

THEATRE PRACTICUM

#597

Spring 2020

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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 2020 and run through early March in the Scene Dock Theatre. This year's repertoire consists of Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM directed by Andrei Belgrader; FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS (Parts 1,2,and 3) by Suzan Lori-Parks directed by Gregg Daniel; and GUARDED by Boni Alvarez, directed by David Warshofsky.

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

The performance of the three plays.

Grading & Evaluation

A is excellence; B is good to adequate; C is failure.

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.

Texts

A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM by William Shakespeare
FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS (Parts 1,2,and 3) by Suzan Lori-Parks
GUARDED by Boni Alvarez

Dates to Note:

MLK Day: Monday, January 20
President's Day: Monday, February 17
Spring Recess Sun-Sun March 15-22
Classes End: Friday, May 1
Study Days: Sat-Tue May 2-5
Exams: Wed-Wed May 6-13
Commencement (required attendance for all MFA) Friday May 15

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 Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. 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>.

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 for DSP and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

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. See the university's site on Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu