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THTR 210.01: Voice and Speech I

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Voice & Speech I - THTR 210 – 01
2 Credits TR 11:10 – 12:30 PM McGill 125

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Aim

The purpose of this course is to broaden your use of voice and speech in performance. These goals are achieved through the study of vocal production and enunciation as applied to the craft of acting. At the end of the semester you will leave with an increased kinesthetic awareness of how movement, breath, voice, and speech combine to embolden your intellectual and emotional connection to text when acting.

Objectives

- To introduce the basic concepts of voice and speech for the stage
- To foster the kinesthetic awareness of the body necessary for dynamic movement, breath, voice, and speech on stage
- To introduce the practice of controlled phonation and resonance as emotional self-expression
- To introduce the vocabulary and conventions of poetic and dramatic texts, focusing specifically on the scansion of Shakespearean verse
- To introduce the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as a symbolic system documenting the common vowel and consonants of spoken English through descriptive and prescriptive transcription
- To begin to develop a personal “Career Speech” integral to your professional aspirations

By the end of the semester you must...

- Demonstrate an expanded use of breath to support both voice and movement
- Exhibit marked improvement in clear phonation, projection, and volume
- Understand, recognize, and notate the poetry inherent in all texts
- Begin to attune to the nuances of speech
- Be able to hear, notate, and clearly phonate specific rhythm patterns and sounds in the context of performance
- Incorporate all skills learned in the studio into the practice of acting

General Education

Students accepted into the BFA Acting program may use the sequence of THTR 210, 211 and 310 to fulfill the Group III, Symbolic System Exception for General Education in place of the Group III, Modern and Classical Languages option. **BA Theatre students must complete the Group III, Modern and Classical Language option for graduation. NO EXCEPTIONS.**

Required Materials

- Meier, Paul. [*Accents & Dialects for Stage and Screen*](#). Revised/Expanded ed. Lawrence, Kan.: Paul Meier Dialect Services, 2012. Print
- Rodenburg, Patsy, and Patsy Rodenburg. [*Speaking Shakespeare*](#). New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. Print.
- Computer and Internet access to upload assignments to [Moodle](#)
- Recording equipment with the ability to save files in MP3 or other compressed formats. Most phones, tablets, and laptops have such capabilities.
- Clothes that support movement. Be prepared to work barefoot. If you must wear socks, please wear those that have slip resistant padding.
- Tickets to *Cyrano De Bergerac* and *A Christmas Carol* in the Montana Theater. Theatre majors are entitled to one ticket via their “majors card.” All declared Majors receive a “majors card” from Erin McDaniel in the first weeks of the semester. General Education students must purchase tickets at the UMArts Box Office in the PARTV Building. Plan ahead and purchase your tickets before the night of the show.

Attendance and Promptness

Acting is participatory: there is no way to learn without doing, no adequate substitute for a missing partner, and no way to “make up” missed experience. School policies will be enforced strictly. Only documented absences will be excused. **Missing more than two classes will drop your grade one-third of a letter for each successive absence.**

Furthermore, besides adversely affecting your own learning, arriving late for class disrupts the learning process of your fellow students. Tardiness in excess of 10 minutes will be considered a complete absence, and every two instances of tardiness—of whatever duration—will equate to one absence for grading purposes. I reserve the right to declare a “no lateness” policy should the need arise. Briefly put, if the door to the class is shut and you are not inside you are absent: no exceptions.

Please be sure to visit the rest room before class and during breaks. Leaving class during performances for a non-emergency is very disruptive. If an illness should cause you to miss class to the point of failing, it is up to you to pursue a medical withdrawal so that the course can be attempted again once you have recovered.

Teaching Assistant

We have a wonderful teaching assistant with us this semester. The TA will be present during all activities and is available to supplement instruction and feedback should the need arise. Please pay the TA the same level of attentiveness and respect that you show to me.

Grading Scale and Breakdown

A	100 – 90%
B	89 – 80%
C	79 – 70 %

D	69 – 60%	
F	59 and Below	
Participation:		30%
Writing/Research/Homework:		30%
Performances		30%
Professional Growth:		10%

Participation

In addition to the attendance policy, for each class session you will receive a grade on a scale from zero to five.

