THEATRE PRACTICUM
#575
63215
Fall 2014 Units: 6

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Office Hours
Available by appointment. Call or email as above. Mentorship is an essential element of the instructional technique in the MFA program; make it a point to make an appointment.

Course Goals
- To exercise the craft of creating a cohesive, authentic, and impactful character - in three entirely separate plays - using vocal, physical, emotional, analytical, and interpretative tools.
- To contribute to the strength of the class ensemble, through dedication and application of core principles.

Course Description
One of the goals of the MFA in Acting program is to subject each student to the demands of becoming a member of an ensemble. After two years of working as a cohort in classes, workshops and various performance situations, the third-year students have spent the Fall semester rehearsing a three-play repertoire. Now, in the Spring, they must bring their work to a culmination and perform the three plays for the public. The performances begin in February 2015, and run through early March in the Scene Dock Theatre. This year’s repertoire consists of THE SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS by Carlo Goldoni directed by Andy Robinson, BLOOD MATCH (a new adaptation of Lorca’s Blood Wedding) by Oliver Mayer directed by David Bridel, and THE SEAGULL by Anton Chekhov directed by Kate Burton.

Resident theatre companies in the USA have dwindled down to a precious few. The vast majority of acting students coming out of universities, conservatories and schools are immediately thrown into a “free-lance” situation where the work comes sporadically with
great spaces in between. The formative practical experience that professional repertory companies used to provide has now been taken on by MFA actor-training programs like ours. The 3-play rep provides the students with an invaluable opportunity to practice their hard-earned craft, an experience they are unlikely to receive in the professional world.

Not only does the student gain an opportunity to play different characters in a multi-rep situation, they get to play characters that the world of commercial theatre and film would never hire them for. Nothing stretches an actor more than to struggle with a character that’s 180 degrees removed from his or her “type.” And it’s in this kind of “miscasting” that some of the most revelatory performances are created.

What the actor learns from working as a member of the ensemble is every bit as important as what he or she learns in terms of character-building technique. A true ensemble player must not only listen and attend to the other actors, but has the responsibility to support the work of the other actors. It’s the melding of individual talents into a coherent and responsive ensemble that creates the potential for extraordinary theatre.

**Assignments**
Each actor is given a role in each play – ideally, a leading role, a supporting role, and a small role – so that no actor has a significantly larger share than the others. Each actor must attend required rehearsals which are held afternoons and/or evenings Monday through Friday and Saturday mornings (approximately 20 to 25 hours a week). Because we are scheduling rehearsals so that they don’t interfere with classes, the rehearsal times are determined each semester. Each actor is responsible for learning the text for each role, doing the appropriate research, and coming to rehearsal on time and prepared to work.

**Schedule**
Brush-up rehearsals for the three plays begin on the first day of the Spring semester and continue until the performances begin in early February, at which point the plays go into a performing rotation in the Scene Dock Theatre through to early March. Each play has 8 performances before a paying audience. The 3 directors work out the rehearsal schedule and the rotation of plays for performance.

**Final Exam**
is the performance of the three plays.

**Grading & Evaluation**
A is excellence; B is good to adequate; C is failure.

**Attendance**
Acts of nature, severe illness, and emergencies are the only excuses for absences, and must be documented.
Texts
THE SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS by Goldoni
BLOOD MATCH by Oliver Mayer
THE SEAGULL by Anton Chekhov

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards
https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/

Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

Student Conduct

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity
http://equity.usc.edu/

or to the Department of Public Safety
http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us.
This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person.
The Center for Women and Men
http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/
provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html
provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu/will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis**

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.