

## **Music 9504a / 9841a: ACTING FOR SINGERS**

**Fall/Winter 2015 - 2016**

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Class time: Thursdays, 9:30am – 12:30pm

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

A practical approach to the development of dramatic skills used by singers in theatrical genres. Students will gain an understanding of different acting techniques and their applications in sung storytelling (Half course: Three hours lecture/laboratory)

Prerequisites: None

### **COURSE CONTENT**

1. Preparation (learning techniques of role study, research, developing a backstory and understanding the context of one's character within a narrative)
2. Projection (gaining access to the multitude of expressive tools available to a performer beyond the voice)
3. Connection (developing a relationship with the audience whether in recital, staged performance or audition)
4. Co-operation (understanding and utilizing techniques for sharing the stage)
5. Interpretation (creating different perspectives on any given theatrical moment)
6. Recit and Dialogue (dismantling one's fear and/or loathing of these essential dramatic passages)

### **NATURE OF THE COURSE**

Acting for Singers is designed to introduce and develop techniques of dramatic preparation and performance. The ultimate goal is the integration of these tools to allow a student to begin the process of becoming an authentic, available and consistent actor. He or she will understand how these dramatic abilities can join forces with their skills as a singer and exponentially increase the power, ease and enjoyment of their performances.

The classes will be structured with equal parts instruction, discussion and participation. Exercises in the various techniques will form the backdrop to all sessions, allowing the course to unfold like a series of workshops. During warm-ups and introductory exercises, regular attention will be paid to these elements:

- Professional Deportment (audition and rehearsal practices in the “real world”)
- Stagecraft (overcoming practical obstacles in pursuit of a seamless performance)
- Combat (building an arsenal of safe, repeatable and credible moments of violence, passion and exuberance)

There will be ongoing question-and-answer sessions guided by the students' individual interests.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

### The students will be expected:

1. To become familiar with the vernacular of acting in order to work with directors and other actors in an articulate and effective manner.
2. To gain an appreciation of different genres of sung storytelling and begin (or expand) their experience with them.
3. To differentiate the unique styles of performance that disparate pieces of theatre demand (baroque gesture, commedia, melodrama, naturalism, surrealism).
4. To become aware of their own strengths and limitations in the dramatic field and how these can be built on or redressed.
5. To understand that reliable acting technique can be developed in much the same way as vocal technique, with tangible results.
6. To establish or enhance the confidence that comes with building a solid foundation of acting technique.
7. To contribute to the process of building a performance, as opposed to the passive approach of awaiting instruction or direction.
8. To encourage and support others around them in a positive, generous manner at all times.
9. To foster creativity in themselves and others in all of their artistic endeavours.
10. To display bravery in the classroom, the studio, and the theatre.
11. To be decisive and take initiative.
11. To set high standards for achievement and strive to exceed them.

## ATTENDANCE

Attendance and punctuality are mandatory. Students are required to attend all classes. Acceptable exceptions will be illness or personal crisis. Documentation may have to be provided. Students will be expected to participate in all exercises unless prior permission has been given.

## DRESS

Students should be prepared for physical movement in all classes and should dress accordingly. Contact with the floor (kneeling, lying down, rolling around) should be anticipated in every case.

## COURSE FORMAT

Each class will begin with a warm-up; stretching, movement, some vocalizing. Instruction will follow, with reference material handed out as necessary. A discussion of the session topic involving all students is next, followed by exercises allowing them to

incorporate the ideas and techniques of the day. Each session will end with further discussions and/or demonstrations by the students themselves, along with a summary of the lesson topic by the instructor.

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

Stanislavski, Constantin. *Stanislavski on Opera*. Theatre Arts Books 1975  
Bergman, Tracy and Moore, Alison. *Acting the Song: Performance skills for the Musical Theatre*. Allworth Press, 2008  
Sutcliff, Tom. *Believing in Opera*. Faber and Faber, 1996  
Hutcheon. Linda and Michael. *Opera – Desire, Disease, Death..* University of Nebraska Press, 1996  
Craig, David. *A Performer Prepares: A Guide to Song Preparation for Actors, Singers and Dancers*. Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 1997

#### ACCOMODATIONS FOR MEDICAL ILLNESS AND ACADEMIC OFFENCES

The Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness may be found at <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>.

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, as found at [www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf).

#### EVALUATION

##### **In-Class Work – MMus students: 50%, DMA candidates 40%**

Students will be evaluated on their comprehension of the material presented in class, their participation in the exercises and demonstrations, and the improvement demonstrated in their abilities.

##### **Analytical Presentation – 20%**

Students will present an analysis of a character from a work of sung theatre, demonstrating their understanding of the role preparation techniques discussed in class. MMus students' presentations must be between 10 and 15 minutes in duration; DMA candidates' presentations must be between 20 and 30 minutes and may contain brief video or audio examples played for the class. In both cases, the students must lead a question-and-answer session in the last few minutes of their presentations.

##### **Final Performance – 10%**

Students will perform an aria, brief scene, song cycle or other acceptable theatrical passage to the class, demonstrating their integration of the performance techniques discussed and developed during the course. This should be the same piece used as the subject of their Analytical Presentation. Duets, trios and ensemble pieces in concert with other students are encouraged. All students will be expected to perform their pieces while incorporating improvised staging directed by the instructor.

##### **Final Paper – MMus students 20%, DMA candidates 30%**

Students will deliver an academic paper summarizing their analysis and detailing their

research of the same character from their Analytical Presentation. The paper will provide evidence of original scholarship, as well as the ability to present arguments and make informed judgments based upon the techniques of role preparation discussed during the course. Where possible, the papers should incorporate the feedback from other students and the instructor from the question and answer component of the Analytical Presentation. The papers from DMA candidates must be substantially greater in length and content than those of MMus students, to satisfy higher expectations of scholarship.

## COURSE TIMETABLE

### **October 15<sup>th</sup>**

Introductions, course discussion, exercises. *The ABCDEs of It All*

### **October 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Instruction, discussion, exercises. *Our Arthurian Quest (Preparation)*

### **October 29<sup>th</sup>**

Instruction, discussion, exercises. *The Superhero Sing-orama (Projection)*

### **November 5<sup>th</sup>**

Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Empathy is Everything (Connection)*

**DEADLINE for submitting subject of Analytical Presentation**

### **November 12<sup>th</sup>**

Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Get Out of Your Bubble, Boy! (Co-operation)*

### **November 19<sup>th</sup>**

Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Making Bad Acting Work for You (Interpretation)*

**DEADLINE for submitting and approval of piece for Final Performance**

### **November 26<sup>th</sup>**

Instruction, discussion, exercises: *The Zen of Throwing and Catching Punches, Kicks, and Objects (Intro to Stage Combat)*

**DEADLINE for submitting and approval of piece for recit/dialogue exercises**

### **January 7<sup>th</sup>**

Summary, recap, review of all topics and exercises

### **January 14<sup>th</sup>**

Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Who's afraid of Recit and Dialogue?*

### **January 21<sup>st</sup>**

Further review, Analytical Presentations begin

### **January 28<sup>th</sup>**

Analytical Presentations continue

### **February 4<sup>th</sup>**

Final Performances, wrap-up – All papers due.