Spring 2-1-2017

THTR 220A.01: Acting I

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When asked about his own method, Konstantin Stanislavsky apparently said: “Create your own method. Don’t depend slavishly on mine. Make up something that will work for you! But keep breaking traditions, I beg you.”

He also said, “The person you are is a thousand times more interesting than the best actor you could ever hope to be.”

COURSE AIM: Acting I is for any student with a background or interest in the craft of acting, especially those considering a career in the performing arts (theatre, music, dance, film, broadcasting). This studio class is intended to cultivate the skill sets necessary to the professional actor: observation, imagination, concentration, improvisation, and character. I also encourage you to experiment with the quieter, less presentational aspects of acting: reflection, balance, listening, vulnerability, introspection, and curiosity. Through this course, you will start to fill your proverbial “actor’s toolbox” with many different tools, as well as learn how to choose those tools thoughtfully and utilize them with confidence and ease. It is a core requirement for all students majoring in theatre and introduces the art of acting as a process integral to collaboration and production both onstage, on camera, and behind the scenes.

COURSE OUTCOMES: By the end of the semester you must…

- Demonstrate a sense of professionalism and enthusiasm for the theatre and the craft of acting
- Understand the fundamentals of the actor’s process in the studio, rehearsal, and production
- Cultivate an understanding of the total organism involved in the acting process
- Explore the actor’s relationship with him/herself, the text, the physical environment, and other performers
- Begin to develop an appreciation for the artistic process necessary for independent and collaborative engagement with every performance undertaken or viewed.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
- *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* by Melissa Bruder, Lee Michael Cohn, et.al. (available for purchase in bookstore)
- *A Lonely Impulse of Delight* by John Patrick Shanley (electronic PDF text provided on Moodle)
- *The Red Coat* by John Patrick Shanley (electronic PDF text provided on Moodle)
- *Acting One* (excerpts) by Robert Cohen (electronic PDF texts provided on Moodle)
- *20th Century Actor Training* ("Stanislavksy" chapter) by Alison Hodge (electronic PDF text provided on Moodle)

LIVE PRODUCTION ATTENDANCE: You are required to attend ALL UM School of Theatre & Dance's theatre productions this semester. Theatre majors are entitled to one ticket via their "majors card." All declared majors will receive a "majors card" from Erin McDaniel in the first weeks of
the semester. General Education must purchase tickets through UMArts Box Office. Evening curtain times on weekdays and Saturdays are 7:30 p.m., while Sunday matinees begin at 2:00 p.m. Plan ahead and reserve tickets early through UMArts Box Office (PARTV Building); box office hours are Tues-Fri, noon-6:00 p.m. and one hour before performance; (406) 243-4581 or www.griztix.com:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Theatre</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Barefoot in the Park</em></td>
<td>Montana Theatre</td>
<td>Jan 21, 26 – 28, Feb 2, 4</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Thinner than Water</em></td>
<td>Masquer Theatre</td>
<td>Feb 22 – 26, Mar 1 - 5</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Dance in Concert</em></td>
<td>Montana Theatre</td>
<td>Mar 8 - 11</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Madwoman of Chaillot</em></td>
<td>Masquer Theatre</td>
<td>April 5 - 9</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Noises Off</em></td>
<td>Montana Theatre</td>
<td>April 19 – 23, 26 – 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dance New Works</td>
<td>Masquer Theatre</td>
<td>May 2 – 6</td>
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**TIPS FOR SUCCESS:**

*In order to foster an appropriate environment for our work, we will treat McGill 125 as a sacred space, respecting the facility and each other as we work on the craft of acting. Here are some reminders as to artistic and professional protocol:*

- Arrive to class early and ready to work. Warm up a bit on your own, getting into a focused, positive, and receptive place -- physically, emotionally, and mentally. As noted below, two late arrivals equal one absence. **Leave class only after restoring the studio to its original state.**

- Wear exercise clothing that promotes a "neutral" state of being (not flashy, controversial logo-bearing or overtly skin-revealing). If you need other "character" clothing for scene work, bring items that you can slip on over your exercise clothing or change during class. **Be prepared to work barefoot and on the floor.** We will most likely be working up a sweat. Keep hair back and out of your face. We will also be working our voices. Bring water (in a capped container). **Leave all digital devices in backpacks, with phones set to "Airplane Mode."** No texting EVER in class (unless your character does it in a scene). I will grant an exception if you are Googling something related to class or using tech for a class project, but you must ask permission and/or let me know.

- Come to class with an open and willing attitude. Be willing to try all the exercises before you pass judgment on them. And then be willing to try them again.

- Participate in discussions. Your thoughts and observations are integral to our development in this class, and I expect you to share them. Ask questions! Challenge assumptions (and me!)

- Be respectful of your classmates: listen to them during the exercises and in the discussions and respond thoughtfully, even if you disagree with their choices or comments. Frame responses in a constructive manner. NEVER attempt to "direct" your fellow actors.

- Always communicate with me about any concerns or questions you have regarding the course, your progress, further areas of exploration, how this connects to other coursework you’re doing, and so on.

