

Stratford Festival
Voice and Text Class for University Students 2019

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:

The Voice Work will be conducted by **Paul de Jong**

Paul de Jong is a Voice, Speech, and Text Instructor and Coach. He is a member of the core coaching team at the Stratford Festival (8 seasons) and teaches for the Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre. He is also a Professor of Voice and Speech at the Humber College Theatre Performance Program where he recently completed a three year appointment as Director of the program and where he also served as the Head of Voice for six years. He has taught at the National Theatre School of Canada, the Centre for Indigenous Theatre, the George Brown Theatre School, the Randolph Academy of Performing Arts, as well as at colleges in the United Kingdom. He received his Masters in Voice Studies from the Central School of Speech and Drama (University of London, England) and is a graduate of the Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre. As a free-lance coach, Paul has worked on productions for Teatro Proscenium (*Sousatzka*), Soulpepper (*A Christmas Carol* and *A Raisin in the Sun*), Globe Theatre (*The Syringa Tree*), Artistic Fraud (*Oil and Water*), Grand Theatre (*The Great Gatsby*), and has done workshops for Shakespeare by The Sea. In addition to this, Paul has worked as a voice and speech consultant: training executives for such companies as the Aga Khan Museum, the Bank of Montreal, the Japan Foundation, Motorola, Teranet, and Gandy Associates. Paul is a recipient of a Tyrone Guthrie Award from the Stratford Festival, as well as a Distinguished Faculty Award from Humber College.

The Text Work will be led by **Kennedy C. MacKinnon**

Kennedy C. MacKinnon (BFA, University of Windsor; MFA, Diploma in Voice Teacher Training, York University) is a coach, teacher, director, actor and the Artistic Director of Shakespeare Link Canada (SLC). She created and directed "Hamlet, Alone" and "Drowning Ophelia" for the Shakespeare Link International Festival, Wales and "With Love, Will Shakespeare," a commissioned play for the Sunnybrook Veterans' Residence. She has an ongoing partnership with Montes Namuli in Mozambique, where she adapts and translates productions of

Shakespeare focused on AIDS education and female empowerment. She created "Romeo and Juliet – Signing the Bard," a collaboration between hearing and deaf actors produced by Shakespeare Link Canada. Other directing credits include "Saltwater Moon" for Common Roof and Death of a Chief (co-director) for Native Earth Performing Arts.

Kennedy was Head of Voice for ten years at the Humber College Theatre School, where she also taught Shakespeare. She is currently in her twelfth season as a Voice and Text Coach at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. She has taught for the Education Department at the Festival and for the Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre, of which she is a graduate. She interned as assistant to Gary Logan at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts/National Theater Conservatory. As a freelance coach Cathy has worked on numerous productions on Broadway, at Aluna, Native Earth Performing Arts, Cahoots, CanStage, The Globe (in Regina) and YPT. She has taught for the Toronto 5 Workshop, George Brown Theatre School, Equity Showcase Theatre, Centre for Indigenous Theatre, University of Windsor, Ryerson Theatre School, York University and the National Voice Intensive. Kennedy is the recipient of three Tyrone Guthrie Awards, as well as an Innovation Award and Distinguished Faculty Award from Humber College. Website: www.shakespearelinkcanada.ca.

Voice: 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 anatomy, voice care, 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 warmup: one that prepares their body, breath and voice for the task of acting and rehearsing; and they will be able to apply these exercises to their daily practice.

Text: The Text work will allow the actor to examine and apply the specific tools of language found in classical text, through a series of individual and group exercises exploring areas such as Drive, Argument/Rhetoric (and supporting structures), Image, 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 them as their own words.

Learning Outcomes: The student will gain practical tools to be able to better analyze, personalize and to act a piece of classical text: to break it down into its component structures, so as to mine it for clues -- and experience them: clues as to character, emotional "situation" or intensity, the clarity of the Argument Story and the specific building-up of, and connection between the thought-phrases; to discover a personal specificity in locating and expressing imagery in those thoughts. They will learn to apply a practical methodology of finding and

playing 'action' *through* the language, in order to find a spontaneity and power in embodying this text and expressing themselves through it.

**** NOTE ****

A list of Shakespeare Monologues will be provided to each student 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 should print off a copy of their monologue *from those provided* and bring their copy to the first day.

The student is strongly urged 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.

*** NOTE ***

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

Dress:

Students are encouraged to bring a yoga-type mat for the floorwork that will take place. 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. Students should dress in clothing appropriate to a movement class: i.e., warmup pants or other stretch clothing that will provide comfort and flexibility. Clothing should also be "neutral"; logo-embossed clothing should be avoided. Earrings, jewelry, piercings should be removed for class. Tattoos should be hidden, if possible. There will be no food or drink (other than water) allowed in class. You may wish to bring along a sweater or blanket, since you may get cold during some of the floor work.

Timetable:

- The course runs May 5th – 17th. Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon
- All classes take place at the University of Waterloo, Stratford Campus
- **NOTE:** For the First Day (Sunday May 5th), please arrange to be in the lobby of the **U of Waterloo's Stratford Campus, 125 St Patrick Street, Stratford, by 8:45 a.m.** The instructors will meet you there and take you to the studios.
- The class is 6 days per week Sunday - Friday

The Presentation of the Monologues takes place on the last day: Friday May 17th (see below).

Textbooks:

Each participant should have a Complete Works of Shakespeare. It can be any edition, including an electronic or website-accessed version should the student prefer. It is advised, however, that the print is large enough to be able to "lift" the text off the page. Students should also have a pen or pencil and a notebook, together with their printed copy of their selected monologue (copied from those provided).

There are no other required textbooks. However, we recommend several books for future (or present) reference: **Text In Action** by Cicely Berry; **The Actor Speaks** and **Speaking Shakespeare**, both by Patsy Rodenburg. All three are available at bookstores throughout Stratford.

Course Evaluation:

25% Personal conduct (punctuality & readiness to work, appropriate dress). Openness to process, focus and concentration.

50% Class work - exploration and application of the work, risk, receptivity (giving and receiving in exercises and in observing fellow classmates), participation in discussions.

25% Presentation of Monologue - this presentation is done on the last day of the workshop (Friday May 17th). Students must have their monologues memorized and be able to present them as performance -- as "a piece of acting" -- having incorporated the voice and text work on their monologue both in and *outside* class. Where time allows, the class is then concluded with a Post-Mortem Discussion.

NOTE: the course grades will be issued by Kennedy C. MacKinnon, in consultation with Paul de Jong.

Students must be *ready to start work* on time each morning at 9:00 a.m. This is strongly maintained. Therefore, students are encouraged (*but not required*) to 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 work. A 1/2 % will be deducted for any lateness, a full 1% for being absent without a supported/validated reason.

The Work takes place through both group and individual exercises. Generosity and focus in partner work is important: often one actor is facilitating an exercise for their partner, while at other times the focus is on one student working while the others observe. The ability to witness an exercise's application in another actor can be key to the observer's own application, since it is often easier once the actor has seen/heard/ or sensed it through another actor's experience. 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 everyone to participate 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 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 her/himself to the exercises, to ask questions, to focus on and share in the observations that take place around the exercises.