

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR-301L: Script, Score & Choreo
Musical Theater Song Interpretation

UNITS: 2.0

Spring 2024: Mon/ Wed 12-1:50pm
Location: MCC 107

Instructors: Ashley Eskew
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Office Hours by Appointment

Course Description

The intention of this course is to equip students with the techniques and tools to successfully synthesize the disciplines of acting and singing, through formative holistic assessment, within the theatrical performance medium of musical theatre.

Learning Objectives

Employing both formal and non-formal modes of training, we will investigate an array of songs, scenes and choreography pulled from the musical theatre canon. We will explore this material through the lenses of their creators as well as, our contemporary understanding; the context of their libretto and score, the period and culture in which they were written, as well as through the imagination, experience, and humanity of the performers assigned to each piece.

Assignments will include:

- Song Repertoire (assigned and/or chosen)
- Sheet Music Preparation (full songs & audition cuts)
- Individual Song Interpretation Coaching during “Public Work Sessions”
- Rehearsal & Presentation of a Scene from Published Musicals (assigned)
- Research of Assigned Musical (reading libretto, listening to score)
- Cold Readings - SATS (Sitting and Talking Scenes)

****Please refer to Blackboard for class announcements/ assignments. Emails will also be sent with updates and/or announcements. It is expected you will be checking email daily and as a result all communication is completely your responsibility.**

Required Readings & Supplementary Materials

1. LIBRETTOS & CAST RECORDINGS:

- In order for the class to have effective discussion and meaningful collaboration, the musical libretto and cast recording must be read and listened to in their entirety, by the time scenes are presented in front of class.

2. PRINTED SHEET MUSIC, SHEET PROTECTORS & THREE RING BINDER

- You will be required to print out the song repertoire and scenes that will be assigned to you before working on them in class. That sheet music must be placed in sheet protectors (NON REFLECTIVE), in a three ring binder (UNDER 2 inches).

Please let the instructor know if there is any financial difficulty acquiring these items and we will find an accommodation.

*Additionally, if you are a student that has a plethora of binders, notebooks, and/or sheet protectors and would be willing to donate them...that would be amazing. We are hoping to create equitable ways to make sure that everyone in the MT BFA has access to necessary equipment.

3. DEVICE POLICY

- Cell phones, computers, ipads, etc. may only be used during breaks or to record accompaniment on an application such as Voice Memo. No videos may be taken in class unless discussed previously with the instructors.

- Notes must be handwritten, in a notebook but I encourage you to stay as present as possible during the work. The notes that need to be retained will stay with you til' break.
- Please discuss with the instructors immediately, if you require an accommodation to this standard, otherwise, no exceptions.

Suggested Readings (Not Required, but Highly Recommended)

1. The Creative Habit by Twyla Tharp
2. Stepping into the Light by Andrew Robinson

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Cumulative Class Participation

- Assessment will be determined by preparedness to sing on Song Repertoire Days, active participation in discussions/“Being Present in the Room”, listening to others, and contributing to the compassionate collaboration of the creative collective.
- On time attendance is essential to class participation. You may miss one unexcused class a semester for your own mental and health and well being. Other than that, points will be removed for tardiness or unexcused absences.

Sheet Music Preparation

- You must print out all assigned sheet music and present it as instructed by Jenni last semester. Your full book should be brought to every class.

Integration of Skills in “Public Work Sessions”

1. Use of physical instrument (physical responsiveness, freedom from physical habits or tension, ease in using the body to communicate).
 2. 2. Diction and clarity of speech (appropriate to style and period of the piece).
 3. 3. Ability to listen and focus on a scene partner (also defined ‘connection to partner’).
 4. Moment-to-moment reality.
 5. Clear and consistent character choices (appropriate to style and period of the musical).
 6. Commitment to the given circumstances and situations of the Musical or Song (existing or created).
 7. Ability to play an action through identification of the wants and battles of the scene and the use of tactics to achieve the character’s objectives.
 8. Physical ease, and use of the entire body to communicate.
 9. Technical adherence to tempo, notes, and lyrics.
 10. Memorization.
- NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS, NO EXCEPTIONS, UNLESS DISCUSSED WITH THE INSTRUCTORS 48 HOURS BEFORE THE DUE DATE.**
- - You must be prepared to sing your assigned repertoire songs on the prescribed calendar date. If no one volunteers to sing on the first day of each song repertoire session, the instructors will choose a student to perform at random.

