeah.

LEXI.

Oh...

TEACHER.

Repeat: "I've been that guy."

DJ.

I've, uh...been that guy.

LEXI.

You've been that guy.

DJ.

I've been that guy.

LEXI.

It's okay though...

DJ.

It's one of those messed up parts of being a man, I think.

LEXI.

What is?

DJ.

Evolution fucked us up, you know? All we care about is survival, and spreading our genes, and making sure that we're perceived as attractive, and tough, and manly, and we put on this show, lifting heavy things, and then as soon as we cum...we're done with all of it. Like I'm so jealous of girls, because apparently, your orgasms are amazing.

LEXI.

They are pretty amazing.

DJ.

And circumcision actually decreases pleasure.

LEXI.

Yeah...

TEACHER.

Repeat.

LEXI.

It decreases pleasure.

DJ.

It does.

LEXI.

And you didn't have a choice with that...

DJ.

Right.

TEACHER.

Repeat.

DJ.

I didn't have a choice...

LEXI.

You didn't have a choice...

DJ.

Yeah.

LEXI.

So do you feel repressed?

DJ.

I would be lying if I said no...

LEXI.

That's another thing that you guys face; toxic masculinity.

DJ.

How so?

LEXI.

It's much more acceptable for a girl to admit she likes girls, than I guy to admit he's attracted to guys. Girls don't give each other hell for that, but guys torture each other for having "gay thoughts." I wonder how many guys would admit they were bisexual, or gay, if they didn't have to fear the judgement of their friends.

DJ.

That's true.

LEXI.

I feel bad for men sometimes.

DJ.

Well, girls have it way worse than we do...

LEXI.

You think so?

DJ.

I've never walked to my car with my keys in my fist...

LEXI.

That's true.

DJ.

Yeah...

LEXI.

I would say everyone deals with things...

TEACHER.

Repeat.

DJ.

Everyone deals with things.

LEXI.

Everyone deals with things.

DJ.

Everyone deals with things...

LEXI.

Everyone deals with things...

DJ.

How do you feel now?

LEXI.

Good.

DJ.

That's good.

LEXI.

What about you?

DJ.

Good.

LEXI.

That's good.

TEACHER.

That was really nice, people.

(Pause.)

So then, are you ready for your first scene?

DJ/LEXI.

Yes.

TEACHER.

(exiting.)

Okay, so I'm going to leave, give you both some time to strip down, prepare...and then when I come back, we'll get started.

A pause. They both take off their clothes and look at each other.

DJ.

Wow...

LEXI.

What?

DJ.

I've never been with someone like you...

LEXI.

What do you mean?

DJ.

You're really hot...

LEXI.

Oh.

(Pause.)

Thanks.

DJ.

Sorry, not trying to make it about your looks or whatever...

LEXI.

You're okay.

Yeah... DJ.

You have really nice muscles. LEXI.

Thanks. DJ.

I like your tattoos. LEXI.

Oh yeah... DJ.

How many do you have? LEXI.

I think nine... DJ.

What's that one on your arm? LEXI.

It's for my Dad. DJ.

It's pretty. LEXI.

Thanks. DJ.

I only have one tattoo... LEXI.

That one? DJ.

LEXI.

Yeah.

DJ.

What does it say?

LEXI.

Beautiful...

A pause. They approach one another. They kiss. A bit awkward, but intimate. They laugh, do weird little awkward things. They kiss again. Blackout.

END OF PLAY.

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *When I started writing, I was exploring the comedic aspects of two rookie porn actors (and a teacher) taking themselves too seriously. It reminded me of acting class, where sometimes (if not all the time) we took ourselves too seriously. As I continued, the play started to change from being just a joke. The themes include: effects of the porn industry on individuals; sexuality; and gender roles. The characters make observations on hookup culture, dating apps, toxic masculinity, sexual repression, and the awkwardness that exists between strangers performing intimate acts with one another.*

My influences include Samuel Beckett, Annie Baker, Lynn Nottage, and Stephen Adly Guirgis. Most of my plays are comedic. I avoid realism and political activism. I want my plays to be entertaining and engaging.

AUTHOR'S BIO: My name is CL Byrd and I'm from High Point, North Carolina. I've been involved in theater since I was in high school. After high school, I spent time acting with community, semi-professional, and professional theater companies such as High Point Community Theater, Shared Radiance Theater, City Arts Drama Center in Greensboro, The Community Theater of Greensboro, and the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival. During this time, I also pursued my Associate in Arts degree at Guilford Technical Community College. As of today, my plays have been performed in the United States, Australia, Costa Rica, Israel, and South Africa.

