

## **INVITATION TO THEATRE Course Outline**

**Instructor: Sarah Meadows**

### **Organisation**

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> January – Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May (inclusive) 6.30-9.30pm. Mid-term break: Wk beginning 6<sup>th</sup> March. Delivery comprises of weekly 3 hour classes and external trips and visits.

### **Course Description**

Invitation to Theatre is an introductory theatre course designed to give students the basic tools to examine and appreciate theatre on an artistic, and personal level; focusing on what theatre is today. Students will engage in a practical and theoretical exploration of various aspects of theatre, including: acting, directing, playwriting, and the art of collaboration. Students will also attend various performances in some of London's most exciting internationally renowned theatres. This practical exploration of theatre will be supported with theatre context and a social and political examination of the role of theatre exploring influential texts and movements; focusing on the diversity of contemporary theatre makers.

### **Aims of the course**

- Develop acting, voice, movement and text skills in rehearsal and performance
- Develop directing and writing skills in rehearsal and performance
- Develop and show independence and skills in self evaluation
- Develop an appreciation for and some knowledge of the theatre

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the course students will be able to:

1. Have a basic understanding various necessary processes of performance and production and communicate effectively (in formats, oral/verbal/physical, appropriate to tasks)
2. Demonstrate subject-specific knowledge in aspects of performance eg. Acting, directing and writing e.g. ethical and social issues and interpretation.
3. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate performances and articulate and debate areas of the course.
4. Analyse, problem solve and evaluate own and others work within the group.
5. Engage in debate about a range of intellectual, practical and professional issues within the performing arts and within a contemporary context.

6. Demonstrate creative and physical skills in performance within acting, directing and writing
7. Be mature and professional in approach, adapting to the different roles of the writer, director, actors and audience.
8. Demonstrate the ability to work both independently and collaboratively within a range of tasks and working environments

### **Coursework**

Theatre is a discipline that engages the body, mind and the imagination and creative self. These classes will require you to take risks and step out of your comfort zones, work hard, be honest and respect yourself and your colleagues. Classes will include physical activity, so dress in comfortable clothing. You will need to complete work outside of class, meeting with scene and project partners to rehearse as well as independent reading and coursework (6 hours equivalent). You will see plays as well as complete reading and writing assignments. You will be required to bring ideas and opinions into the classroom and discuss your own work honestly and the work of your classmates' in respectful and supportive dialogues. Please note that if you have any learning difficulties or special requirements that would support you in class or require adaptation, please speak to your tutor at the earliest opportunity and this is confidential.

### **Main Graded Components**

- **Introduction to Acting:** This unit is designed to give you a basic introduction to acting. We will perform several in-class exercises designed to help you develop basic acting tools. This unit will culminate in the performance of an acting scene selected by your tutor. You must be fully off book and created a shape and structure for the scene by applying the skills taught.
- **Introduction to Directing:** Here you will learn about what it means to be a theatre director. You will learn about directing in various in-class exercises, reading and discussion. At the end of this unit, you will direct a scene selected by your tutor.
- **Introduction to writing:** After examining various writing styles throughout the semester, we will begin the playwriting unit by experimenting with writing exercises and understanding form, structure and character. The playwriting unit will culminate in your writing of a 5-page short play.
- **Theatre analysis:** Throughout each of the previously mentioned units, we will be examining texts and some influences throughout theatre history and plays that shook the world. This is to understand the potential power of theatre and therefore what it could mean to us today. This is designed to open your mind to the many

possibilities of what theatre has done/can do/could be and what you could do with it. Reading quizzes will be given on the due date of each reading assignment. Please bring the play/text we are discussing each day to class and be prepared to share examples from the texts to back up your ideas.

- Seeing Theatre/Performance analysis: We will be going to the theatre a number of times over the course of the semester. You will see a range of productions across London. You will be required to submit a 1-2 page for each production that you see, using the analysis questions you will be given to form the structure, demonstrating your growing knowledge and understanding of theatre. Please note that theatre visits are subject to change.

- Final project: Your final project in this class will be a collaborative project with your colleagues. You will explore staging a selection of the short plays written in class. Your job is to present the performance of a 5-10 page short play to the group. Actors should be off book, directors should analyse and shape the scene, and playwrights will need to re-draft during the process and work closely with the director.

- Participation: Participation is crucial. If you choose to absorb and not participate, your grade will suffer, as will the group dynamic. We all benefit when everyone is generous with ideas. For the in-class exercises no one is expected to perform at the level of a theatre artist, but you must have a go and you will be asked to run warm-ups. Theatre specialists are not eligible to take the course. All that is expected is a good-faith effort to enter into the spirit of the exercise and give things a go.

