

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 453– Taking It on The Road and Beyond
Spring 2023 Monday & Wednesday 2:00-3:50

Location: MCC 102

Instructor: Scott Faris

Office: JEF 202

Office Hours: By appointment

Contact Info: scottfar@usc.edu,

Cell: 917-825-2739

Course Description and Overview

This course provides specific information needed to prepare Stage Managers for the processes and subtleties of working as a stage manager in professional entertainment including Broadway, touring, regional, television, corporate, theme park, Las Vegas, cruise ship, as well as other possible careers choices. The course will apply the processes and tools learned to date in the BFA Stage Management program to synthesize accumulated knowledge and explore professional avenues of employment after graduation. Through a series of field trips, guest lecturers, classroom lecture and discussion, the course will provide a deeper exploration of the specific working environments in each of these areas of production. All students will be required to participate in the final presentation of their paper on career strategy.

Learning Objectives

To prepare students for a career in the professional entertainment world. By the end of this course, students will know of viable options available in fields related to their skill set and interests, will have created both theatrical and business resumes, and written a business plan in addition to learning practical skills of rehearsing, teching and calling a show.

During the course, students will be required to:

- Demonstrate a fluency in theatrical equipment, terminology and areas of a variety of theaters.
- Practice how to problem solve crisis situations during rehearsal.
- Analyze a script in preparation for production.
- Demonstrate an ability to “call” a show.
- Demonstrate advanced practices in stage management.
- Complete a “reflective paper” after each guest visit summarizing what they took away from the visit.
- Create a business plan for pursuing a career in their chosen area of the entertainment industry.

Prerequisite(s): THTR 131, THTR 333, THTR 430

Co-Requisite (s):

Concurrent Enrollment: None

Recommended Preparation: At least two THTR 397 theatre practicum units

Course Notes

Blackboard will be used to post notices, course content and for final exam. Please familiarize yourself with basic functions of Blackboard.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Have your own laptop, if possible.

USC technology rental program

We realize that attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university's equipment rental program. To apply, please [submit an application](#). The Student Basic Needs team will contact all applicants in early August and distribute equipment to eligible applicants prior to the start of the fall semester.

USC Technology Support Links

If you have technical issues either with Blackboard or Zoom, please reach out to [USC IT Services](#), which is available 24/7 at:

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Blackboard help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

Classroom norms

- Please present yourself professionally, i.e., dressed properly, sitting up.
- Please log into the class on your laptop rather than your phone. If you have an issue that prevents this, please let the instructor know before class or in the chat.

Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment

USC has a policy that 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).

Covid-19 POP Testing Hours and Locations

<https://studenthealth.usc.edu/pop-testing-hours-and-locations/>

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials:

- *Production Stage Management for Broadway: From Idea to Opening Night and Beyond* by Peter Lawrence, 2015 published by Quite Specific Media Group Ltd.

Optional Reading:

- *Notes on Directing* by Frank Hauser
- *Theatrical Index* -- provided by instructor

Grading Breakdown

- A** Excellent work is neat, concise, detailed and complete as well as on time.
- B** Good work but less neat; still detailed and complete.
- C** Fair quality work may contain errors in substance or style or be late.
- D** Work does not meet the letter of the assignment.
- F** Projects are not turned in or are inadequate to the assignment.

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Class Participation	15	15
Reflective papers on guests	20	20
Stage management skills	40	40
Final Action Assignment	25	25
TOTAL	100	100

Description of Grading Criteria

- Class participation is essential. Absences from class will have an impact on the final grade, unless for pre-arranged SDA activities.
- Weekly one-page essays; you will be required to turn in a one-page double spaced paper, throughout the course of the semester, reflecting on that week's guest-speaker or field trip. Essays may be submitted to the instructor by e-mail.
- Stage management skills include clarity in paperwork and communication, attention to detail, timeliness, precision in calling cues, and a clear understanding of the "soft skills" of managing people in the theatre.

- Final Paper and Cover Letter are a final 5-page project which will be worth 25% of the grade and is described in more detail in the week-to-week section below.

Additional Policies

- Students should ideally be able to bring a laptop to class to work on assignments in class.
- Because communication and timeliness are central to excellent project management, all assignments will be graded for neatness, spelling and completeness, as well as for clarity in communication.
- No late assignments, projects, exams, papers or exercises shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the instructor or unless exceptional circumstances occur.
- NB: There may be a lab fee related to the site visits (such as to Disneyland).

