SINGING FOR ACTORS
THTR 542
Fall 2018

BRETT RYBACK

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Office Hours

Available by appointment.

Course Description

Students will explore singing in musical theatre from the integration of scene through to the end of the song. We will work through various duet, trio, and quartet scene/song vignettes that are chosen to challenge and highlight each student's skill set. We will work to combine dramatic and musical expression, fostering organic, authentic, emotional work to shift from scene to song. We will work to find and mark musical dynamics; expression in the voice; text/ lyric work to find and mark color words; objective; actions (verb words); and ultimately staging. We will work in both classical and contemporary genres. The desired goal will see each actor in roughly three numbers. This will vary given student's type and skill set (which often informs pace), allowing us to find the right balance of comfort and challenge.

In addition to the group numbers, the students will also work on a solo piece. This can be in the style of their choice. This piece will differ from the other course material, and will not be performed using the scene/song format.

Course Overview

In working with students whose primary focus is dramatic acting, I believe that using the scene/song format will allow them to root themselves in the 'reality' of the scene and feel more grounded while emotionally spring boarding into the song. I believe the singing of a song is meaningless without strong emotional conviction from a performer - in many instances I have been more moved by a non-singer, than by a singer who has had classical training. There is a void when listening to a trained voice without the emotional wheels turning.

This course presents a unique opportunity to work with true actors though song. I think the work will lead to thrilling moments. It will provide challenges, but ultimately I believe the work will mean more when it is rooted in text and dramatic acting choices.

Learning Objectives

Musicality
Learning to dissect a piece of music. Becoming familiar with the words and markings on the sheet music. The emotional arc of the song, the breaths, the emotions as expressed through vocal characteristics – crying in the voice, joy in the voice.

Word work
Identifying action words, interpreting the text. What are the objectives, working with the song as a monologue text, finding the backstory and objectives of the character.

Performance work –
Finding the foci, finding the blueprint emotionally so that the emotion builds as the scene progresses into the song. The emotion has to be high enough to earn the right to sing.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Students will be given text and materials to prepare by the instructor. In addition, students may be required to purchase sheet music and scripts as directed in class.

Class Meetings

TH 3-5:50
Location: DRC 120

Final Presentation

Tuesday, December 11th – 2pm-4pm

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

FOR SDA Assignments: Grades will be assigned according to the above criteria. Students can check their progress at any time by scheduling an appointment with the instructors during office hours.

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

> **The grades will be based on a combination of performance in class, written assignment(s), and preparation and study outside of class:**
> • the degree of participation, and the energy in and commitment to the performance work

        in class **(45%)**
- the amount and quality of preparation outside of class **(10%)**
- the consistency of class attendance **(5%)**
- the mid-term exercise, which will be announced during the first half of the semester. **(15%)**
- the written review of a musical production seen during the current semester **(10%)**
- the final presentation **(15%)**

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

- *Each course shall contain at least three assignments, projects, exams, papers or exercises which shall be evaluated during the semester and which shall provide an analytical record of each student's progress in the course.*
- *Attendance shall be weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines. Studio Courses must delineate how participation will be graded (in class exercises, scene study, etc.)*
- *There shall be no unexcused absences.*
- *No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercised shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.*

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments will be given in class. Scene and song work assigned by the instructor MUST be prepared for the class meeting it is due. Failure to prepare material will result in students being prohibited from working in class.

Attendance, Tardiness, Absences

We expect the highest level of commitment from MFA actors. Lateness is not tolerated without prior notice. Unexcused absences are not permitted. Communication with the instructor is essential in case of emergency or illness. Violation of these requirements will result in disciplinary measures.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

WEEK 1: Introduction, "Audition"
WEEK 2: Foundational vocal work, learn group number
WEEK 3: Individual assignments. Learning Music
WEEK 4: Learning Music.
WEEK 5: Linklater / Learning Music
WEEK 6: Linklater / Learning Music
WEEK 7: Linklater / Learning Music
WEEK 8: Linklater / Learning Music
WEEK 9: Staging
WEEK 10: Staging

WEEK 11: Staging
WEEK 12: Review/Stumble Thru
WEEK 13: Review/Stumble Thru
WEEK 14: No Class. Thanksgiving.
WEEK 15: Run-Thru

Important Dates

1. 9-11: Last day to add or to drop this class without a grade of "W" or to select the "P/NP" options.
2. 11-13: Last day to withdraw with a grade of "W"

Read the Fine Print

1. The above schedule and procedures in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.
2. It is the responsibility of each student to know and follow all the written guidance given by the instructor in this syllabus.

NOTE: All 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 for Students with Disabilities
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Statement on Academic Integrity
USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or http://scampus.usc.edu) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Statements 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.htmlprovides 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.