- 5** The student was actively participating in class, well prepared, and positively engaged with the material and fellow classmates.
- 4** The student was present, somewhat prepared, but not fully engaged
- 3-0** The student was unprepared, disruptive, disrespectful, or absent

A solid work ethic is expected so high marks should be the norm. Poor work will stand out. Students receiving low marks for participation should meet with me to discuss the problem and how it will be resolved.

Skill Assessment

Your performance and professional growth grades are my evaluation of how your technical skills have developed over the course of the semester. The following scale will be used to assess your performances and professional growth throughout the semester:

- A** **Superb Acting.** The student has transcended the level of craft brought to the course, mastered the intellectual preparation, and has begun to play imaginatively “in the moment.”
- B** **Good Skills.** The student has mastered the intellectual preparation necessary to move on to more advanced skills, but is not yet playing fully “in the moment.”
- C** **Fair Work.** The student is somewhat prepared intellectually for the work, and is making progress, but it is evident that stronger choices could be made and more practice is necessary.
- D** **Poor work.** The student has not or is not prepared fully for the work and it is painfully obvious to the both the student and the audience.
- F** **Failure.** The student has not or is not prepared at all, has made no specific choices, and is wasting theirs and the audience’s time.

Hopefully you will develop the voice and speech skills necessary to begin playing “in the moment.” However participation is often not enough. You are expected to show some growth in craft and artistry by the semester’s conclusion and achieve the outcomes laid out at the beginning of the syllabus.

Readings, Assignments, and Performances

All assignments, readings, handouts and recordings will take place on Moodle this semester. You are expected to check the web daily. All written work must be properly formatted, typed, and submitted as a PDF document by the beginning of class on the date due. I will not accept paper copies. If Moodle is down, use email as your alternate submission option.

This semester you will read selected texts by renowned voice teacher, Patsy Rodenburg. You will take an online quiz for each reading assignment and post a reflection to Moodle. Even though this is writing in an online forum, use of professional language and university level writing is required. Points will be deducted if you do not adhere to the highest standards of composition and citation. As you read, consider the following questions:

- How do you see yourself represented in the reading?
- What works? What doesn’t? Why?
- How might these techniques have helped a performance you participated in or saw?
- How might an exercise be modified to better suit your needs?

The following writing and performance assignments will assess your voice and speech skill development:

- Breath and phonatory capacity testing
- IPA Quizzes
- Shakespearean Sonnet Scansion and Performance
- Shakespearean Verse Scansion, Transcription, and Performance
- General American Dialect Performances

Assignments may be turned in late for partial credit. Performances must take place on the date noted in the schedule or assigned in class by the instructor. Due to a tight schedule and limited class time, they may not be made up without prior permission from the instructor.

Production Attendance

You are required to attend all School of Theatre & Dance theatre productions and attend the “All-School Responses” on the following dates (the Monday after the show closes).

Cyrano de Bergerac
A Christmas Carol

October 20 at 5:15 PM
December 8 at 5:30 PM

Attendance will be taken at the talkbacks and we will have an in class discussion if time permits.

Tentative Schedule

This semester we will work within the following generalized schedule in order to have enough room for flexibility. Weeks 1-8 will include brief IPA labs where new IPA symbols are introduced.

Weeks 1-2 **The Fundamentals:** Anatomy, Physiology, Warm-ups, and Vocal Health

Weeks 3-4 **Vocal Production:** The Body, Alignment, Breath, and Phonation

Weeks 5-6 **Vowel Sounds and Resonators:** Emotion, Extremes, Phonetics

Weeks 7-8 **Speech and Operative Structure:** Scansion, Poetry, and Verse

Weeks 9-11 **Connected Speech:** Descriptive Transcription and Performance

Weeks 12-End **General American Dialect:** Prescriptive Transcription and Performance

Final Exam **Friday, December 12 8-10 AM**
Final Shakespearean Verse Monologue

Electronic Resources

In this class we will embrace technology as the incredible resource that it is. Email is the required method of communication for the course. Please check your email and Moodle frequently throughout the day. **I will always initiate contact with you using your UM email.**

If you have course materials stored on your phone, tablet, laptop or equivalent device, set it to "Airplane Mode" so that the functionality is limited to stored data retrieval. Silence and stow other unneeded electronic devices. I will have my phone on vibrate in case an emergency message should be sent by the university. If accessing the web becomes necessary, inform me that you are doing so for the benefit of the entire class. Raise your hand and proclaim, "I'm Googling it!"

