

THEATER

The mission of the Theater Department is to provide students with an understanding of theater as an art form, and to foster respect for its requirements and disciplines. The curriculum will educate students in artistic ways of thinking and viewing the world, and enable them to use theater as their voice.

The goals of the Theater Department are:

- To prepare students for their next step, whether that is further education, professional work, or further training in theater.
- To take students, in their theatrical training, as far as they are able to go regardless of background or area of special interest.
- To give students the means to approach and develop dramatic material independently.
- To foster in students a greater understanding of the world and their peers, and to make them better citizens through cooperative and collaborative endeavors.

Students follow the curriculum prescribed by the Theater Department. Class assignments are made by the department chairperson and are based on the student's academic grade level and technical development. Incoming students will enter the curriculum as First Year Students. In exceptional cases, students transferring from other Arts Magnet curricula may be placed at a more advanced level. Spending one year in any level does not guarantee advancement in the following year. Advancement decisions will be made by the Theater Faculty based on a student's Year-End Jury Performance and an evaluation of their Performance in classes throughout the year.

- First Year Students will take: Acting Technique, Movement for Actors, Voice & Diction, Introduction to Technical Theater, Textual Analysis, Fools & Clowns and their choice of 2 electives per semester.
- Second Year Students will take: Acting 2, Physical Theatre, Shakespeare, Suzuki Technique, Textual Analysis 2, Personal Theater, Vocal Production and 2 Elective Courses per semester.
- Third Year Students will take: Acting 3, Theater History, Commedia dell' Arte, Audition Technique, Classical Scene Study, and 2 Elective Courses per semester.
- Fourth Year Students will take: Acting 4, Theater and Social Justice, Audition Technique, Contemporary Trends in Theater, Solo Performance, and 2 Elective Courses per semester.

THEATER COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

ACTING TECHNIQUE

Students will be introduced to the fundamental elements of the actor's craft through a combination of exercises, improvisation, and approaches to scripted material. Classes will emphasize the techniques developed by Uta Hagen, Stella Adler and Viola Spolin to develop a strong sense of given & imagined circumstances, believable focus within the context of work on stage, and collaboration among an Ensemble of peers. Students will learn to create plausible situations, make choices, justify those choices, and begin to identify a character's intention.

ACTING II

Students will be introduced to the technique developed by Sanford Meisner and its application to scripted scene and monologue work. Students will participate in a series of exercises designed to develop Meisner's conception of acting, and then will apply those precepts to a series of monologues and scripted scenes from the contemporary American repertoire. Students will learn to make strong and specific choices of action, objective and obstacle and apply those choices to their performance work.

ACTING III

This course is designed broaden students' understanding of acting technique. Students will explore the physical performance principles developed by such practitioners as Jerzy Grotowski, Michael Chekhov and Jacques LeCoq in order to integrate their physical, vocal and analytical work. Students will analyze, rehearse and perform a variety of material from both American and international repertoires. They will learn to justify their interpretive choices through textual clues and historical, social and aesthetic research.

ACTING IV

This course is designed as a laboratory for students to experiment with their current understandings of Theater and expand their conceptual limits. Students will work with a variety of contemporary and traditional approaches to Theater around the world. They will explore Modern Non-realist acting techniques and experiment with the use of technology in performance in order to create a series of original works for the stage.

ACTING FOR THE CAMERA - (elective)

Students will acquire a broad overview of the many faces of on-camera work, including the vocabulary, skills, and techniques for working on a set. The sessions are divided into a didactic lesson and a practical on-camera lab. Students will be taped every week in order to achieve a degree of comfort, familiarity, and self-awareness with the medium. Each week, students will also discuss up-to-date practical information about working in the entertainment industry (e.g.; pictures, resumes, demo tapes, classes, auditions, agents, trade publications, and unions).

ACTING FOR NON-MAJORS – (elective)

This course gives students a basic first experience in acting. They learn how to interact creatively and collaboratively with each other; to do simple solo and partner mimes and exercises; to create context, given circumstances, relationships and objectives in simple one page scripts; to do realistic and believable improvisations; and to act a character in a full short play. Acting experience is not necessary.

AUDITION TECHNIQUE

This class is designed to prepare students for their next steps in the education and/or professional theater. Students will develop a standard, contrasting two monologue audition performance, as well as learning cold reading and self-taping techniques. Students will be introduced to the basic tools of the actor's business: headshots and resumes, websites, and reels. They will be introduced to the roles of agents and casting directors in the theatrical workplace.

