

THTR-343 Musical Theatre Audition

Fall— Mon/Wed— 2:00-3:50 pm

Location: MCC 106

Instructor: Kenneth Noel Mitchell

Office: 1029 Childs Way, DRC 11B

Office Hours: , Wednesday 12 to 2

Contact Info: knm@usc.edu,

Kenneth Noel Mitchell is currently Professor of Professional Practice in Music Theatre and the Head of Music Theater at the University of Southern California. He has served on the faculty of Hofstra University, Lincoln Center Institute and The American Globe Theatre and as a guest artist/faculty at The Asolo Conservatory, Eckerd College, Florida State University and the Native American Community Center. Before coming to USC he was the Head of Acting for New York University's (NYU) New Studio on Broadway where he served as Associate Chair for the Department of Drama. Prior to that he was the Coordinator of Acting for the University of Minnesota/Guthrie BFA Actor Training Program, where he helped build one of the most competitive acting curriculums in the country today. As a director Kenneth's work has been represented in New York on the stages of the Public Theatre, Soho Rep, The American Globe Theatre, Musical Theatre Works and The Sanford Meisner Theatre. Regionally he has directed productions for: The American Stage, Stage Works, Bristol Valley Theatre, White River Junction Theatre Festival, The Asolo Conservatory Theatre, The Eckerd Theatre Company, The Fredonia Opera House and The Guthrie Experience.

As an actor he has appeared on the stages of The New York Shakespeare Festival, The Atlantic Theatre, The Performing Garage, The American Globe Theatre, The Dramatist Guild, Bristol Valley Theatre, American Stage, Stageworks and WordBridge.

Kenneth was the Artistic Director for American Stage in Saint Petersburg Florida, Kaleidoscope Theater in Sarasota Florida and Theater Outrageous in New York.

As a theatre administrator, Kenneth has worked at the New Shakespeare Festival, Circle Rep, Drama Book Shop, Manhattan Theatre Club (casting), The American Globe Theatre (Literary and casting associate) and American Stage (education director).

Kenneth is a member of Actors Equity.

Course Description and Overview:

Designed to give students confidence and integrity for auditions in musical theatre. Choosing appropriate material and preparation for the audition and performance. Through a process driven approach of active investigation of a song the actor will gain skills to prepare and present a dynamic Musical Theatre audition. The actor will understand the appropriate audition etiquette expected of them to have successful career in the industry.

Learning Objectives:

- To give the actor skills to prepare for an audition
- To give the actors the confidence to work with ease a specificity
- To apply previous training to the preparation of a musical theater audition
- To introduce the emerging professional to etiquette/skills needed to have a successful professional career
- To increase the actors awareness of musical theatre styles
- To develop the actors ability to choose the appropriate material to best showcase their unique talent

Outcomes:

- Students will have a systematic approach to prepare for an MT audition and callback
- Students will marry their present acting skills and new approaches to acting the song
- Students will expand their audition material to reflect current trends in the Musical Theatre
- Students will have the tools to personalize the characters situation
- Students will understand the skill set required of them to participate in the professional arena
- Through process oriented approach to the musical theatre audition students will gain the confidence to prepare, rehearse and execute an audition that can reveal their potential

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- New York Times Entertainment Section
- Libretto from musical you have chosen material from and historic background of period
- Libretto for the show you are auditioning for and relevant historical information about the period the musical is set

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

The SDA GUIDELINES on GRADING as published elsewhere in this handbook are:

Exceptional - A

Good - B

Satisfactory/Average - C

Poor - D

Unsatisfactory - F

A- 3.7 - The work is usually exceptional. The student is usually able to demonstrate their ability to integrate the skills being acquired in all studio classes with their talent and the technique's being taught the student demonstrates the ability to integrate the work with their talent with a high degree of artistry. The student usually exceeds all expectations.

B+ 3.3 - The student work is very good on a consistent basis. The student has been able to demonstrate the ability to meet all the expectations with sufficient consistency. They are able to identify the skills being taught and all studio classes and the techniques being employed in the process in this class with little support. Student shows promise of great achievement over time.