### **Attendance and Academic Conduct Policy**

Consistent attendance, discipline and preparedness for work are essential for a class with a standard of excellence. You are required to attend every class. There are no authorized absences. At the tutors discretion a student may be failed at mid-term (or at any point after) if he or she has excessive absences (two without a valid medical reason & evidence), or are unprepared to work more than twice. Being unprepared is counted as an absence. Being late twice is counted as one absence. Over one unexcused absence will result in a full letter grade reduction. Excessive lateness will be regarded the same way. Missing a performance will be counted as two absences since it means that the student will be unable to participate in the discussion the following class. Documentation (doctor's note or similar) is required for any absence you wish to have excused. Cell phones must be turned off during class, unless specifically authorised by your tutor.

**Reference reading list** (You are not expected to read the full texts, although you can of course, but we will be referencing them throughout the course)

The Empty Space, by Peter Brook

The Directors Craft, Katie Mitchell

Actions; The Actor's Thesaurus by Marina Caldarone

Actions; How To Do It by Marina Caldarone

How Plays Work by David Edgar

Different Every Night by Mike Alfreds

The Challenge for the Actor, by Uta Hagen

**Plays Reading list (subject to change at course leaders discretion):**

Jerusalem by Jez Butterworth

The Effect by Lucy Prebble

Punk Rock by Simon Stephens

Topgirls Caryl Churchill

Blue/Orange by Joe Penhill

Random by Debbie Tucker-Green

A Dolls House by Henrik Ibsen

Three Sisters by Anton Chekhov

**Scheme of work** (please note that this is subject to change at the discretion of the tutor. Addition visit and trips may also be scheduled and some texts revised)

**WEEK 1. 17/01/17**

**Content**

Meet and greet and course overview.

What is theatre? What is acting?

What is a warmup? What is improvisation?

Practical workshop and short scene work

**Independent study/preparation:** Reading extracts from; The Poetics, Aristotle & The Empty Space by Peter Brook

## **WEEK 2. 24/01/17**

### **Content**

The Poetics, Aristotle & The Empty Space, Peter Brook discussion

Acting; the basics. What are objectives and actions? Look at Hierarchy of objectives (from Different Every Night, Mike Alfreds).

Read from Actions; An Actors Thesaurus/How to Action & watch online video extract from Out of Joint actioning.

Warmup (group led)

Apply objectives and actions work to short scenes as group

Explore objectives, tactics in short scenes and exercises

Group discussion (TBC): Plays that shook the world/a world 1 (e.g. Hamlet by William Shakespeare/Dr Faustus by Christopher Marlowe/A Dolls House, Henrik Ibsen/Waiting for Godot, Samuel Beckett / A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry/Behdji by Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti.)

Launch acting assessment

Given casting and scenes for Acting component (extract from contemporary text TBC)

**Independent study/preparation:** Read extract from Actions; An Actors Thesaurus & How To It; Read Jerusalem by Jez Butterworth; Start learning lines for acting scenes and rehearse.

## **WEEK 3. 31/01/17**

### **Content**

Reading quiz Jerusalem by Jez Butterworth & discussion

Warmup (group led)

Building and developing a character (Character questionnaire/characteristics work)

Group character workshop for scenes (characteristics, energy, laban etc)

Sharing of scenes with course leader; acting masterclass with full group

**Independent study/preparation:** Read extracts from Uta Hagan, the Challenge for the Actor; Read The Effect By Lucy Prebble

#### **WEEK 4. 07/02/17**

Theatre Trip: Hamlet by William Shakespeare, The Almeida Theatre

<https://almeida.co.uk/whats-on/hamlet/16-feb-2017-22-apr-2017>

Complete Theatre analysis questionnaire.

#### **WEEK 5. 14/02/17**

##### **Content**

Reading quiz The Effect, Lucy Prebble & discussion

Warmup (group led)

Relationship and listening workshop

Open rehearsals and tutor notes

**Independent study/preparation:** Read extracts from Uta Hagan, the Challenge for the Actor; Read Punk Rock by Simon Stephens

#### **WEEK 6. 21/02/17**

##### **Content**

Reading quiz The Effect by Lucy Prebble & discussion

Warmup (group led)

Assessment: Acting scenes performance

Group discussion/feedback session

Launch Directing scenes

What is directing? What have directors said about their job? The jobs of a director

Quotes and discussion from Simon Usher; Directing, A Miscellany, Katie Mitchell; The Directors Craft, Mike Alfreds; Different Every Night, Anne Bogart; A Director Prepares.