If one of your devices beeps or rings accidently during class, please silence it as **quickly as humanly possible**. Don't be embarrassed, just turn it off and all will be forgiven. Having said that anyone caught messaging or frivolously surfing the web will be dismissed immediately from class, resulting in a complete absence for the day. **I'M NOT KIDDING.**

Preparation for BFA Auditions

The skills learned in this course are necessary to pursue more advanced training in Acting. From the School of Theatre & Dance Handbook, Page 24: "all acting and skills courses during the third and fourth years of BFA training are considered "advanced." This level of training is student-driven and collaborative. The successful completion of advanced courses requires that students

synthesize and utilize the fundamental skills acquired during prior training outside of class time. Independent preparation and rehearsal is expected so that advanced concepts can be pursued in the studio. Students who fail to demonstrate proper preparation for advanced work or monopolize studio time addressing fundamental issues of skill will be graded accordingly and may be asked to withdraw from the course. Instructors will address the skills necessary for completing advanced work in the studio at the beginning of each advanced course.”

Movement Clothes

Please wear clothes to class that facilitate movement. It will become immediately apparent to you that jewelry (small studs are acceptable except in the tongue), jeans, hooded sweatshirts, hats, tight-fitting and restrictive clothing, anything too revealing (showing skin), and hair that covers the face make full participation in class and proper evaluation by the instructor impossible. Please remove or change out of restrictive items before work commences.

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 having a “Wounded Warrior” day. However, frequent sitting out is a sign that you might not be ready to advance in your training. If deemed necessary, any student with such needs will be asked to meet with the head of Acting/Directing and the instructor to discuss how we might better facilitate you through the course.

Sacred Space

In order to foster an appropriate environment for our work, we will treat McGill 125 as a sacred space. Please remove your shoes and socks upon crossing the threshold into the classroom and store your belongings neatly in the shelves provided. If you arrive early, use this time for reflection, stretching, sweeping the floor, and organizing any furniture scattered about. Be mindful of any rehearsal furniture designated for a School production that may be using the space and treat it with respect. If you must speak, speak only of the work we will do in this class. When class has ended, restore the room. Return any furniture to its designated area and retrieve all belongings that you brought with you to class. There is no overnight storage allowed and the safety of your belongings is not guaranteed.

Extra Credit

This semester you can earn up to a maximum of **fifty extra-credit** points towards your **participation grade** for participating in the following activities:

- 10 Points – Serve on the crew—construction, stage management, board operation, and backstage run-crew—of a production that does not fulfill your required school crew assignment. Please be sure to provide a program or note from your supervisor to verify that you completed the assignment.
- 5 Points Each – A sleeve of fancy 8-ounce clear plastic party cups for opening night toasts or a two liter bottle of ginger-ale (or equivalent number of cans)

No student can earn more than 100% of his or her participation grade in the class. Be aware of this when pursuing extra credit. **There is no extra credit to make up missed assignments or performances.**

Procedure/Policy

You are expected to abide by the following School regulations. There is no eating, drinking, or gum chewing during the class. Please let me know if 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.

There is inherent risk involved in many Theatre classes, as they are very physical in nature. Please proceed through class and rehearsals with caution. Always be mindful of your personal safety and the safety of others. Students participating in classes, rehearsals, and performances do so at their own risk.

Due to safety considerations, at **no** point during a student's time spent in class or serving on a production (in any capacity) should non-enrolled persons be guests of that student **without my consent**. Presence of such unauthorized persons in a class, shop, or any backstage/off-stage area will negatively affect a student's grade.

[School of Theatre & Dance Handbook](#)

All students in theatre courses must have an in-depth knowledge of the practices and procedures outlined in the School of Theatre & Dance Handbook. The Handbook is available online at the link above.

[Disability Services for Students \(DSS\):](#)

If you have a disability for which accommodations are needed please provide me, in writing, your official DSS accommodation letter. Please visit the website linked above for more information.

[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 located at the link above.