B 3.0 - The student work is solidly within expectations. The student demonstrates the ability to utilize the skills being taught with regular support. The student is able to demonstrate their understanding of the critique if not always able to achieve it consistently.

B- 2.7 - The student work is above average. The student requires regular support but their work remains within the required parameter. The student demonstrates the ability to use the skills being taught but with less confidence and frequency.

C+ 2.3 - The student work has been above average on occasion but with less consistency average. The student is engaging the process technically but with out the consistent results expected. The student requires regular and repeated support.

C 2.0 - The student's work is average. They are proceeding at a slower pace. They are demonstrating a limited understanding/engagement of the skills being taught. The student requires regular and repeated support. Other underlying factors such as discipline, focus, concentration and commitment may be undermining their progress. The student demonstrates a lack of consistency.

C- 1.7 - The student work is below average and is not meeting the expectations or criteria of the class. The student is not working with rigor and is not engaging the skills being taught with any consistency. Regular and repeated support may not be effectively advancing the student's progress. Other underlying factors such as discipline, focus, concentration and commitment may be undermining their progress.

D+ 1.3 - The student work is poor. The student is not engaging in the process with any rigor or discipline. The work is far below the parameters of acceptable application. The student demonstrates little appetite the skills being taught. Other underlying factors such as discipline, focus, concentration and commitment may be undermining their progress.

D 1.0 - The work is barely acceptable. The student has shown little to no progress during the course in any visible manner. The most of the homework assigned has not been turned in in a

timely manner. The student is not engaged with the work, his classmates and/or the craft of acting.

F 0.0 - A majority of the work is unacceptable.

What you will be graded on:

Assessment Criteria

	Exceptional A	Good B	Satisfactory/ Average C	Poor D	Unsatisfactory F
Collaboration					
Generosity of Spirit					
Participation					
Attitude					
Preparation for Class					
Risk Taking					
Building a process					
Integration of skills					
Imagination & Creativity					
Professional Etiquette					
Discussion Etiquette					
Skill Acquisition					
Overall Growth					

Collaboration - is a process where two or more people come together in an intersection of common goals.

Generosity of Spirit - Generosity of spirit means that an individual chooses to **give** of his own free will. It can **transform** situations, particularly those that seem immutable.

Participation – **Always** being prompts and attending all classes, unless excused. You proactively contribute to class by offering ideas and **asking** questions. You listen when others talk, both in groups and in class. You **incorporate or build off** of the ideas of others. You are **always** prepared for class with assignments and required class materials.

Attitude – You must **fully** engage your **heart, body** and **spirit** in **all** exercises and assignments.

Preparation for Class/Written Assignments - You are required to come to acting class focused, in neutral, loose fitting clothes or dressed to perform the character you are portraying. All assignments must be executed and/or the completed when they are due, this includes all text memorized and props present necessary to perform your assignment.

Imagination and Creativity – you must **deepen** your power of forming mental images and situations of what is not actually present. This is the act or power of creating mental images of what has never been actually experienced, or of creating new images or ideas by combining previous experiences; you must build your **creative power** by awakening your inner child.

Risk Taking – You will be encourage to step out side of you own personal comfort zone and asked to take intelligent risks.

Building a Process/Integration of skills – In order to excel in the training you will asked to begin to incorporate and apply the skills and techniques you are leaning in your other classes to building your process in acting.

“Create your own method. Don’t depend slavishly on mine (or someone else’s). Make up something that will work for you! But keep breaking tradition, I beg you.”

- Constantine Stanislavski

Professional Etiquette

- Be early is on time on time is late
- Always enter the class wearing the clothes the instructor has requested
- If you are late to class you will be asked to leave and marked absent
- Do not ask to dress once class has begun
- Get water and use the restroom before class has started not when class is ready to begin
- Eat before hand, there is no food allowed in the studio
- Do not chew gum
- Leave the space cleaner then you found it
- Return all props and furniture to where they belong

