BERRIDGE PROGRAMS

Course Descriptions

CORE CLASSES (All students participate)

Acting Techniques

**Faculty:** Emily Firth

**Class hours:** 18 **Rehearsal Hours**: 6-8 **Performance Hours**: 3

**Texts Used:** *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*, Melissa Bruder, *Contemporary American Monologues for Women/for Men*, Todd London, *Audition Arsenal*, Janet Milstein, *The Ultimate Scene and Monologue Sourcebook*, Ed Hooks, *Scenes and Monologues from New American Theatre*, Frank Pike, *Voice and the Actor*, Cecily Berry, *Actions: The Actors Thesaurus,* Marina Calderone

**Description of work:** This course focuses on techniques that help students gain truth in their acting and perfect the skill of being truthfully “in the moment” on stage. Improvisation exercises and drama games students explore new techniques in freeing their voice, imagination and physicality. Students use “open scenes”, an exercise which uses simple dialogue as a framework to encourage actors, to learn how to make bold choices for a character’s given circumstances. Various script analysis techniques are taught as actors breakdown scripts into beats and objectives, making strong ‘action’ choices. A special emphasis is placed on proper vocal technique, breathing and posture exercises to help actors develop their own pre-performance warm up. The course culminates in partner scene work and includes an introduction to dialects including Standard British, Irish and French.

Shakespeare

**Faculty:** Simon Purse

**Class Hours:** 12 **Rehearsal Hours**: 6-8 **Performance Hours**: 2

**Texts Used:** *First Folio Speeches for Men and Women*, William Shakespeare edited by LAMDA, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*, Alexander Schmidt

**Description of work:** When Shakespeare’s actors were preparing for performance they were given only their own parts: cue scripts that consist of their character’s lines, and the two or three words that cue each line. This class recreates these performance conditions and explores the original practice techniques championed by Patrick Tucker. The class equips students with the skills to identify and theatricalise the clues in their text that allow them to perform scenes and plays with no group rehearsal. In class we work on blocking and the demands of thrust staging - performing cue script scenes and monologues and critiquing them as a group, learning how to give feedback as well as the specifics of this kind of work. This is interspersed with games and exercises to encourage faster and bolder acting choices, less naturalistic performance, and voice work to meet the demands of classical text. All students also undertake intensive individual work on their text for the final productions. At the end of the course new students perform a selection of scenes and returning students perform a full length play.

Contemporary Performance

**Faculty:** Duane Daniels

**Class Hours:** 18 **Rehearsal Hours**: 6-8 **Performance Hours**: 2

**Texts Used:** *10 Minute Plays from The Actors Theatre of Louisville Vol 1-6* **Texts Referred:** *Impro*, Keith Johnston, *Improvisation for the Theatre*, Viola Spolin.

**Description of work:** Explore both traditional and experimental forms of dramatic literature, learning how to approach blocking and staging with a view to creating professional performances from unusual and challenging material. Class discussions centre on ways of honouring the text of a playwright while, at the same time, creating truthful and visually exciting performances. Actors learn how to approach blocking and staging with a view to creating a polished and professional final product performed for an invited audience. This class has a special focus on improvisation techniques, both long and short form, as a warm-up technique, an ensemble building exercise and as a way of exploring text and building character relationships.

Movement

**Faculty:** Dan Milne

**Class Hours:** 18 **Rehearsal Hours**: 3 **Performance Hours**: 2

Texts Referred: *The Articulate Body*, Anne Dennis, *The Viewpoints Book*, Anne Bogart, *The Moving Body*, Jacques Lecoq, *Towards A Poor Theatre*, Jerzy Grotowski, *The Empty Space,* Peter Brook, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors,* Augusto Boal

**Description of work:** This course develops individual physical presence, encouraging actors to get “in their bodies”, work with breath, weight and release to better understand the relationship of the body to the performance space. The course includes classes on chorus work, tableau, characterization, physical narratives and abstract expression. Actors begin to find ease in working physically with others through ensemble dynamics as well as identifying their own personal needs for warm-up, preparation and further training. Energy work such as yoga, tai chi, Feldenkrais and Viewpoints increase body awareness, flexibility and range of expression. The physical practices of Jacques Lecoq, Peter Brook, Phillipe Gaulier, Augusto Boal, Miranda Tufnell and Steve Paxton are discussed and there is a special workshop working with hand-made neutral masks which give actors heightened sense of discovery, awareness of the space, a greater presence and a profound awareness of self.

On-Camera Acting

**Faculty:** Greg Ainsworth, Kristy Hasen

**Class Hours:** 20 **On Camera Hours**: 1

**Course Description:** Students are filmed performing cold readings from contemporary monologues and industry sides with a view to preparing for life as a working actor. Analyzing “before and after” footage, students learn the subtlety and specificity required to perfect the skill of acting on-camera. A special emphasis is placed on the technique of using the actor’s imagination as a means to build character and make choices quickly, particularly as it applies to an audition setting. A series of improvisational exercises teach actors how to be genuine and spontaneous, creating truthful and bold performances on film.

ELECTIVES (Students choose one)

Directing

**Faculty:** Dan Milne

**Class Hours:** 22 **Extracurricular Hours**: 8-10

**Course Description:**

This course explores the tenets of directing, beginning with script analysis and basic staging techniques. Emphasis is on understanding the role of the director, approaching a text, methods of communication with actors, and understanding the elements of a scene. The class takes a special look at directing “site-specific” work, using locations outside a traditional theatre space. Students direct work from the Writer/Performer class for a special showcase.

Musical Theatre

**Faculty:** Emily Firth

**Class Hours:** 22 **Rehearsal Hours**: 6-8 **Performance Hours**: 4

**Texts Referred:** *The Singers Musical Theatre Anthology Vols 1-3, Duets***,** Richard Walters, *Broadway: The American Musical*, PBS Television.

**Course Description:**

Choosing pieces that fit their vocal range, actors work on an individual song for performance, receiving one-on-one direction alternately with a choreographer and a vocal coach. The group will work on several ensemble numbers to be performed at the Final Showcase, mastering the music and choreography, as well as how to effectively act through song.

Writer/Performer

**Faculty:** Kristy Hasen, Greg Ainsworth

**Class Hours:** 22 **Extracurricular Hours:** 12-15 **Performance Hours**: 4

Students discover their unique voice and how to translate their work into a dramatic performance. Daily “writing prompts” are given to get the imagination and the pen going as students work towards writing their own piece for a special performance evening. They will also have their piece cast and directed by our directing students, gaining a fuller understanding of how their words can be interpreted and staged to inspire an audience.

Improvisation

**Faculty:** Duane Daniels

**Class Hours:** 22 **Performance Hours**: 3-4

Texts Referred: *Impro*, Keith Johnston, *Improvisation for the Theatre*, Viola Spolin, *Improvising Better*, Jim Carrane

Students hone their moment to moment reflexes onstage through a series of games and exercises. Emphasis is on building truthful, creative scenes through collaboration rather than trying to “entertain” the audience. Actors form an “Improv Troup” which performs several times during the pro