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MUSI 195.08: Applied Study - Voice Music Theatre

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MUSI 195-495

Applied Studies I-IV: Musical Theatre

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Course Syllabus



UM Alumni John Knispel (Center) and Andy Meyers (Right) in *Titanic* with the Arizona Broadway Theatre (2018).

Overview

Students receive weekly one-on-one voice lessons culminating in a juried performance for the voice faculty at the end of the semester. Students develop vocal technique, musicianship, and artistry across the broad spectrum of musical theatre styles. Students also work with their instructor to build a professional audition book that showcases their strengths as singers/actors. My approach to voice lessons focuses on technique but I also develop students' artistry, musical/vocal style, and communicative skills.

Goals/Outcomes

In addition to developing technique and artistry, my primary goals are to build upon each student's strengths and individuality. It is important for a young singer/actor to be exposed to the different vocal and musical styles used in musical theatre and to be aware of the expectations involved with them. Regardless of the repertoire you will sing, all of my students learn a technique that is based on healthy, efficient singing, beauty of tone, and flexibility. I also embrace the many contemporary commercial styles of singing used in musical theatre (i.e. pop, rock, belt, etc.) and will help you develop the most effective way to sing them.

Your main goal, simply put, should be to improve at a steady rate. Certain aspects of singing take longer to assimilate than others. Therefore, you should approach your lessons and practice sessions with a blend of diligence and patience. This is only the first step in a four-year process, and becoming a strong, communicative singer develops over time. You should finish the semester a better singer than you were at the beginning. You should notice definite improvements in all aspects of vocal technique (posture and breathing, range, beauty of tone, flexibility of style, control of registration and dynamics, and freedom from tension) as well as artistry (character and communication, confidence, emotive ability). You should also be able to monitor your progress by the feedback you receive at auditions, master classes, and juries.

Making music is one of life's greatest joys. Making music will not only give personal satisfaction, it will unleash your creativity, enhance your collaborative and communicative skills, and improve readiness for a variety of careers.

Requirements - What I require from you is:

- A strong desire to learn and improve.
- A willingness to try new things.
- An attitude that promotes learning and communication.
- Prompt attendance at each lesson.
- To prepare repertoire for Juries per the requirement

Like any discipline, singing requires hard work and time. I still believe in the old adage: *You get out of it what you put into it.* I expect you to practice outside of lessons a minimum of one hour a day, and demonstrate your progress at each lesson. I will assist you by giving you specific tasks and goals for your practice sessions.

Materials

You will need to keep your repertoire, syllabus, vocal warm-ups, and other materials in a 3-ring binder, which you will bring to each lesson. Also bring a pencil and water, and something with which to record your lessons. Most students use an app on their smartphones.

Supplemental Activities

Sound Recordings and Videos

I encourage you to listen to recordings and videos of your repertoire, but be careful that it isn't your only method of learning your music and lyrics.

Audition Video

You are required to make a mock audition video by the end of the semester. I suggest reserving [Studio I](#) in the Mansfield Library. This will enhance your auditioning skills and as well as your use of video and audio technology.

Singing with an accompaniment

For some lessons I will be using recorded accompaniments and playing the piano for your lessons. At a certain point in the semester, you will need to secure a pianist who will accompany for your some of your lessons and your voice jury. There are student piano majors who are required to accompany one student per semester, free of charge. Otherwise, there are accompanists who charge a fee.

Studio Policies

Missed Lessons

Please notify me in advance if you have to miss a lesson due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances, and we can schedule a make-up lesson. There may be a couple of dates when I am out of town on recruiting trips. Lessons missed due to my absences will be made up.

Lessons & Coachings with Other Teachers

I am a firm believer in a student working with one voice teacher at a time. Regular lessons on vocal technique from two different teachers in one semester can lead to contradictory advice and confusion. Coaching on style and interpretation is another matter, and students will receive feedback from other instructors, musical directors, and stage directors in classes and theatrical productions. This is fine, and normal practice.

Evaluation

You will be evaluated on your:

- Attendance and preparation to all scheduled lessons.
- Steady improvement throughout the semester
- Performance at the Voice Jury.

My Commitment

It is my job to train you in all aspects of technique and artistry in an environment that is safe, supportive, and comfortable. Singing can be a highly emotional art form, and singers are expected to move audiences with their performances. It takes courage, confidence, and trust to learn how to bear one's soul in live performance. Therefore, I want you to know that I am in your corner. I want you to regard me as a supporter, a mentor, and one who has your best interests at heart. I will be demanding and task oriented but I also try to adapt my delivery to each student's individuality and personal goals.

Repertoire

Repertoire is assigned for the following reasons.

- To develop the technique of singing
- To build the student's knowledge of musical theatre song styles
- To discover and develop the student's individuality, talents and strengths
- To challenge the student but also provide a clear opportunity for success
- To build the student's professional audition book

Students in *Applied Studies: Musical Theatre* will work predominantly on musical theatre repertoire. I may choose to also assign repertoire from classical art song and opera, to build technique, efficiency, and breadth of knowledge.

Jury/Repertoire Requirements

Freshmen (MUSI 195): a minimum of 3 memorized complete songs

Sophomores (MUSI 295): a minimum of 5 memorized complete songs

Juniors (MUSI 395): a minimum of 5 memorized complete songs and at least 2 additional songs as audition cuts

Seniors (MUSI 495): a minimum of 6 memorized complete songs and at least 2 additional songs as audition cuts

Note: I take great care in choosing repertoire for my students, but if I have chosen a song you don't like, that's fine – just let me know and I'll find another song. If you have a specific song you want to bring into your lesson, that is also fine and I am eager to know about it. As long as all of your songs fit the criteria above, I am happy to collaborate on song selection.