- In the spirit of ensemble and preparing you for the professional world, accepted standards of personal hygiene must be respected
- Memorize your lines accurately and on schedule as directed
- The student is responsible for all material presented, including material presented when a student is absent
- All cell phones must be TURNED OFF (not on vibrate mode) at the beginning of the class and remain off, out of sight and inaccessible for the duration.
- Only the recording of music is acceptable in class is of music or by the instructor. Otherwise. THERE IS NO RECORDING OF CLASSES OR EVENTS AND NO POSTING OF CLASSES OR EVENTS, EITHER WHOLE OR IN PART ON ANY SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES.
- The classroom is a place to warm up in not socialize
- When in the acting studio warm up and prepare for the acting class and not doing homework from other classes
- Avoid personal activities that interfere concentration and energy
- Do not direct or coach other actors if you have suggestions go through the instructor when rehearsing or in class
- In discussion think like an investigator not like a critic
- Accept feedback without defensiveness
- Do not beat yourself up if the work did not go as expected
- Do not make excuses for the work
- Apply observations of others to your own work
- Avoid talking or whispering while others are working
- Stay present physically and emotionally when others are working
- Do not engage in side conversation when the instructor is working is with another actor

Discussion etiquette - This is a process, not a competition. Each actor is unique and each of you will be encouraged to grow individually. Each actor will encounter different obstacles at different points in the training. Acting is about acknowledging and revealing the deepest parts of your soul and lending that part of you to the character. In order to expose and express the feelings of the character you must access your feelings; this type of work is dangerous and exciting. Therefore, we must create a safe environment where risk taking and failure is honored. When you are encouraged to respond to actors and their exercises it is required that your comments be constructive, not destructive. My function is to challenge each actor to develop his/her own unique voice and become the best possible artist. Because each of you are unique, I will be pushing you in different ways. Anything personal revealed in the studio stays in the studio.

Skill Acquisition - To succeed in this course you must make a **personal connection** to the material, taking the focus **off** yourself and putting it **on** the other and the ability to identify and pursue an objective **actively** and with **variety**.

Overall Growth – You will be expected to achieve a level of **comprehension** and **implementation** of the skills required in this course and exhibit growth with the talents and abilities that are **uniquely** yours.

TOUCHING:

It is understood that the teaching of theater often requires “hands-on” teaching by the instructor and student partners. The respectful use of touch is often necessary to determine proper breathing, postural alignment, and to make students aware of body habits that may be inhibiting efficient and effective physical and vocal production. It is instrumental at times in order to make a well-informed diagnosis and to act upon that determination accordingly. If, after reading and understanding the intention behind “hands-on” teaching, a student has concerns about it, he/she should speak with the instructor outside of class as soon as the concern arises so that the instructor may consider an alternative approach and solution.

- *If you become uncomfortable with exercises, the material or the rehearsal process, please notify the instructor immediately.*

MATERIAL:

When choosing material please let me know if there is an area of interest that speaks to you. Also, I encourage you to make me aware of any areas/subjects you are uncomfortable with in the initial phase of your training. Finally, please let me know if there are any physical challenges that we must take into account in order to make this process safe and healthy. However, the very nature of professional training demands that we go into spaces that are unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable. This is a part of the process. As faculty, it is our responsibility to challenge and support you on your artistic journey while facilitating a space of risk to help you develop a vivid imagination, emotional resilience and strong technical backbone. The space is not meant to be safe one but a brave one. There will be moments of discomfort. By making yourself open and available during times of vulnerability and discomfort you have the ability to grow as an artist. When those moments occur we encourage you to lean in with an understanding that we are there to support you.

RIGOR

If your work when called upon is not at a level deemed acceptable by the professor, you can and will be asked to sit down. This is not to embarrass or humiliate you. The professor is there to support your developing technique and assist in deepening connection to the material which cannot be done if your work has not been explored before coming into the classroom.

Expectations in Engagement and Preparation of the Work

- 1) *No assignments should be rehearsed a cappella after we have done our text work. You must become accustomed to engaging the moment in partnership with the*

accompaniment where many musical clues are held.

2) Be prepared to briefly discuss what acting techniques were used during your outside rehearsal time and how this musical selection reveals your strengths as an actor and musician.

3) Once you enter the classroom, there is no idle chatter. The time before class begins must be spent: Engaging in vocal or physical warmup. Working on class assignment. Emotionally preparing for demands of class assignment

4) Each student is expected to be present and supportive of all classmates as they work. No sleeping, no zoning out.

