

Music 9504a / 9841a: ACTING FOR SINGERS

Winter 2021

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Room 227, Music Building, and Zoom

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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. Comprehension (identifying and understanding the essential elements that combine in the ideal singing actor)
2. Preparation (learning techniques of role study, research, developing a backstory and understanding the context of one's character within a narrative)
3. Projection (gaining access to the multitude of expressive tools available to a performer beyond the voice)
4. Connection (developing a relationship with the audience whether in recital, staged performance or audition)
5. Co-operation (utilizing techniques for collaborating with colleagues sharing the stage)
6. Interpretation (creating different perspectives on any given theatrical moment)
7. Declamation (understanding dialogue and the techniques with which one can maximize the impact of these essential dramatic passages)
8. Interaction* (building an arsenal of safe, repeatable and credible moments of violence, passion and exuberance)

*If time and circumstances allow.

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 students to begin or continue the process of becoming a fully authentic, aware, and consistent actor. They will understand how these dramatic abilities can join forces with their skills as singers to exponentially increase the impact 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. Ongoing question-and-answer sessions will be held, guided by the students' individual interests. During these discussions, regular attention will be paid to the realities and expectations in the professional world.

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 experiences with them.
3. To differentiate the unique styles of performance that disparate pieces of theatre demand (baroque gesture, commedia, melodrama, naturalism, surrealism, etc).
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.
12. To set high standards for achievement and strive to exceed them.

ATTENDANCE,

Attendance and punctuality are mandatory. Students are required to attend all classes, virtually or – should circumstances eventually allow – in person, as designated. 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. Please refer to the document, “Required Course Outline Notes – Acting for Singers” on the OWL course site for further information.

COURSE FORMAT

Each class will begin with an introduction and free-form question and answer period. Instruction will follow, with reference material distributed out as necessary. A discussion of the session topic involving all students is next, followed, if possible, 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
Ostwald, David F. *Acting for Singers: Creating Believable Singing Characters*. Oxford University Press, 2005
Hicks, Alan E. *Singer and Actor: Acting Technique and the Operatic Performer*. Amadeus Press, 2011

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR MEDICAL ILLNESS, ACADEMIC OFFENCES, INTERNET INTERACTIONS, ETC

Policies and best practices for these and other topics can be found in a separate document on the OWL course site, entitled, “Required Course Outline Notes – Acting for Singers”

EVALUATION

In-Class Work – MMus students: 50%, DMA candidates 30%

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

Analytical Presentation – MMus students: 30%, DMA candidates 40% 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 should be approximately 10 minutes in duration; DMA candidates’ presentations should be approximately 20 minutes long. In both cases, the students must lead a brief question-and-answer session at the conclusion of their presentations.

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, as well as their dramatic approach to the aria/song/scene presented in class. 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. 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

January 14 – on Zoom

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

January 21 – on Zoom

Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Preparation*

January 28 – on Zoom

Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Projection*

February 4 – on Zoom

Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Connection*

February 11 – on Zoom

Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Co-operation*

DEADLINE for approval of presentation/paper

February 25 – TBA in person/Zoom

Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Interpretation*

March 4 – TBA in person/Zoom

Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Declamation*

March 11 – TBA in person/Zoom

Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Interaction*

March 18 – TBA in person/Zoom

Course material review, exercises: All topics

March 25 – TBA in person/Zoom

Presentations begin

April 1 – TBA in person/Zoom

Presentations continue

April 8 – TBA in person/Zoom

Course wrap-up, individual feedback
(All papers due)