

COURSE OUTLINE

Stratford Festival Voice and Text Class for University Students 2020

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a course focusing on acting the language of Shakespeare. It is practical in its philosophy and its application: wholly designed to give the aspiring actor a handful of tools with which to explore, personalize and perform Shakespeare's text. It is not, therefore, a theoretical course or a study of Shakespeare as dramatic *literature*.

The work takes the form of two major sections, both integral to each other. Firstly, the student will experiment with practical tools to decipher Shakespeare's language and make it their own. Meanwhile, exercises in Voice will encourage and enable the actor to develop those facets of their instrument that allow them to further access, experience and communicate Shakespeare's language.

Students come to the course from varying levels of acting training. Previous acting experience and/or experience with Shakespeare is not necessarily a path to success in the course. *Process, Progress*, and a corresponding commitment to the work are valued over *Perfection*.

INSTRUCTORS

Voice Work will be led by Martha Farrell, and Text Work will be led by Tim Welham.

MARTHA FARRELL

After nine seasons in the Stratford Festival's acting company, Martha is now furthering her craft of teaching and coaching voice through the Stratford Festival's Professional Development Program. Martha has worked with the Education Department over the course of many years and has taught Shakespeare in schools throughout Ontario. She has been a guest instructor of text and voice work for the Shakespeare Immersion Program in Michigan, as well as the University of Waterloo and the Atlantic Ballet Company. Martha has performed in theatres across the country. Stratford highlights include *Coriolanus*, *Misanthrope*, *Camelot*, *Peter Pan*, *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Don Juan*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard III*, and *The Winter's Tale*. She is a graduate of Sheridan College's Music Theatre Performance Program and the Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre. Martha is also a recipient of the Jean A. Chalmers Apprentice Award, Mary Savage Award (Stratford), Rosemary Burns Award and the Greg Bond Award (Theatre Sheridan).

TIM WELHAM (BFA, Ryerson University; MA, Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London) is a current member of the coaching team at the Stratford Festival where he works primarily as the Text Coach on the Festival's Shakespeare productions, and has taught for the Education Department. He is also a faculty member in the School of Performance at Ryerson University, and an instructor at the National Theatre School of Canada, teaching Shakespeare to the acting students. Tim has performed on stages in Canada, England and Europe, and coached and taught theatre throughout Ontario. Some of his favourite acting credits from his time in the UK include *Twelfth Night* (Rose Theatre), *Flight* (New Diorama), and *The Bowl* at the Young Vic Theatre. He also toured Austria for

six months with Vienna's English Theatre. As an actor in Canada, his stage credits include *Chariots of Fire* (Grand Theatre), *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare in the Ruff), *Life is a Dream* (Canadian Stage) and *Crookback* – his five-star reviewed solo adaptation of Shakespeare's *Richard III*. His writing has been generously supported by Theatre Ontario and the Ontario Arts Council.

VOICE WORK

Voice Work begins with breath and with the body – together, both form not only the foundation of a free and responsive voice, but that of an emotional and imaginative connection to the words the actor will speak. The Work will allow the actor to discover the possibilities of the vocal instrument as it relates to text and to performance. Each class will begin with a warmup, followed by classes focusing on such subjects as breath, breath and movement/the spine, vowels, consonants, metre and punctuation. This work is designed to give additional support to, and to complement the specific text exercises.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the two weeks, the student will demonstrate a stronger understanding of the connection between breath and sound, and how that breath is connected to impulse/thought and, therefore, to acting, immediate and "live." They will have learned techniques/exercises for doing a warm-up: one that prepares their body, breath and voice for the task of acting/ rehearsing; and they will be able to apply these exercises to their daily practice.

TEXT WORK

The Text work will allow the actor to examine and apply the specific tools of language found in classical text, through a series of exercises exploring areas such as Argument, Rhetoric (and supporting structures), Syntax, Particulars of Language (modifiers, metre, rhyme, etc.), and Address. Throughout, the exercises – in close tandem with the Voice work – will look to help the actor ingest or embody the language so that, ultimately, it comes from the artist as their own words.

Learning Outcomes

The student will gain practical tools to be able to better analyze, personalize, and act a piece of classical text by breaking it down into its component structures. Through this exploration, they will uncover clues to character, emotional situation, argument, and thought progression. They will begin to discover a personal specificity in locating and expressing imagery in thought, and to apply a practical methodology of finding and playing 'action' *through* language. The overall goal is to find spontaneity and power in embodying classical text and expressing themselves through it.