- - Music, Lyrics, and Dialogue must be fully memorized by the time they are presented in front of the class for “Public Learning Work Sessions”.
- - Sheet Music Preparation will be considered during every “Public Learning Work Session”.
- - If an issue arises that affects your ability to complete an assignment, PLEASE bring it to your instructors’ attention as soon as possible. Time management is essential to working in the theatre industry and it would be a disservice to you if we did not make deadlines a priority when considering your final grade.
- - You are expected to apply all skills and exercises which you have acquired thus far, in your rehearsal process, both in and out of the classroom.
*There may be additions and/or subtractions to the schedule. These adjustments will be prescriptive to the specific needs of the student-artists.

If a deadline is missed because of a classmate’s unavailability, the available partner(s) will not be penalized if a discussion with me and all involved occurs before the deadline.

Note:

Participation, Attendance & Health Participation

- - Much of the work done in class will require your participation as both a practitioner as well as an observer. Both skills are paramount to professional training and the practice of these skills will serve you monumentally in the field of performance. I cannot overemphasize how important “being present in the room” is for our work.
- - In addition to in-class contact hours, all courses must also meet a minimum standard for out-of-class time, which accounts for time students spend on homework, readings, writing, and other academic activities. For each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects two hours of out of class student work per week over a semester.

Attendance

- - No portion of the grade may be awarded for class attendance, but non-attendance can be the basis for lowering your grade. Please communicate with the instructors before missing a class, whether it be for illness or a religious exemption. Your grade will be affected if there is no direct communication with instructors.
- - 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.

Health

- Your health and safety, and the health and safety of your peers, are my top priorities. My hope is that if you are feeling ill, you will stay home to heal and to protect others. I will find ways for you to continue to participate in class and make-up work so that your education is not disrupted.

- Masks are always welcome in my classroom, especially during cold, flu, (and the ongoing) Covid 19 season.

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

Additional Policies

Eating and Drinking in Class

- - Water, teas, coffee are all permissible in a closed container or cup.
- - Please refrain from eating food during class.
- **Physical Contact, Intimacy, & Consent**
Consent - "The permission for something to happen or agreement to do something"
Synonyms: agreement, assent, acceptance, approval, approbation; permission, authorization, sanction, leave, backing, endorsement, support, go-ahead, thumbs up, green light, OK
Rules for consent in scenes involving close contact, 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. The exact physical blocking. All parties must discuss verbally and agree upon this blocking.

- i. They must discuss and identify what parts of the anatomy they give permission to touch.
- ii. They must discuss and identify what parts of the anatomy are off limits to touch.
- iii. They must discuss and identify what parts of the anatomy they are comfortable with being touched.

These agreements cannot be deviated from without further discussion. No change may be made without the consent of all the partners.

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

4a. If the blocking decided upon is deviated from by either party while sharing in the classroom, the instructor will stop the scene immediately, clear the classroom, and talk to the parties involved.

a. After the instructor discusses with the actors what has occurred, the professor of record will make a written report to leadership and all parties will be asked to meet with the co-heads of undergraduate acting or the program director.

7. The following is **MANDATORY** in **TRAINING**. The first rehearsal of the physical contact within the scene should be done with the professor of record in the room to review and approve. If at this time the staging is being adhered to as agreed upon, then the work can be shared in class.

8. As in all things common sense, decency, consideration and respect of both your partner and yourself is extremely important.

9. As in all interpersonal dynamics, romantic, sensual, sexual situations, close contact and fight choreography, **NO MEANS NO** and **STOP MEANS STOP**. **NO** does not mean “maybe”. **NO** does not mean “let’s take a break and come back to it.” **STOP** does not mean “slow down”. **STOP** does not mean “let’s go until there’s a break.” When someone says **NO** and **STOP**, listen to them.

