

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 315: Physical Theatre

Fall Semester 2016 Monday, Wednesday 2.30 – 4.50

Location: Ped 208

Instructor: Dr Louise Peacock

Office: Jefferson 202

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10am – 11am. Please email for face to face appointments or skype appointments outside these times.

Contact Info: lpeacock@usc.edu.

Catalogue Description

This course immerses students in the world of Commedia dell'Arte. The course will focus on working physically to create commedia inspired characters. Students will learn to perform physical comedy and will learn how to work in commedia masks. The emphasis of the course will be on the physical exploration of devising commedia inspired scenes. Students will also have the opportunity to explore original commedia scenarios. By the time we conclude students should feel confident that they can create and perform a short commedia scenario.

This course is intended for BFA majors.

Course Overview

The course is structured as a studio class in which student exploration and performance experience are primary.

Learning Objectives

The course is designed to equip students with advanced devising and performance skills in the area of Commedia Dell'Arte.

- To acquire a practical understanding of the processes of rehearsing and performing Commedia dell'Arte
- To develop technical skills in commedia characterization and mask work
- To develop skills in improvisation and devising

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

| Assignment | % of Grade |
|--|-------------|
| 1. In class character exercises | 10% |
| 2. Creation and performance of 2 solo lazzi | 10% |
| 3. Creation and performance of a short duo scene | 10% |
| 4. Reflection on solo and Duo | 10% |
| 5. Physicalizing text | 20% |
| 6. Final – creation of a 20 min scenario | 25% |
| 7. Participation | 15% |
| TOTAL: | 100% |

Grading Scale for SDA: **A** indicates work of excellent quality; **B** of good quality; **C** of average quality; **D** of below average quality; and **F** indicates inadequate work.

Grading Breakdown

Excellent: A (4) = 100-94; A- (3.7) = 93-90

Good: B+ (3.3) = 89-86; B (3) = 85-84; B- (2.7) = 83-80

Average: C+ (2.3) = 79-76; C (2) = 75-74; C- (1.7) = 73-70

Poor: the D range (1.3-0) = 60s; F (0) = 59 and below

“Excellent” indicates that the student couples clear understanding of the class material with original and creative insight; “Good” means that the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the material; “Average” indicates that the student demonstrates a general understanding of the material but with some gaps; “Poor” indicates that there are identifiable gaps in the student’s understanding of the class material; “Failure” is the result of the student not having completed his or her assignments coupled with poor understanding of the material.

- When the average falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students whose attendance and participation in class have been good, and will be weighted toward the negative end of the scale for those with poor attendance and participation.

The SDA GUIDELINES on GRADING:

- There shall be 3 graded assignments and a final examination as scheduled by USC.
- Attendance shall be weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.
- There shall be no unexcused absences.
- **No late assignments** shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.

Grades are not dictated by the instructor’s subjective opinion of talent or artistic preference.

Grades are dictated by:

- **Constructive feedback on classmates’ work**

- **Willingness to experiment and apply the constructive feedback of instructor and students on one's own process and performance techniques**
- **Meeting all assignment deadlines: rehearsing, writing, performing (No late work accepted)**
- **Preparedness for class (remembering any props and/or costume indicated by the instructor)**
- **Availability to fellow classmates to rehearse outside of class**

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

| | | |
|----------------|----------|---|
| WEEK 1 | Class 1 | Introduction Broad Stroke Character work |
| | Class 2 | Exploring the commedia Stage |
| WEEK 2 | Class 3 | The Zanni, Brighella and Arlecchino |
| | Class 4 | Pantalone, Dottore and Capitano |
| WEEK 3 | | No Class: Labor Day |
| | Class 5 | The Lovers and Colombina |
| WEEK 4 | Class 6 | Developing character work/Introducing Mask |
| | Class 7 | Developing character work/Introducing Mask |
| WEEK 5 | Class 8 | Refining character work |
| | Class 9 | Character exercise assessments |
| WEEK 6 | Class 10 | Exploration of lazzi |
| | Class 11 | Exploration of lazzi |
| WEEK 7 | Class 12 | Minor masks: Pulcinella and Pasquella/the witch, Pedrolino and Magnifico |
| | Class 13 | Work on Solo lazzi |
| WEEK 8 | Class 14 | Solo lazzi assessment |
| | Class 15 | Comic chases and comic violence |
| WEEK 9 | Class 16 | Short scene work |
| | Class 17 | Short scene work |
| WEEK 10 | Class 18 | Duo scene assessment |
| | Class 19 | Reading scenarios |
| WEEK 11 | Class 20 | Exploring the possibilities of scenarios Proposition/Complication/Resolution |
| | Class 21 | Working on a given scenario |

| | | |
|----------------|----------|--|
| WEEK 12 | Class 22 | In class assessment – bringing the scenario to life |
| | Class 23 | Developing a scenario |
| WEEK 13 | Class 24 | Incorporating music |
| | Class 25 | Rehearsing a scenario |
| WEEK 14 | Class 26 | Rehearsing a scenario |
| | Class 27 | Work in progress showing |
| WEEK 15 | Class 28 | Finalizing your scenario |
| | Class 30 | Finalizing your scenario |

Assignments and deadlines:

Character exercises: in class on Wednesday 20th September

You will demonstrate your ability to perform any two of the commedia characters covered in the course. Your demonstration should include stance, walk(s), use of mask, audience engagement as appropriate and either speech or grummelot.

Solo Lazzi: in class on Monday 9th October

You will develop and perform two lazzi lasting no more than 3 mins in total. You may perform both in the same character or in different characters. You may only use props and costume which you can readily supply.

Duo performance: in class on Wednesday October 18th

Self-reflection portfolio: to be submitted in class or by email prior to the class on Monday 30th October

Your portfolio should include reflections on each of your assessed performances (character, lazzi, duo). For each you should assess your strengths and weakness. Your portfolio should be no longer than 1500 words long. You may include photographs and sketches if they help you to make a point but not simply as decoration.

Physicalising text: Monday 6th November.

In a small group you will work on a short, allocated section of the scenario studied to demonstrate how it can be brought to life, where and how lazzi might be inserted, how

the stage space can be used and how character interaction can occur. You may perform or combine performance with presentation of your ideas verbally. Your performance/demonstration should last no longer than 7 mins. Be prepared to take questions.

Final: Open Performance of a scenario lasting 15 – 20 minutes on Friday Dec 9th from 2pm – 4pm

Participation: You will be assessed each week on your punctuality, preparedness to work, willingness to experiment and to engage with the exercises undertaken in class. You will also be assessed on your ability to give and receive feedback in relation to the showing of work.

Final Examination Date: Dec 8th 2pm – 4pm

This section should clearly state the date of your final exam as established by the University Registrar. This information can be found online at USC's site for the Schedule of Classes.

NOTE: *All undergraduate classes must meet for the Final Examination as established by the University. You may not hold your final examination on the last day of classes.*

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/>.

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* <https://dps.usc.edu/contact/report/>. 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. *Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP)* <http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/> 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.