CLASSICAL SCENE STUDY

This class focuses on exploring texts of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Students will rehearse and present a variety of sonnets, soliloquies and scenes from the Elizabethan/Jacobean repertoire. Using abstract vocal and physical techniques, students will learn to bring elevated text to life, while incorporating character, beats and intention. In the final portion of the course, students may have the opportunity to explore other aspects of the Classical Repertoire from Renaissance Europe, Classical Greece and Rome, or other areas of the world.

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

Commedia dell' Arte is a form of Italian street theatre and improvisational comedy, which dates back to the sixteenth century. As a living theatre form Commedia dell' Arte no longer exists, however - - it is the *arte* that is the essential part of the work, the spirit discovered through the style. Students will study mime, physical comedy, and the development of a clown character, slapstick and circus skills such as juggling, balancing, and acrobatics on the road to becoming complete Commedia performers. The study of masks, improvisational technique, *lazzi*, and scenario provide the performer with a challenging container to explore the art of comedy and the craft of acting. Students will develop their own stock characters, complete with masks, and use them to create original Commedia pieces.

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN THEATER

This course will give students an opportunity to evaluate and discuss the socio-political dynamics that impact the practice of Theater in today's world. Through discussion, debate, critical writing and creative projects – students will learn how considerations of gender/cultural equity, representative diversity, and conscious vs. blind casting practices are shaping the professional theater landscape.

DIRECTING- (elective)

A hands-on, fast-paced introduction to the basics of directing for the stage. Using a series of progressive exercises, students will practice and perfect the techniques of visual storytelling. By creating an artistic laboratory setting, the curriculum challenges the students to make strong, clear choices and effectively communicate to actors and designers on a daily basis, developing practical applications of the theories behind directing. This class is for advanced Theater and Musical Theater majors only.

DOCUDRAMA – (elective)

In this elective course, students will create original theater pieces from real-life stories and interviews. Students will work together to examine contemporary issues and develop their own plays by sharing and performing the stories of the interviewees. Students will also examine the works and work processes of noted docudrama makers.

FOOLS AND CLOWNS

In this physical, high energy acting class students will take a journey into the world of physical comedic acting and clowning. They will learn the rules of clowning and various clowning techniques to create scenes featuring original clown characters. Students will learn to communicate stories and ideas using movement, gesture, facial expressions and other clowning skills. They will demonstrate acting skills by developing, communicating and sustaining characters individually and within a group. They will apply research from silent film sources to script writing and acting choices. They will develop inter and intrapersonal skills through use of ensemble based activities, and learn to connect importance of physical warm-ups to the work actors create.

IMPROV: DON'T BE PREPARED – (elective)

In this class, students will learn the basics behind improvisational performance, a theater style where the only motto is, "Don't Be Prepared." A serious approach to comedy will be practiced and something brand new will be created at every class meeting. By using short, long and competitive forms, we will develop an active approach to improvisation and hone our skills to become comedy confident.

IMPROVISATION

This semester-long course supports and adds to the curriculum for all Second Year students in the theater department. Students focus on two primary areas: working cooperatively with their classmates in small groups; and creating believable characters in a variety of given circumstances with increasing complexity. Students use the same tools as with simple scripts—only in this class they create the scripts as well.

INTRODUCTION TO TECHNICAL THEATER

This survey course, taught by the Theater Design & Production faculty, is designed to introduce students to the basic areas of theater production such as scenery, costumes, and lighting. Instruction will emphasize terminology, basic concepts and safety. Students will obtain the knowledge of the behind the scenes collaboration that takes a production from an initial script selection through design and implementation to the final curtain.

INTRODUCTION TO THEATER

This course will emphasize that reading a playscript is an act of imagination that requires effort and active engagement. Students will explore the ways in which various theater artists interpret the text of a play depending upon their roles as Actors, Directors, Designers or Technicians. Through reading, discussion and projects, students will learn to analyze the plot structures of plays and discover how levels of characterization can be developed through close reading of the text.

JAZZ DANCE

This class incorporates basic elements of classical Jazz Dance. Concentrated work focuses on strength, alignment, coordination of all parts of the body and demonstrating different styles of choreography. The course asks students to approach their movement work in a disciplined and technical manner.

MOVEMENT FOR ACTORS

Students will develop the tools to prepare for a character and change characters. This class will train students to identify and adapt the physical qualities of a character through dance styles, improvisation, and the study of basic movement qualities drawn from the work of Laban Movement Analysis.

MOVEMENT REP – (elective)

This is a product-oriented elective class in which the ensemble works together to create and workshop a long, non-verbal movement piece. Students are expected to create and embody choreography, to take risks to discover the most exciting physical work, and to research and analyze music, text and other materials. There will be a one-night-only final presentation of the work for an invited audience at the end of the school year. The course is open to students in all departments by audition.

