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THTR 120A.02: Introduction to Acting I

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THTR 120A, Section 2 – 3 Credits

INTRODUCTION TO ACTING

Fall 2014

T/R 2:10-3:30PM – August 26-December 9, 2014 – Schreiber Gym 124

Instructor: Cohen Ambrose

Email: cohen.ambrose@umontana.edu

Office: Mansfield Library, Room TBA

Office Hours: T/R 4:00-5:00PM

Aim:

This course is designed to help you broaden your communication, presentation, and social skills. By studying the craft of acting you will come to develop a more articulate, responsive, and expressive identity and begin to view your everyday actions and interactions as performances. At the end of the semester, I hope you leave with an extended understanding of yourself and of other people.

Outcomes:

In this setting you will achieve:

- A demonstrated confidence in the presentation of your self—socially and professionally;
- An ability to further articulate both your personal character and the character of those you take on in dramatic performance;
- An understanding of, and appreciation for, the craft of acting and the skills that actor's employ;
- An understanding of, and respect for, performers and audiences.

Content:

This course is divided into 4 sequential units.

Unit 1: WHAT IS ACTING AND WHAT IS PERFORMANCE?

- An introduction to the history and theory of acting, vocabulary, and audience etiquette. You will create performances and learn how to see yourself as an actor.

Unit 2: DEVELOPING ACTING SKILLS

- Building skills through group exercises, including warm-ups, games, and acting exercises. You will learn how to use specific acting skills in your everyday life.

Unit 3: PERFORMING A CHARACTER

- Rehearsing and performing short scenes with a partner, creating new and original characters, and analysing characters and scripts. You will learn how to use the skills you have developed in the service of a role.

Unit 4: GAINING INFORMATION FROM REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE

- Techniques for learning more about your world through performance. You will learn more about other people through role play and improvisation.

Required Text:

Campana, Jillian. *ACTING SUCCESSFUL using performance skills in everyday life*. Cognella Press, 2014.

The text is mandatory and should be brought to every class meeting. We will be reading in class and referring to the text often. The text can be purchased in the UM Bookstore or online through the publisher. To purchase through the publisher you need to create a login and password at their site. To look up University of Montana and the class, THTR 120: <https://students.universityreaders.com/store/>

Since the book has only just been printed it is not yet available on Amazon or in other bookstores.

Production Attendance:

Part of your grade for this class requires that you attend three of the School of Theatre & Dance's performances this semester. Missing one production will drop your grade one full letter. Missing two productions will drop your grade two full letters. If you do not attend any of the productions, you will not pass the class. In other words, production attendance is a part of this class and there will be quizzes on the productions.

The materials fee you paid when you registered for this course allows you to obtain your ticket for these shows at no additional expense. You must pick up your ticket at the UMArts Box Office, located in the lobby of the PARTV Center, in person between 10 AM and 6 PM Monday-Friday. You may pick up only one ticket—your own; you cannot pick up a ticket for a classmate. If you pick up your ticket to a production and wish to change performances, you will be charged a \$2 exchange fee before the performance date printed on the ticket. If you come in to exchange your ticket after the performance date printed on the ticket (and therefore need a new ticket), you will be charged the full student ticket price.

When you go to the Box Office to obtain your ticket, you must present your Griz Card. Please tell the box office staff that you are a 120 student and that you are picking up your ticket. Tell them your instructor is **Cohen Ambrose** and that you are in section **2**.

Seating in the Masquer Theatre is general admission. Seating in the Montana Theatre is reserved. The fee that you have paid does not guarantee you a ticket on a particular night, nor does it guarantee that you will be able to get a ticket if the show sells out. Do not wait until the evening of the performance you plan to attend to pick up a ticket.

Required Productions

Cyrano de Bergerac

By Edmond Rostand / Adapted by Ranjit Bolt

Montana Theatre / October 7-11, 14-18, 2014

Cyrano de Bergerac is the beloved heroic comedy about selflessness, bravery, love, and one inimitable nose. The larger-than-life title character succeeds in every quest on which he embarks ... except the one for the hand of his adored Roxane. Set against the

iconic backdrop of 17th-century Paris, this fresh, swashbuckling adaptation promises to be earthy, rowdy, and overflowing with heart and panache.

Broomstick

By John Biguenet

Masquer Theatre / September 10-27, 2014

A witch confesses all: her first love affair, how she discovered her powers, how she has used them. But more than that, *Broomstick* is a funny and frightening return to our childhood where we first wrestled with evil and justice. For the witch is a completely unsentimental moralist who knows everything about the human heart — having been both its victim and avenger all her life long — and who metes out inexorable justice, immune to our pleas for mercy, cackling at our excuses. This is no Hansel and Gretel. In *Broomstick*, whiners end up in casseroles. Produced by the Montana Repertory Theatre with the National New Play Network.

A Christmas Carol

By Charles Dickens / Adapted by Jere Lee Hodgin / Directed by your instructor Cohen Ambrose

Montana Theatre / November 25, 29-30, December 2-6, 2014

This crowd-pleasing holiday play needs no introduction. The tale of one core-shaking night in the life of miserly Ebenezer Scrooge is inherently theatrical. As brought to the stage with a script by one of Theatre & Dance's faculty members, it will also be a joyous version of the classic story driven by an unforgettable ensemble.