Course Schedule:

(Exact dates of lectures will change due to availability of guest speakers)

Guests Speakers:

- **Broadway/Tours/Large Events**
 - TBD – SMs from touring production, Broadway or large event stage management

- **Disney Entertainment**
 - Guest TBD
 - Site visit TBA pending Covid restrictions

- **Television**
 - Jessica Major, Script Supervisor
 - Guest will talk about specifics to working in television and career possibilities
 - Steve Hollander, Television Stage Manager
 - SM from Jimmy Kimmel Live -- TBD

- **International/themed entertainment opportunities**
 - Francois Bergeron, Chief Operating Officer – THINKWELL
 - <https://thinkwellgroup.com>.

- **Spectacle/Corporate/Live Events**
 - Kevin Lee Harvey, CEO & Founder of Senovva
 - <http://www.senovva.com>
 - Senovva provides production services to the Grammys, Oscars and other Corporate events
 - Melissa Rae Mahon, freelance producer

- **Las Vegas/Broadway**
 - Randall C. White, PSM
 - Particulars to management structure for Las Vegas
 - Lynda A. Lavin

- **Rock & Roll Production Management**
 - Marty Hom
 - Particulars to management structure and touring life

- **Management in Film**
 - Zane Weiner, producer for Peter Jackson
 - transitioning from theatre to film

- **Cruise Ship Stage Management**
 - Melissa Trupp, Disney Cruise Lines

- **Financial Management**
 - Melissa Bondar, financial advisor and stage manager
- **Cirque du Soleil:**
 - Mary Barnett, General Stage Manager Cirque du Soleil, Michael Jackson One

Lectures: Order will vary depending on guest visits and field trips

- **Lecture 1 – Review class goals:**
 - Each week will try to cover a different aspect of live entertainment
 - You will be required to turn in a one-page paper on the previous week's subject using one of the following prompts:
 - How can you apply what you learned today to your work at SDA?
 - Is there something in particular you learned today that might influence your own career choices? Please describe.
 - Was there anything that was shared that has clarified or changed how you view working in professional theatre/entertainment?
 - Acknowledge if this is a possible career option for you.
 - Please include any questions you might have about the subject discussed.
 - The prompts will be adapted accordingly for each week's subject.
 - Coordinate guest speakers, as well as off-site visits and shadowing opportunities with professional entertainment companies
 - Weekly lectures will take place during classes without guest speakers.
- **Lecture 1 – part 2 – Auditions, Preproduction, Rehearsals & Reports**
 - Casting
 - Preproduction
 - Studio rehearsals
 - Reports; both rehearsal & performance
- **Lecture 2 – Tech rehearsals/dress rehearsal/orchestra rehearsals/recordings**
 - Tech rehearsals
 - Effective practice for running a tech
 - Orchestra rehearsals
 - Dress rehearsals
 - Outside recordings – voice over, augmentation, click-tracks
- **Lecture 3 – Calling Musicals – TBD**
 - Practice calling musicals
- **Lecture 4 – Professional Practices, protocols & structure**
 - Quiz – odd theatre terminology
 - Professional practices:

- Senior management
 - Designers
 - Music department
 - FOH
 - Unions – rule books and maybe guests from these unions...?
 - AEA Production Contract Rulebook
 - Rule 58. Rehearsals, pp. 83-85 (stop at (D) Breaks &
 - Rule 61. Rest Periods & Days Off, pp. 91-94
 - Rule 62. Safe & Sanitary, p. 95-100
 - IATSE – Discussion of basic rules and management structure
 - Local 802 (musicians)
 - Rule IV Rehearsal Conditions, pp. 6-12
 - Focus on hours not salary
- **Lecture 5 – How to run a show/overcoming communication challenges**
 - Lecture – How to run a show
 - Crisis management:
 - Learn how to deal with confrontation
 - Egos
 - Getting what you want
 - How/when to speak up in rehearsal
 - Guiding a director
- **Lecture 6 – The Finish Line:**
 - **Resumes/Networking/promotion**
- **Final Action Paper & Cover Letter – 5 pages**
 - Write a detailed paper with a synopsis of your career plan after graduation, laying out production companies, people and dates as part of your action plan. Describe in detail the key characteristics of the areas that interest you. List why you would be a perfect candidate for work in this area and any areas of weakness that you could improve upon to become more employable. The final page should be in the form of a cover letter that you can use to seek employment.
- **SM showcase panel**

Final Examination Date: Monday, May 8, 2023

2 - 4pm

EXTRA-CURRICULAR COMMITMENTS AND ISPS

Should you choose to participate in any extra-curricular project, such as an Independent Student Production, the SDA administration and faculty will not make allowances or exceptions for

absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, home work that is required as preparation for class, or lack of participation in class resulting from your extra-curricular involvement.

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 the USC community. dps.usc.edu