

This summary is part of research on performance training in Australia undertaken by Professor Peta Tait and Dr Melanie Beddie in 2017 funded by La Trobe University. It researched the influences on, and the training of, prominent teachers working within key training institutions circa 1980 to 2010.

David Latham

David Latham joined the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) as Head of Acting in 1985, and became Dean in 1987, a role he had until 1995. With a background in acting and directing, Latham had worked closely with Australia director, Roger Hodgman, at both London's East 15 and the Vancouver Playhouse.

Latham teaches an embodied approach to text analysis and an application of Laban for character development. Latham's method of teaching was influenced by Philip Hedley, who had studied with Jean Newlove, Laban's apprentice, and also with Joan Littlewood. Littlewood was influenced by both Stanislavsky and Brecht and she developed her way of teaching actions and objectives, which Latham passed on to his own students. In his approach to Laban, Latham taught both Laban's original Effort Actions and also aspects of the work of Yat Malmgren who had developed Laban's work through the concept of Inner Attitudes. Latham uses neutral mask as a training tool to create physically expressive performances.

Latham's own teacher was Powys Thomas, a Welsh-born actor who had studied with Michel Saint-Denis at the Old Vic Theatre School and moving to Canada, Thomas co-founded The National Theatre School in Montreal, with Saint-Denis. Saint-Denis had worked with Copeau, when Copeau and Suzanne Bing were inventing and applying the use of neutral mask to actor training. Thus it was through Thomas that Latham first encountered neutral mask training, and Copeau and Bing's work.

Latham continues to teach actors in Canada. One of his positions is as the training consultant at the Stratford Ontario Shakespeare Festival. In 2014, Latham was awarded the Gascon-Thomas Award by the National Theatre School of Canada, an award named in part after Powys Thomas.

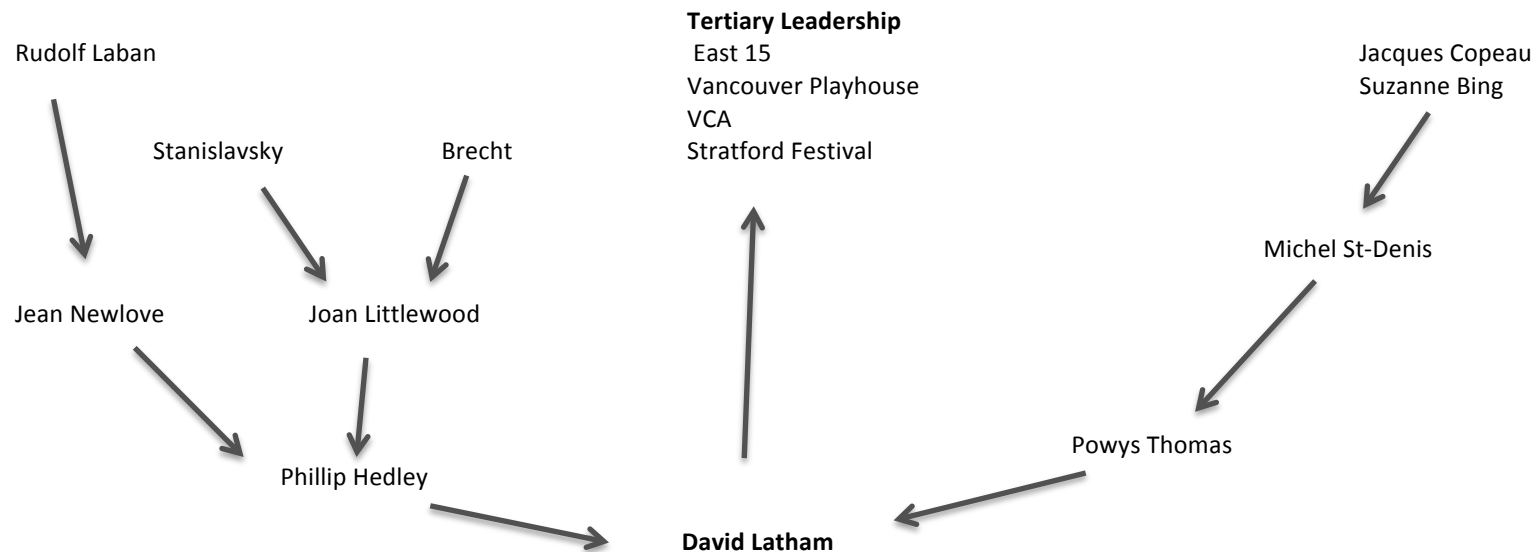


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