Non-required Productions (These are available to attend for extra credit. You do not have free tickets to these productions):

Once Upon a Time in Ancient Greece

By Laramie Dean / Directed by your instructor Cohen Ambrose

Masquer Theatre / September 5-6, 2014

A fantastic and comic quest of mythological proportions! Stheno, one of three sisters turned into hideous Gorgons by Athena for catching the eye of Poseidon, is not going to take her sister Medusa's murder lying down! Told in under 50 minutes, this epic story is played out by three actors donning a variety of Greek masks and employing puppetry, shadow play, and illusion to create this highly inventive theatrical experience.

Dance Up Close

Masquer Theatre / November 4-8, 2014

This annual black-box showcase will feature original works in two alternating programs and provides audiences with a chance to see work of emerging and established dance artists in an intimate setting. It also gives students the opportunity to collaborate with those dancers on creating design elements of some pieces—valuable partnerships that yield breathtaking results.

Jekyll & Hyde: The Musical

By Frank Wildhorn and Steve Cuden

Missoula Community Theatre / October 31-November 2, November 5-6, 2014

This gothic musical, based on a Robert Louis Stevenson classic, is a tale about the battle between good and evil. Dr. Henry Jekyll unwittingly unleashes his own dark side, wreaking havoc in the streets of London, as the savage, maniacal Mr. Edward Hyde. Set to a powerful rock music score, this show contains violence and adult situations. The themes and intensity are not suitable for children.

Participation in Class Projects and Performances

You will be performing on a weekly basis and will be given grades for your class work and performances in the areas of *process* and *product*. In other words, you will be graded on the finished performance and on all of the rehearsals. Your grade in this area is not based on the natural talent you bring to the class; rather, it will be a reflection of your *developed* talent and the progress that you make over the course of the semester.

Effort/Respect/Attitude

Effort and respect are two very important requirements. You are expected to respond to assignments and performances with effort and enthusiasm. You are expected to show respect for yourself, your classmates, your instructor, and your classroom environment. An excellent performance hinges upon taking risks, which is impossible to do if the environment is uncomfortable or uninviting. It is expected that when you participate in classroom activities, your peers will encourage you to commit to your actions and characters without embarrassment, remorse, or caution. This class requires openness and a willingness to take risks. Once that happens, the fun begins.

Writing Assignments

There are several worksheets in our text that you will be asked to fill out and discuss with the groups well as an in depth character analysis, also referred to in the text. There will also be another writing assignment, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the class which will be creative in nature.

Evaluation

Attendance, including promptness and participation	25%
Effort/respect/attitude	25%
Growth and participation in all class performances, including the final	25%
Production attendance and written assignments	25%

Attendance and Promptness

Attendance is compulsory because acting is participatory. There is no way to learn without doing, no adequate substitute for a missing partner, and no way to “make up” a missed experience. You will be given a grade for your attendance and after 3 unexcused absences your grade will begin to be effected. Generally speaking after 3 unexcused absences your grade will be lowered an increment.

Arriving late adversely affects your own learning and disrupts the learning process of your fellow students. Therefore, tardiness in excess of 10 minutes will be considered a complete absence, and every three instances of tardiness—of whatever duration—will equate to one absence. Every acting teacher reserves the right to declare a “no lateness” policy, should the need arise. Briefly put, this means that if the door to the class is shut and you are not inside by the time class begins, you are absent. No exceptions. If you have excessive absences or lateness please speak to me.

Movement Clothes

Please wear clothing to class that does not restrict movement: tight-fitting and restrictive clothing and anything too revealing is not acceptable. Hooded sweatshirts, hats, and hair that cover the face make it hard for others to see you, so remove them before work commences. Please clean your shoes appropriately before you enter the building to keep our floors as clean as possible. You may be asked to work in bare feet.

Personal Comfort

The study of acting often requires the instructor or peers to touch each other or be in close proximity. We all have bad days when we do not want such contact. Feel free to bow out of a particular exercise if you are in pain. However, frequent sitting out is a sign that you are having a difficult time with the class material.

Cell Phones

Please turn off your cell phone in class. My phone will be set to vibrate in case an emergency text message should be sent by the University. If your phone rings during class, please silence it as quickly as possible. Anyone caught texting in class will be immediately dismissed from class, resulting in an absence for the day.

Procedure/Policy

You are expected to abide by the following School of Theatre & Dance regulations.

- Eating, drinking, or gum chewing during the class are not permitted. Please let me know in writing if you have a medical exception to this policy. Water in a capped container is acceptable.
- Absolutely no weapons, real or fake, are allowed in the classroom.
- Late work is not accepted; this includes late or unprepared performances.
- There is inherent risk involved in many Theatre & Dance classes, as they are very physical in nature. Please proceed through class with caution. Always be mindful of your personal safety and the safety of others.

Due to safety considerations, at no point during a student’s time spent in class should non-enrolled persons be guests of that student without my consent.

School Handbook

All Theatre & Dance students must have an in-depth knowledge of the practices and procedures outlined in the School of Theatre & Dance *Student Handbook*. The *Handbook* is available online at <http://www.umt.edu/theatredance/about/handbook>.

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.