If you wish to engage in idle chatter please do so outside of the room until class begins. Bathroom breaks are before class and can only be excused in cases of emergency.

Other things to know:

If you come to class you must be capable of doing the work. If you are ill and come to class, you must be able to engage the work if called upon. This is an opportunity to engage the work in a different way and many lessons can be learned in these circumstances.

*** All students are asked to do 1 one hour tutorial during the semester**

***There maybe additions and/or subtractions to the schedule. These adjustments will be prescriptive to the specific needs of the ensemble.**

Course Schedule:

Week 1 – 8/20

Monday

**Assign song for Wednesday New Song from a*

Contemporary Musical that has a personal connection to the lyrics but have never heard. please check to make sure it's in your voice the. and a libretto is available and send a copy to the instructor.

Wednesday

Week 2 - 8/27

Monday

Wednesday

Week 3 - 9/03

Monday

Wednesday

Week 4 - 9/10

Monday

Wednesday

Week 5 – 9/17

Monday

Wednesday

**Assign 2 New contrasting songs 16/8 bar cut-Midterm*

From a Golden Age musical one ballad and one uptempo from such composers as Rodgers and Hart, Kurt Weill, Cole Porter, Lerner and Lowe, Harold Arlen, The Gershwins, Jules Stein, early Cy Coleman. One of the must be an "invitation" song where you invite people know you. It should be joyful and express who you are. One song can be a ballad. please get a copy of the libretto and be familiar with it.

Week 6 - 9/24

Monday

Wednesday

Week 7 - 10/1

Monday

Wednesday

Week 8 - 10/8

Monday

Wednesday

Week 9 - 10/15

Introduction

Syllabus, Exercises and Discussion

Entering the room, Exercises and Present a song

Music

Individual appointments to go over music

How to enter the room

Personal Connection

Labor Day

New Song Due, Dropping in

Personal Connection

Working the text

Working the test with music

Relationship & Environment

Relationship and partner work

Environment

Moment B4

Uta Hagan 3 entrances

Moment B 4, Relationship & Environment

Objective, Conflict, Beats and Action, Givens

Circumstances

Work songs

Present song

New Song-Midterm

Work song #1 to incorporate skills

Work song #1 & 2 to incorporate a skills

Monday	Work song #1 to incorporate skills
Wednesday	Work song #1 & 2 to incorporate a skills
Monday	Work song #1 & 2 to incorporate a skills
Wednesday	Present both songs
Week 10 – 10/21	Audition # 1-Raw, Emotional song for POP/ROCK MUSICAL Title TBA.
Monday	
Wednesday	Callback Announced
Week 11 -10/28	Callback # 1 POP/ROCK MUSCAL
Monday	
Wednesday	
Week 12 - 11/05	Audition # 2 TBA
Monday	Music Call
Wednesday	Dance Call, Call Back announced
Week 13 - 11/12	CallBack # 2
Monday	Assign One song from a Disney musical or movie
Wednesday	
Week 14 – 11/19	Audition # 3-Disney TBA musical or movie
Monday	Final exam assigned, Call backs announced
Wednesday	Thanksgiving off
Week 15 – 11/26	Callback # 3
Monday	
Wednesday	

Final Examination Date: 12/7 2:00-4:00

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* <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.

***HEALTH:**

Nutrition: A well-trained actor is a poet, scholar and an athlete. As an athlete, your nutritional choices directly affect your performance. Please make informed choices about what you eat and drink. Courses on nutrition are offered and are available to you. If you have questions, please ask.

Sleep: Lack of sufficient rest will soon catch up with you and will affect all of your work. Part of your education is learning time management.

Smoking: Our work centers on breath and smoking handicaps this effort. If you'd like help to quit, we can refer you to effective programs.

Stress: The next four years will be among the most exhilarating of your life. They will also be stressful and not without moments of difficulty. This is normal. Mental stress is as real as physical stress. If you need help, please ask your student advisor for guidance.

*You will be required to work on assignments outside the classroom. The minimum amount of time you spend preparing each project will be prescribed when the assignment is given.

