

Blockbuster 'Fury' Star Jon Bernthal Learned to Act in Moscow

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Jon Bernthal plays a U.S. soldier in the World War II tank drama "Fury."

One of the actors in Brad Pitt's latest blockbuster "Fury" attributes his acting success to his theatrical training in Russia.

Jon Bernthal, who has a starring role in the World War II drama, studied at the prestigious Moscow Art Theater School.

"I'm extremely grateful for my time in Moscow. I feel like the studying I did there made a man of me. It made me an artist, and it opened up my eyes," Bernthal told The Moscow Times.

Before landing the plump role in the \$80 million-budgeted Pitt movie, he was also seen alongside Leonardo DiCaprio in "The Wolf of Wall Street."

Shortly after graduating from high school, Bernthal was encouraged by his acting coach to try out for the Moscow Theater.

"I went to my teacher in the States and I said, 'Look, this is what I want to do. I want to be

an actor.'"

"I thought it would be no different than being a dentist or a lawyer. If I go to a school, I can be an actor, right? And she said it really doesn't work like that. But, she said, 'If I were you, if I wanted to do one thing, I would go and audition for the Moscow Art Theater.'"

When she told him that no American had ever taken this route to stardom, Bernthal was determined to take on the task.

"I had gone over there and started playing baseball [in the European league] and auditioned for the school and I got it," Bernthal said. "I'm eternally grateful to my American drama teacher Alma Becker for suggesting Russia."

"I absolutely fell in love with Russian culture, Russian people," he said, adding, "I felt that as an actor, there's a real respect for the arts there that I don't necessarily think too many of my peers at the time in America had."

Bernthal spent the late 1990s and early 2000s in Moscow. Did he speak any Russian when he arrived? "No, no. I did not speak one word. I picked it up while I was there," he said, and he is now fluent in the language.

Studying at the theater was hard, but an amazing experience, he said. "My teacher was Oleg Tabakov. He's one of the most celebrated stars in Russian cinema and stage."

"It was a real privilege to be there. It was a tough discipline. I grew up playing sports, boxing, etc. My time at the Moscow Art Theater was just as rigorous and hard, and perhaps more disciplined than any of the organized sports that I played."

"There was a reality and brutality of life that I think was very important, as a young American, for me to see. I'll be forever indebted to that school," he said.

The 38-year-old actor has become a familiar face on the small screen. His TV credits include such shows as "Law & Order," "How I Met Your Mother" and Steven Spielberg's miniseries "The Pacific." He also had a major role in the horror series "The Walking Dead" but is killed by the main character Rick Grimes — and then by Grimes' son Carl when he comes back as a zombie.

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