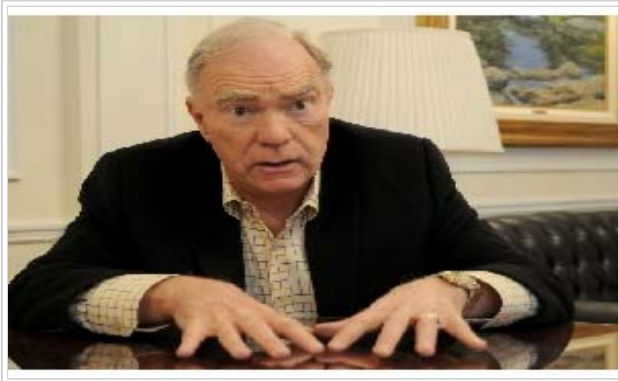


Entertainment

'I have been asked many times to come here'

Robert McKee to train screenwriters in Buenos Aires



By Mariana Marcaletti and Pablo Toledo, Herald staff.

Story is the name of Robert McKee's famous course about writing, which he has offered all over the world and which has been attended by celebrities such as Diane Keaton, Julia Roberts, Meg Ryan, David Bowie, Kirk Douglas, Quincy Jones and Ed Burns. He has been teaching drama structure for the past 25 years, and from this Thursday to Sunday he will talk in Argentina for the first time.

"This is my second trip to South America," Robert McKee says in an interview with the Herald. "I was in Chile a few months ago, but this is my first trip to Buenos Aires. I have been asked many times to come here because many

Argentines have come to New York, to Paris, to London, and they have heard my lectures."

Targeted by his enthusiastic local fans, McKee felt it was high time to hit BA and tell his followers what writing a good script is all about. "The principles of the story haven't changed for thousands of years. What I have done over the years in my seminar has varied, the lectures have become longer because I added subjects such as the problems of adapting novels and plays to the screen and, of course, new examples come along as I see films or plays or I read a novel," he says.

Apart from the innovations he mentioned, the main sections of the four-day seminar remain the same, as they deal with the classical structure. "What I teach is so deeply fundamental to writers that every generation has to learn these things. So, the principles that I teach are the principles that I was taught, that my teachers were taught, because human nature never changes. The details change. So, this lecture isn't 25 years old – it's 2,500 years old. These are the principles that Aristotle began, these are principles that date back many years."

In his words, writers must focus on the structure because the essence of stories is unchanging. "Human nature is universal and storytelling is simply a reflection of how human beings see life, the world, themselves in their world or inside. These qualities, these forms are universal, they have been since we sat around in caves and told each other stories".

When asked if the art of storytelling can be taught, he answers: "You can't teach how to write, in the same way as you cannot teach somebody how to compose music or how to paint. But what you can teach is what story is. In painting, if you went to an art school I would teach you perspective, the psychology of colour, I could show you examples from Rembrandt to Jackson Pollock. The new people will have to figure out how they are going to do it. So, when I teach story, I teach writers as if they were painters, 'this is a story's structure.' Because one of the great lackings in education is that we believe that we can be taught what music is, what painting is, what sculpture is, because there are art schools everywhere in the world, but, for some reason, the world doesn't believe that you can teach what writing is. They don't see writing as just another art, like music, like painting. And they don't see writing as a craft."

Determined that there is a need to consider writing as an art and education as a tool to improve writing skills, McKee will teach screenwriters, moviemakers, executives, novelists, journalists and actors the principles that rule stories. You still have time to enroll on the course, and you can also read the full Herald interview this Saturday: McKee is hard on the cinema industry, directors and semiologists; defends authorship, US television and himself against the accusations of those who say his style is "writing by numbers;" expresses his opinion about Argentine films; talks about the most memorable movies of all times and the emotional side of moviemaking.

WHEN AND WHERE:

From Thursday to Sunday 9.30am to 7pm

Belgrano Auditorium, Virrey Loreto 2348
Subway line D, stations Olleros or José Hernandez
Buses 41, 44, 59, 65, 67, 68, 80, 152, 168
Website: www.mckeestoryargentina.com