MULTICULTURAL DANCE STYLES – (elective)

Throughout the year, students will be exposed to music and dance from around the world. Classes will include instruction in African, Latin, Asian, and/or American dance forms. Sessions will include breathing exercises and a physical warm-up to condition students to the rigorous full-body nature of the work. Students will be encouraged to use their own creativity and cultural dance knowledge to create solos or small group dances. The class is designed to show students how dance from around the world is expressed individually and where it intersects across cultures.

PERSONAL THEATER

This course will introduce students to a variety of techniques and activities (including improvisation and theatre games) for writing and generating performance through the lenses of personal and public material. Students will memorize and perform self-generated works. This class will focus on the ensemble of a community as well as individual artistic expression.

PHYSICAL THEATER

In this semester-long class, students explore ways of creating original theatre using physical form and gesture. In the first quarter, students explore Viewpoints and Laban Movement Analysis, two physical acting methods used to train actors, build ensembles and create movement for the stage. In the second quarter, students use the movement vocabulary developed in the first quarter to develop short etudes, group improvisations and scene work.

PLAYWRITING – (elective)

This course is designed to introduce students to the craft of dramatic writing. Students engage in short writing exercises which focus upon specific elements of play writing and which develop their own ideas for dramatic material. They also read and discuss selections from the contemporary repertoire. In the final portion of the course, students are responsible for developing and drafting a ten-minute play.

PUPPETRY

Students will discover acting from the perspective of performing by speaking and acting through another with at least two styles of puppets. Styles of puppet performance covered in the class may include but not be limited to: Object Theatre, Hand Puppetry, Rod Puppetry, and Marionettes. Students will construct their own simple puppets in order to perform a final scene.

SHAKESPEARE FOR ACTORS

This course concentrates on bringing Shakespeare's plays to life through scene work and monologues. Students will choose and cut material from a cross section of Shakespeare's works. They will dissect the language, distinguish differences for performing prose and verse, and build characters for performance.

STAGE COMBAT – (elective)

The aim of the course is to have students learn the basics of stage combat, both hand to hand, and using weapons. To create the illusion of fighting, the course will cover trust falls, Tibetan and Maori exercises regarding physical and spatial awareness, hand to hand combat skills, tumbling and stunt work. It culminates in weapons work, including rapier and dagger techniques, fencing, Broadsword and shield techniques.

SPOKEN WORD (elective)

This course will introduce students to the world of performance poetry. Students will be introduced to a variety of poetic styles, formats and devices. They will cover poetic movements from the Harlem Renaissance to the Nuyorican Poets to the world of Hip-Hop. They will be encouraged to respond with the original writing and performances that reflect upon their personal experiences and the world around them.

SUZUKI TECHNIQUE

This course is based on the physical training and creative energy of renowned Japanese theater artist, Tadashi Suzuki. The students participate in rigorous physical exercises geared towards heightening their strength, focus, intensity and stamina. They all perform as an ensemble in an actor generated piece of theater of which they write, create, and direct.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

In this class, the students will learn how to read a play as a performance piece rather than as a literary work. Texts are analyzed for dramatic structure and character clues. Contemporary and classical texts are read aloud. In addition, the students are introduced to various “isms” in theater – those styles that we most commonly recognize in Western theater. We look at plays from the vantage point of actors, directors, and designers. Multi-media projects explore the material in each quarter.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS 2

In this course students read contemporary plays by and/or about minority culture to hear the stories less heard and the stories of the oppressed. Throughout this class students will be building an understanding of the context and how/why oppression works, through play reading and historical research. This course is intended to cultivate further empathy and compassion towards others and understanding of how storytelling can change the world.

THEATER & SOCIAL JUSTICE

Using techniques developed by such practitioners as Augusto Boal, Dario Fo and Bertolt Brecht, this course will investigate the ways in which applied theater can impact the society as a whole. Students will develop and perform a series of projects designed to address, analyze and inspire the audience to change systemic problems at the school, regional, national and/or global level.

THEATER HISTORY

This course will provide an overview of the history of theater from the present day back to the Greeks. A non-Eurocentric approach will be taken to include Asian and African theater in the curriculum. Students are required to do research and make presentations in class and to pool their knowledge and resources. Cultural eras will be brought to life in the classroom as students explore text, performance styles, and costume/scenic design.

VOICE & DICTION

This course will introduce students to the means of developing articulation, breath control and projection skills by learning how the voice works and how to use it efficiently. Through daily technical exercises and projects, students will begin to develop the skills to be easily heard and understood whenever they on stage.

VOCAL PRODUCTION 2

This course will develop and specify the skills introduced in Voice & Diction. Through a series of technical exercises and projects, students will pay specific attention to developing resonance and increasing their vocal range and expressiveness. Students will develop personal, pre-performance regimens to warm-up their voices and to continue to improve their diction and projection.