

Slumped in a dilapidated armchair in Room 2 at RADA for the last class of an exhausting week, I remember suddenly feeling quite an overwhelming sense of inspiration. It was a strange mixture of huge excitement, pride and potential courage and the source of this inspiration was the lady sitting, talking right in front of me – Doreen.

The difference with Doreen was – you listened to her, whatever state you were in, even if you really weren't 'in the mood' – you were just totally enticed. Although I didn't fully realise it at the time, Doreen was the first acting teacher I really trusted.

Doreen was very 'hot' on relaxation. Even before embarking on a 'preparation' for your character, she would really encourage you to relax so that you wouldn't be working from nervous tension. Sometimes we would do deep relaxation in the form of visualisation exercises to help with emotional triggers. On one of these occasions, I remember the whole class lying down on the floor of Room 2, and me lying there 'trying' to relax and then 'trying' to feel some huge emotion and finding it all very difficult and frustrating. At the end of the class Doreen came up to me and said, "And you, lying there with your face all screwed up," touching my previously furrowed brow, "I was dying to come over and unclench it all – it won't come if you're trying that hard!" That image has certainly stuck with me, and has helped me to understand that good acting is about opening, softness and feelings gently rising up in you, not about forcing it with every bit of your body!

Other fundamentally important bits of advice from Doreen which have stayed with me have been to do with the importance of a good preparation, a clearly defined and understood physicality of a character, personalisations and of course the quest for truthfulness – immortalised beautifully in Doreen's catchphrase, "I don't believe you." These four words penetrated all our brains and have stayed lodged there to remind us all to be as truthful as we can.

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