**Independent study/preparation:** Read directing extracts from above texts, preparing a scene, watch video interviews with theatre directors (TBC), Read Topgirls by Caryl Churchill & Random by Debbie Tucker Green

### **WEEK 7. 28/02/17**

Theatre trip: A Profoundly Affectionate, Passionate Devotion to Someone (-noun) by Debbie Tucker Green, The Royal Court Theatre

<https://royalcourttheatre.com/whats-on/aprofoundly/>

Complete Theatre analysis questionnaire

**Mid Term Break - w/k beg 07/03/17**

### **WEEK 8. 14/03/17**

Theatre trip: Ugly Lies The Bones by Lindsey Ferrentino, The National Theatre

<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/shows/ugly-lies-the-bone>

Complete Theatre analysis questionnaire

### **WEEK 9. 21/03/17**

#### **Content**

Reading quiz on Top Girls by Caryl Churchill & Random by Debbie Tucker Green & Discussion

Warm-up (group led)

Directing masterclass/workshop; from page to stage. Rehearsal techniques; apply techniques discussed and explored in small groups

Group discussion (TBC): Plays that shook the world/a world 2 (Hamlet by William Shakespeare/A Dolls House, Henrik Ibsen/Waiting for Godot, Beckett / A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry/Behdji by Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti.)

**Independent study/preparation:** Read extracts from directing texts, work on written directing proposal, Read Blue/Orange by Joe Penhill

### **WEEK 10. 28/03/17**

Theatre Trip: A Midsummer Nights Dream by William Shakespeare, The Young Vic

<http://www.youngvic.org/whats-on/a-midsummer-nights-dream>

Complete Theatre analysis questionnaire

### **WEEK 11. 04/04/17**

#### **Content**

Reading quiz Blue/Orange by Joe Penhill and discussion

Warmup (group led)

Assessment: Perform directed scenes

Launch writing response task (responding to one of the plays seen so far TBC)

Writing exercises/workshop; generating ideas

The components of a script; Research, structure, character, dialogue etc

Read & discuss extract from; How plays work – David Edgar

**Independent study/preparation:** Read further extract from David Edgar, complete writing exercises to generate material. Read Three Sisters by Anton Chekhov

### **WEEK 12. 11/04/17**

#### **Content**

Reading quiz Three Sisters by Anton Chekhov and discussion

Writing warmup exercises

Draft 1 script reading and feeding back session

Writing exercises and workshop

Group discussion (TBC): Plays that shook the world/a world 3 ( e.g. Hamlet by William Shakespeare/A Dolls House, Henrik Ibsen/Waiting for Godot, Beckett / A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry/Behdji by Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti.)

**Independent study/preparation:** Write draft 2 of script, Read A Dolls House by Henrik Ibsen

### **WEEK 13. 18/04/17**

Theatre trip: Consent by Nina Raine, The National Theatre

<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/shows/consent>

Complete Theatre analysis questionnaire.

### **WEEK 14. 25/04/17**

#### **Content**

Reading quiz on A Dolls House by Henrik Ibsen

Assessment: Reading and submission of writing responses

Launch final project

Staging your own writing. Choices made and companies formed.

Observed collaborative project reading/rehearsal and notes



**Independent study/preparation:** Rehearsals and preparation of short scripts and written self-assessment and evaluation

**WEEK 15. 02/05/17**

**Content**

Group Warmup

Assessment: Present scripts

Group reflection and evaluation

What does it really mean to make theatre in 2017?

Self assessment and plenary

**Grade Breakdown**

Acting Scene	15%
Directing Scene	15%
Playwriting Scene	15%
Reading Quizzes	15%
Performance analysis	15%
Participation	25%

**Grading levels and descriptors** (these are general guidelines. More specific assessment criteria based on practical, written and group work will be disseminated).

A Excellent; Honors-level work, outstanding. 4.00

A- Still excellent. 3.67

B+ Very Good; High Level of performance. 3.33

B Good; Solid & above average level of performance. 3.00

B- Good; Still above average. 2.67

C+ Average level of performance. 2.33

C Satisfactory; Acceptable level of performance. 2.00

C- Minimally acceptable. 1.67

D Passing, but unsatisfactory; Below average performance. 1.00

F Failure. Inferior performance. 0.00