ACTIVATION WARNING AND COMMITMENT TO TRANSPARENT CONVERSATION:

Training in Theatre often involves experiential modes of instruction. When studying theatrical material, especially within these modes, there is the potential for personal activation that could be unsettling or disturbing. This could include, but is not limited to, issues of gender, race, sexuality, religion, ability, and various moral concerns. Please consider this syllabus an “activation warning” and gauge your receptibility to the material assigned.

Keeping this in mind, your voluntary participation in this course constitutes explicit consent to experiencing assigned material.

In the spirit of cultivating trust, I am always open to transparent conversation. As artists, we are in the business of vulnerability, transformation, and restoration. My intention is to create an exploratory space that reflects this kind of work. Whatever I say and do is not intended to injure or devalue...and if it does, I will immediately create an environment to listen and to provide resources to help. This is my commitment to you.

Additionally, you should be aware that as USC faculty, we are Mandatory Reporters. If you share something with us, whether in class or office hours, that gives us concern that there has been an event of harm or abuse, we are required by the university to report this information to the USC Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX. This does not mean that we are not available to you if you need to share with us, but it is important that we make you aware of our position as Mandatory Reporters.

Final Grade Based On

Cumulative Class Participation 15% Sheet Music Preparation 15% Mid-term Exam 15% Collaborative Work in Rehearsal 15%

Integration of Skills in 20% “Public Work Sessions”

Final Presentation & Exam 20%

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**

Course Schedule

M: 1/8	Introductions, Syllabus Overview, Review Community Agreements
W: 1/10	GETTING TO KNOW YOU SONGS
M: 1/15	NO CLASS- MARTIN LUTHER KING’S BIRTHDAY
W: 1/17	GETTING TO KNOW YOU SONGS
M: 1/22	ASSIGN SCENES & REP (50’s-60’s)— INTRO TO SATS
W: 1/24	SATS
M: 1/29	REP- Preparing YOUR SPACE
W: 1/31	REP- Assign Next Round 60’s-70’s
M: 2/5	SCENEWORK

W: 2/7	REP
M: 2/12	SCENEWORK- Assign 70's-80's
W: 2/14	LOVE SONGS- FREE CHOICE
M: 2/19	NO CLASS- PRESIDENT'S DAY
W: 2/21	SCENEWORK
M: 2/26	SCENEWORK
W: 2/28	SCENEWORK- Assign 80's-90's
M: 3/4	SCENEWORK
W: 3/6	SCENEWORK
M: 3/11	NO CLASS- SPRING RECESS
W: 3/13	NO CLASS- SPRING RECESS
M: 3/18	SCENEWORK- ASSIGN 90's-2000's
W: 3/20	SCENEWORK
M: 3/25	SCENWORK
W: 3/27	SCENEWORK- 2000-2010
M: 4/1	SCENEWORK
W: 4/3	SCENEWORK
M: 4/8	SCENEWORK- Assign 2010- Contemporary
W: 4/10	SCENWORK
M: 4/15	SCENEWORK
W: 4/17	SCENEWORK
M: 4/22	RECOUNTS/ GREATEST HITS
W: 4/24	RECOUNTS/GREATEST HITS

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the USC Student Handbook. All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity’s website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theater Consent Culture Statement:

Through our pluralistic approach of diverse pedagogies, methodologies, ideologies, and modalities of artistic expression, we invite(engage) and challenge students to expand their breadth and depth of knowledge, complexity, and range of the human experience. Even though we nurture, guide, and challenge our students to embrace the unknown or unfamiliar and step outside of their comfort zones through storytelling/art, we aim to practice effective strategies and offer tools to students mindful of their physical, psychological, social, and emotional wellbeing. In alignment with professional and industry standards, we will integrate core principles and techniques of Intimacy in Theater and Building Cultures of Affirmative Consent. This will provide agency, offer resources and support to the teachers, students, directors, and staff to establish healthy boundaries of consent when working on material that is physically, intimately, or emotionally charged content in both the classroom and production.

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: <https://bit.ly/SDAstudentreporting>

Support Systems:

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

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

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086 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

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

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

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

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

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 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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.