Physical Contact and Consent:

Consent-The permission for something to happen or agreement to do something

"No change may be made without the consent of all the partners."Synonyms: agreement, assent, acceptance, approval, approbation; permission, authorization, sanction, leave; backing, endorsement, support; informal go-ahead, thumbs up, green light, OK

Rules for consent in scenes involving intimacy, sexual contact or violence in rehearsal or in the classroom:

1. ALL PHYSICAL CONTACT NEEDS TO BE DISCUSSED AND AGREED UPON BY ALL PARTIES INVOLVED, INCLUDING THE PROFESSOR OF RECORD IN THE CLASS BEFORE THE WORK IS REHEARSED OR PRESENTED IN CLASS AND BEFORE IT IS PHYSICALIZED IN ANY WAY. ONCE THESE MOMENTS ARE SET, THEY CANNOT BE VARIED OR CHANGED UNLESS A SPECIFIC MODIFICATION IS AGREED UPON IN ADVANCE BY ALL PARTIES INCLUDING THE PROFESSOR OF RECORD.

2. If at this point any person/persons involved in the work feel uncomfortable they must notify the instructor immediately.

3. If everyone involved in the work is comfortable with moving forward with the work they must agree upon:

a. When they want to physicalize the moment in the process

b . If the blocking decided upon is deviated from by either party in the rehearsal, they must stop immediately and the instructor notified.

c. If the blocking decided upon is deviated from by either party in the classroom sharing, then the instructor will stop the scene immediately, clear the classroom, and talk to the parties involved.

d. As in all things common sense, decency, consideration and respect of both your partner and yourself is extremely important. Among the common practices and boundaries adhered to within the profession:

PLEASE REMEMBER TO LIMIT ALL PHYSICAL CONTACT IF YOU ARE NOT 100% WELL OR HAVE EVEN THE BEGINNINGS OF A COLD, FLU or ANYTHING COMMUNICABLE!!!!!!

Discard Attitude and Judgment

In some cases, you may have naïve expectations about the behavior of other people and find yourself being critical of your colleagues. Try not to be sidetracked by your negative judgments or adversarial relationships with other actors. If a situation arises, handle it with all the maturity you can muster.

Set your own boundaries for the behavior you will tolerate: depending upon the circumstances, you will probably discover that you can tolerate much more than you ever imagined. But when someone's behavior holds you back or crosses an extremely personal line, you must deal with the individual. Deal directly or seek channels through which you can handle the situation effectively and discreetly.

Work with Integrity

Unprofessional behavior is not okay and you do not have to tolerate it. Although you will most often be able to get out of an uncomfortable situation in an acting class by dropping the scene, it is unlikely that you will quit a paid acting job even if you are working in a miserable environment with people who are unprofessional. As with any job, this can happen, and you will eventually develop the skills to determine how to navigate the situation and get on with the work.

- DO NOT SPEAK WITH YOUR CLASSMATES ABOUT SCENE PARTNERS.
- WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CLASSROOM, STAYS IN THE CLASSROOM!

Confidential On-Campus Resources

USC Center for Work and Family Life

213.821.0800

<http://www.usc.edu/programs/cwfl/>

The center for Work and Family Life offers confidential counseling for faculty and staff, free of charge. Services offered include:

- anxiety, depression, and other mental and emotional problems and disorders
- family and relationship issues
- substance abuse and other addictions
- sexual abuse and domestic violence
- social and emotional difficulties related to disability, illness, relationships

USC Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services

For students impacted or affected by gender-based harm, or to discuss issues of healthy relationships, please contact USC Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services, which is the home of the Sexual Assault Resource Center (sarc.usc.edu).

USC Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services offers confidential 24-hour crisis counseling:

- business hours: (213) 740-4900 (After-hours press 0 to speak to an on call counselor)

Other On-Campus Resources (Not Confidential)

USC Department of Public Safety (DPS)

University Park Campus

- Emergency: (213) 740-4321
- Non-Emergency: (213) 740-6000

Health Sciences Campus

- Emergency: (323) 442-1000
- Non-Emergency: (323) 442-1000

USC Office of Equity and Diversity (includes Title IX compliance)

- University Park Campus: (213) 740-5086
- Health Sciences Campus: (323) 442-2020