

# Acting

Fall 2011, E Block Classroom: 212 Instructor: Eric de Lora  
Office Hours: Friday Lunch E-mail: ericd@maybeckhs.org

*I think theater ought to be theatrical ... you know, shuffling the pack in different ways so that it's -- there's always some kind of ambush involved in the experience. You're being ambushed by an unexpected word, or by an elephant falling out of the cupboard, whatever it is.*

TOM STOPPARD, interview, March 10, 1999

*When you come into the theater, you have to be willing to say, "We're all here to undergo a communion, to find out what the hell is going on in this world." If you're not willing to say that, what you get is entertainment instead of art, and poor entertainment at that.*

DAVID MAMET, *Three Uses of the Knife* (2000)

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Acting is a course designed to teach the basic skills, concepts, and methods of modern realistic acting technique: essentially the why and how of stage performance. Beyond that, however, the class will provide students the opportunity to strengthen those powers of concentration, focus, analysis, imagination, creativity and empathy that are critical to every art form.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Develop confidence, spontaneity, sensitivity, and imagination.
2. Develop self-confidence, trust, and sensitivity to self and others through an interactive process.
3. Expand physical and vocal range, flexibility, creativity, and stamina.
4. Explore realistic acting through scene-work and monologues.
5. Learn to make clear, well-informed, interesting and compelling CHOICES in the work.
6. Develop analytical skills through written critiques, peer and self-analyses.

## COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Introduction. The Audition. Discuss.

Week 2: Read Handbook, Intro—pp. 11.

***Present your own monologue.***

Week 3: Read Handbook, Chap 1: Physical Action. Analysis of Monologue I. Discuss.

***Present Monologue I: Contemporary Dramatic.***

Week 4: Read Handbook, Chap 2: Analyzing a Scene. Analysis of Monologue II. Discuss.

***Present Monologue II: Contemporary Comedic.***

Week 5: Read Handbook, Chap 3: The Truth of the Moment. Analysis of Monologue III. Discuss.

***Present Monologue III: Classical.***

Week 6: Read Handbook, Chap 4: Externals.

***Present two monologues (the audition).***

Week 7: Read Handbook, Chap 5: Preparing for a Scene. Analysis Scene I. Discuss.

***Present Scene I.***

Week 8: Read Handbook, Chap 6: Troubleshooting. Rehearse Scene I. Discuss.

***Present Scene I.***

Week 9: Read Handbook, Chap 7: The Tools of the Craft.

***Present Scene II.***

Week 10: Read Handbook: Pitfalls (Working in the Real World) pp. 67-87. Discuss.

***Present Scene II.***

Week 11: Rehearse Scenes and/or One-Act Plays.

***Present One-Act Plays and Scenes, Dec. 2-3, 2011.***

Week 12: Musical Theatre: Preparation and Auditioning.

***Present Musical Theatre Songs I.***

Week 13: Musical Theatre: Analysis of Songs as Monologues.

***Present Musical Theatre Songs II.***

Week 14: Mamet's Analysis of the Theatre I, pp. 1-50. Discuss.

Week 15: Mamet's Analysis of the Theatre II, pp. 51-100. Discuss.

**Final: Present/Audition with Monologues and Songs.**

### **REQUIRED TEXTS AND SUPPLIES**

- *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* (Bruder/Cohn/Olnek/Pollack/Previto/Zigler)

- *Theatre* (Mamet, 2010)

- Monologues and Scenes as assigned

- One Blank Notebook with ample supply of lined notebook paper

- Pencil, Pen or other writing instrument

PLEASE MAKE A HABIT OF BRINGING THESE TEXTS TO CLASS, AS WE WILL USE THEM.

### **EVALUATION**

Grading: Grades will not be based on "talent" but on discipline, preparedness, hard work, a positive attitude, respect for others, imagination, and attention to detail.

1. Monologue I-II-III (10% each, for total of 30%)
2. Musical Theatre Songs (2) (5% each, for total of 10%)
3. Scene I (10%)
4. Scene I (10%)
5. Character Analyses (10%)
6. Play Critiques (10%)
6. One-Act Performances (20%)

### **CLASS ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION**

1. Regular attendance and active participation in class are vitally important to both you and your classmates. Theatre means being there. You cannot learn this material by merely reading a book and taking a test. Attendance is critical -- as with any rehearsal or performance. More than two unexcused absence will lower your grade. More than three unexcused absences is reason for failure. Tardiness is unacceptable and will also lower your grade. If you know you will miss a class, let me know by phone and/or e-mail immediately.
2. Because of the amount of physical activity, stretching, jumping, etc., that we will be doing in this class, it would be advisable to wear loose-fitting clothes, pants, sweats, etc., or at the very least to avoid wearing tight fitting skirts, pants, or other apparel that would hinder your ability to move. You will be expected to participate fully and enthusiastically in class exercises and to rehearse and memorize performance projects outside of class time.

### **EVALUATION ACTIVITIES**

1-2-3-4. You will be evaluated according to a performance rubric (similar to those used at high school theatre festivals, i.e. the Bob Smart Festival in Sacramento that we attend in mid-January) and graded according to those criteria. This evaluation is not based on talent but on your ability to exercise discipline, effort and concentration in memorizing the script and applying the principles we learn and discuss in class to your performance. You will be given verbal and written comments from the instructor and given an opportunity to repeat each performance piece as a means of demonstrating growth and to improve your grade.

5. Character Analyses: You will be writing analysis of your monologues (3), musical theatre songs (2) and scenes (1), and you should base your responses on the principles covered in the text, a close reading of the play and any other research.

6. Play Critiques: You will need to attend two (2) professional productions outside of class over the course of this semester. You are required to see both shows and to write and hand-in a Play Critique (review) on each. Use the *New York Times* theatre reviews as a model for your own. FYI: We attend one Berkeley Rep production (the entire school), several ACT productions with Michael and Eric (sign-up in the office), and depending on offerings, a Shotgun Players production. If in doubt, ask me for a recommendation. **High school and community theatre productions will not fulfill this requirement.**

7. **Term Performance Projects: You will perform an assigned role as a cast member in scenes and/or a one-act play at the One-Act Play Festival, December 2-3, 2011. You may also select to perform a musical theatre song at the Moment Musicaux Concert (November 4, 2011) for extra credit.**

## PRACTICES

- I hope you feel welcome in this class and help make others feel welcome too. It should be an intriguing class and I hope you have a positive, rewarding and even exciting time this semester. If not, please let me know. Never hesitate to talk with me before or after class, during office hours or any other time we can arrange. My email is at the top of this syllabus for you to use.
- With this in mind, the primary rule in class is: Everyone, Everything Treated with RESPECT.  
Meaning:
  1. No personal put downs or purposefully hurtful comments.
  2. You can sit next to who you want to unless you get distracted.
  3. Do not disrupt the class. Comments on topic are cool – conversations off to the side and random comments are not.
  4. No one should have to raise their voice to be heard.
  5. Take care of the room and of each other.
  6. Please come to class prepared. Meaning:
    7. Have your script, notebook, and a pencil or pen in hand, ready to rehearse.
    8. Go to the bathroom, eat snacks and get a drink before or after class. Our time together is limited and leaving the class will be disruptive and will often mean missing something important.
    9. Always remember: understanding something is not necessarily agreeing with it.