

THTR 542 Singing for Actors

Units: 2.0

Fall 2021 — Thursdays — 3:00-5:50p

Location: MCC 107.

Instructors : Vicki Lewis, Brett Ryback

Office Hours: Available by appointment

Contact Info: Vicki: vlewis@usc.edu, 310-428-6803.

Brett: bryback@usc.edu, 310-923-8662. Text or call. Will get back within 48 hours.

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 two to 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 may also be asked to 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.

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 through 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.

Vocal Work

Understanding the physical mechanisms of the voice; focusing on deep relaxation; strengthening breath support, and understanding that breath is the basis for accessing emotion; learning techniques to access different areas of the vocal mechanism.

Text 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.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Students will be expected to learn and rehearse material assigned in class, utilizing techniques learned in class. Their participation in class, their preparation outside of class, and their progress toward the final performance will create the basis for their grade.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Full Group Work		15
Small Group Work		15
Solo Work		15
Non-acting vocal work		10
Outside Preparation		20
Reading of text materials		10
Final Presentation		15
TOTAL	0	100

Grading Scale (Example)

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

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.

Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment

USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

SCampus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

Course evaluation

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. You should expect to receive an email update once the system has launched to provide your feedback on this course. In addition, you are always welcome to connect with with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.

Additional Policies

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

Provide a detailed course calendar that provides a thorough list of deliverables—readings, assignments, examinations, etc., broken down on at least a weekly basis. The format may vary, but the content must include:

- Subject matter (topic) or activity
- Required preparatory reading, or other assignments (i.e., viewing videos) for each class session, including page numbers.
- Assignments or deliverables.

EDI @SDA: Professional Development/Mandatory EDI Training

Wednesday, September 15, 2021

As part of our EDI initiatives and call to action, some workshops will be offered to faculty and staff and to students. Competencies that will be included: Anti-Racism (Faculty/Staff) and Equity Mindedness (Faculty/Staff), and then Theater Intimacy & Building Cultures of Consent (Students, Faculty/Staff). More details will follow. NOTE: All SDA classes will be cancelled to support involvement in this effort.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1	Overview, Goals, History of Musical Theatre. Music literacy - basics of the page	JRB article, History packet, Wicked page.	
Week 2	Warm up, Vocal anatomy, auditions, assign group number Music literacy (song structure, phrasing.) Text work for group number, recording parts	Group Number	Audition Song

Week 3	Music literacy, key signatures, basic harmony. Group singing exercises. Text work for group number. Recording parts	Small group assignments	
Week 4	Warm up, group singing exercises, recording parts	More small Group Assignments	
Week 5	Warm up, Text work, songs as scenes (1/2). Adding music separately		
Week 6	Warm up. Continue Text work. Songs as scenes. Adding music. (Finish)		
Week 7	Learning Music / Begin Staging		
Week 8	NO CLASS / Fall Recess		
Week 9	Staging		
Week 10	Staging		
Week 11	Rehearse		
Week 12	Rehearse		
Week 13	Review / Stumble Thru		
Week 14	NO CLASS / Thanksgiving		
Week 15	Run-thru		
FINAL	Tuesday, December 14 th . Time TBD.		

SDA PRODUCTIONS, ISPS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SDA productions, ISPs and Extracurricular Activities* will not excuse you from any class work. There will be no exceptions made for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, homework or lack of class participation resulting from your involvement in any of the above. Your grade will reflect your work in this class, independent from work in any other class or activity.

*Activities that have been officially sanctioned by the larger university (such as marching band, song girls, or varsity sports) are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.

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 GFS 120 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) 814-4618 (Vidoe Phone), (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.

Health and Participation in Class

You are expected to complete your Trojan Check screener daily and, as your instructor, I may ask you to show your daily screening in class. Your health and safety, and the health and safety of your peers, are my top priorities. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, or if you discover that you have been in close contact with others who have symptoms or who have tested positive, you must follow the instructions on Trojan Check. My hope is that if you are feeling ill or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, you will stay home to protect others. I will ensure that you can continue to participate in class remotely so that your education is not disrupted.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, USC requires that face coverings (masks) be worn indoors including in classrooms. Face coverings must cover your nose and mouth and be worn throughout the class session. A mask with a valve is not considered an adequate face covering and should not be used, as it can expel exhaled air, increasing the risk to others. Eating or drinking during class is prohibited because of the risk posed by removing your mask for these activities. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in your being asked to leave the classroom immediately. Requests for accommodations related to the face covering and eating/drinking policies should be directed to the Office for Student Accessibility Services (<https://osas.usc.edu/>).

SDA Student Support & Reporting Form:

To facilitate a supportive environment of accountability, SDA has created an internal system of reporting for students to address issues/concerns and to offer feedback or suggestions for improvement. This mechanism provides a pathway for reporting and offering feedback without fear of retaliation or judgment. Any submission filed through this form will be reviewed and processed accordingly through SDA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

To file a report, please visit: <http://bit.ly/sdasupport>

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

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

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776

<https://osas.usc.edu>

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.