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

As this course is entirely online, certain technologies are required outside the scope of a traditional classroom:

- 1) A Computer or Tablet able to run a recent version of web browser such as Chrome, Safari or Firefox.
- 2) A reliable high-speed internet connection.
- 3) A webcam (internal or external) digital camera, or similar device to stream video.
- 4) A microphone (internal or external) to record audio, and speakers or headphones.

- 5) Minimum floor space at home of approx. 8'x8' to move, stretch and participate in exercises.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- 1) Complete Works of William Shakespeare – Each participant should have access to a Complete Works of Shakespeare. It can be any edition, including an electronic or website-accessed version should the student prefer. (Recommended print editions are the Riverside, Arden, Folger or RSC; free online versions can be found at folgerdigitaltexts.org.)
- 2) Shakespeare Monologue – a copy of which should be ready on the first day. A list of appropriate Shakespeare Monologues will be provided several weeks in advance of the course. The student will select one monologue from that list to work on during (and outside of) class, and eventually to present. The student is required to read the play of their monologue before beginning the course, and to be familiar with the meanings of words in the monologue. **The student is strongly discouraged from memorizing the speech before the course, and from developing a performance or "way to do it."** (It is our experience that this can only interfere with any exploration and experience the student may have.) It is also advised that the print is large enough to be able read from a distance.

SUGGESTED RESOURCE BOOKS

There are no required textbooks. However, we recommend several books for reference:

- *Oxford English Dictionary*
- *Shakespeare's Words* by David & Ben Crystal (free online at shakespeareswords.com)
- *Text in Action* by Cicely Berry
- *The Actor Speaks* by Patsy Rodenburg
- *Speaking Shakespeare* by Patsy Rodenburg

DRESS

Students should dress in clothing appropriate to a movement class (i.e. warm-up pants or other stretch clothing that will provide comfort and flexibility). Clothing should be "neutral"; logo-embossed clothing should be avoided. Students are encouraged to work in bare feet to make full use of contact with the floor. (Any footwear deemed to impede the work is discouraged.) Earrings, jewelry, piercings should be removed for class. Students are also encouraged to use a yoga-mat for the floor work that will take place.

TIMETABLE

Dates: Monday May 4th to Saturday May 16th, 2020

Hours: 9:00am to 12noon

- The class runs six days per week, with no class on Sunday May 10th

COURSE EVALUATION

10% -- Personal Conduct

- punctuality & readiness to work, appropriate dress, openness to process, focus and concentration

15% -- Character Analysis

- completion of a one-page "Character Analysis", due by **Saturday, May 9th**

50% -- Class Work

- exploration and application of the work, risk in exercises, participation in exercises and discussions

25% -- Presentation of Monologue

- the Monologue is due to be presented on **Saturday, May 16th**
- Students must have memorized their monologues, and present them as a performance -- as "a piece of acting" -- having incorporated the voice and text work on their monologue both in and *outside* class.
- The class is concluded with a Post-Mortem Discussion.
- Further details of the Monologue Presentation will be explained on the first day.

NOTE: Curriculum will vary according to progress of the group. Certain sections of both the Voice and Text components may be concentrated on, others may be omitted.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Students must be online and *ready to start* each morning at 9:00am. This is strongly maintained. Therefore, students are encouraged to sign-in and arrive several minutes before the actual start-time, to get settled, do their own warmups, etc.

Students will be marked down for absenteeism, lateness or lack of readiness to begin. A 0.5% will be deducted for any lateness, a full 1% for being absent without a supported/validated reason.

The Work in this course will take place through individual exercises and discussions. The student's ability to verbalize changes and results of the various exercises is key to developing a relationship between oneself and one's work. The instructors encourage participation in feedback of the exercises because it's important for the actor to develop a language for talking about their work objectively. Participation in these discussions during and after the exercises is not a measure of how much one talks but rather how receptive and perceptive the student is, a measure of their focus in their own work and in that of the group.

The student is encouraged to risk: to commit fully to the work, to note changes, make adjustments and go further or deeper in each exercise, often (and by necessity) in their own time outside the class.

Above all, the course requires the actor to be "present": to be ready to work promptly, to commit themselves to the exercises, to ask questions, to focus on and share in the observations that take place around the exercises.