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THTR 482.01: Advanced Acting - Solo Performance

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Recommended Citation

Bolton, Randy, "THTR 482.01: Advanced Acting - Solo Performance" (2014). *University of Montana Course Syllabi*. 2276.

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School of Theatre & Dance
THTR 482 Advanced Acting: Solo Performance 3 Credits
Spring 2014: TR 3:40-5:30 pm SG 123
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Office Hours: T , TH 1-3

These are the criteria for both Personal Performance and (especially) Solo Performance.

1. What do you have to do?
2. What do you really want to—and have to—say?
3. What does this have to do with a public audience?
4. How is what you have to do and what you have to say in public risky, irrevocable, rigorous, and costly to you and your process?

SOLO PERFORMANCE

- Expand from personal issues to how you place these in the context of the world and the time that you live in. How does the world affect you and how do you affect the world and the people around you?
- Are you part of the solution? Do you want to be?
- This is a chance to communicate something to a great number of people—so make sure it is something you are PASSIONATE about.
- Do you want to think on a global scale?
- Please feel free to bring in an unformed idea and try it in front of an audience.
- Are you telling a *dramatic story*? It has to be interesting for the audience, not just indulgent for you.
- Talk about issues that may pale into insignificance if we increase our thinking to global issues. I was on the stair step . . . sometimes our issues change.
- Very sensitive—please help make this a safe and supporting environment—acting is incredibly tender. Please show your hearts and souls; use this as a time to do things bigger than you have been able to before—it doesn't have to be good.
- REMEMBER CONFIDENTIALITY!
- Show an understanding of dramatic elements—this piece is now for show—you have to take into account its innate theatricality and production values.
- Take something personal and express it through character—it is freeing and more interesting for the audience, and not uncomfortable. Sometimes when something is painful it is not necessarily interesting unless taken out of your own personal pain and put into the context of the world around you. My bag lady piece was about the fear of failure as an artist—about starving, being on the streets, not making it, being mentally ill, being laughed at because you're not cool and don't know how to dress. It was an expression of how beautiful I think the world is and how hard it is to be able to just look at someone and tell them that you think the tree over the road is beautiful and it fills you full of joy. *Adaptation*—about PASSION, and flowers.
- Think about the relationship between the solo performer and the audience. It is much more intimate and direct than in an ensemble work.
- Remember this is the key to self-sufficiency for the artist: you do not have to wait to be asked to do something—you rent the space and you do it, and you invite casting directors.
- You have to develop your own sense of special awareness—you are your own designer and must try your own aesthetic.

‘The [solo work] process starts very early on with the initial ideas of what the show is going to be about, who the voices will be, and how those voices come together thematically and rhythmically. So, rather than jumping in when the script is finished, it’s very much a cycle—the performer writing, my editing and suggesting, watching them improvising or reading more pages, workshopping it in front of an audience, then doing it all again.’

—Jo Bonney

Remember, you are also a playwright, performing your own work. It can be as good as you want it to be.

‘We hear a lot about the arrogance of the artist but nothing about the arrogance of the audience. The audience, who have not done the work, who have not taken any risks, whose life and livelihood are not bound up at every moment with what they are making, who have given no thought to the medium or method . . .’

—Jeanette Winterson

Don’t pay much attention to the specifics. In fact, when you hear all this criticism, the more specific the suggestions get—“You’ve got to have the dog sing ‘Amazing Grace’ here”—the more it’s essential to look instead for the subtext of the criticism by asking yourself this simple question . . .

What about my play is prompting these responses?

Solo Performance:

When I dance alone,
I lead.
There are no awkward moves
nor bruised toes,
only sweet, fluid, graceful steps

Performing takes practice—I think if you start now you will be ready, but you need to put a little pressure on yourself to start now, because your energy will become less and less as the semester continues. You are at your peak today! So start tonight and come in with ideas to talk about.

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.

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>.

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