- Decide to enjoy the work we do together. **If you find yourself overwhelmed, step back and practice the mantra: "I am enough for me today."** Then, do your best to dive back in and be ready to share yourself with others in a variety of playful and inquisitive ways. If you are having a particularly rough day (physically or emotionally), please feel free to speak with me in private and we will discuss strategies by which you can still participate in and contribute to class.
that day. If an illness should cause you to miss class to the point of failing, it is up to you to obtain a medical withdrawal so that the course can be attempted again once you have recovered.

- **This course requires work outside of class hours.** All Acting and Design courses may include officially scheduled, unsupervised rehearsal or studio time. Students enrolled in these courses are not to schedule other activities during time dedicated for independent work and collaboration with project and scene partners.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. **ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION**

   **Attendance:** Your prompt class attendance supports and exemplifies your professional work ethic and level of commitment to the art and craft of acting; further, any absence has an effect upon the work of the entire class. Absences can only be excused if formal documentation is provided (e.g., doctor's note, court notice, obituary with travel itinerary) or if I am notified as to a religious observance conflict. After 2 absences your grade will begin to be effected. 3 absences will result in loss of half a letter grade (A-). 4 absences will result in loss of a complete letter grade (B). 5 absences will result in automatic failure in class (F). In addition, **two tardies (arriving after attendance has been taken) will equal one unexcused absence.** If your tardiness is extreme, I reserve the right to count you as absent for the day and possibly refuse your admittance into class, out of respect for the other students and to avoid disrupting their learning process.

   **Participation / Collaboration:** Participation in this class is crucial! Theatre is action! Responsible participation and collaboration also includes attentive observation -- you must respect and support your fellow classmates, keep feedback constructive, and share the floor during discussions/exercises. **Further, if you are asked questions about assigned readings and cannot respond, it will affect your participation grade.** Following is the grading rubric for participation/collaboration: (10 POINTS)

   9-10 Actively participated, often contributed to discussions/exercises, courteous and invested in the work of others
   8-9 Dutifully participated, semi-regularly contributed to discussions/exercises, courteous/invested
   7-8 Seldom participated, occasionally contributed to discussions, marginally courteous/invested
   6-7 Participated and contributed only when absolutely required, problems with courtesy and investment
   0-6 Failed in regards to participation, contribution, courtesy, investment, and overall professional behavior

2. **TWO (2) LIVE PRODUCTION ATTENDANCES & REFLECTIONS:**

   **Thinner Than Water.** Attend live UM production; send me informal email reflecting on the acting component of the production. You must specifically address enough material to convince me that you attended the production. You must also attend "All School Response/Talkback" session. (**10 PTS TOTAL** Deadline Wednesday, March 8th 2017)

   **Noises Off.** Attend live UM production; send me informal email reflecting on the acting component of the production. You must specifically address enough material to convince me that you attended the production. You must also attend "All School Response/Talkback" session. (**10 PTS TOTAL** Deadline Wednesday, May 1st 2017)
3. POP QUIZZES OVER ASSIGNED READINGS:
All reading assignments are due by the date specified in the syllabus so that we may discuss them in class. To facilitate this, there will be four unannounced short-answer pop quizzes given periodically regarding the reading assignment/s scheduled for discussion. (EACH QUIZ = 5 POINTS -- 20 POSSIBLE TOTAL POINTS)

4. GRADED ACTING EXERCISES / PERFORMANCES:
Following are the graded, memorized acting/performance assignments associated with and reflecting progress in the course sections:

Open Scene Performance – 10 POINTS
Random Scene Performance – 10 POINTS
Red Coat or Lonely Delight Scene Exercise – 10 POINTS
3 - 5-Minute Scene Performance (10 PTS) with Score/Analysis (10 PTS) – 20 POINTS TOTAL
1-Minute Monologue Performance (10 PTS) with Score/Analysis (10 PTS) – 20 POINTS TOTAL
Physicalized Monologue Exercise – 10 POINTS

5. FINAL: Performed Scenes and Monologues with Final Class Reflection
The class final is a showcase of your polished 2-person scenes (3-5 minutes) and monologues (1 minute each). Each duo will get 5 minutes to perform all pieces for an invited audience. You must also submit a final written reflection of your overall work in the class, personally addressing points in regard to process, progress, challenges, victories, outcomes, etc. Scene Performance / 10 POINTS; Monologue Performance / 10 POINTS; Class Reflection / 10 POINTS = 30 POINTS TOTAL

GRADING RUBRIC for ACTING EXERCISES / PERFORMANCES
Your performance and technical growth grades are based on my evaluation of how your acting skills have developed over the course of the semester. The following scale will be used to assess your acting exercises / performances, indicative of your growth in the class:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td><strong>Superb Acting.</strong> The student has transcended the level of craft they brought to the course, mastered the intellectual preparation, demonstrated elementary technical prowess, and has begun to play imaginatively “in the moment.”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8-8.9</td>
<td><strong>Good Skills.</strong> The student has mastered the intellectual preparation necessary to move on to more advanced skills, made some basic advances in craft, but is not yet playing fully “in the moment.”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7-7.9</td>
<td><strong>Fair Work.</strong> The student is prepared intellectually for the work, and is making progress with some of the skills, but it is evident that stronger choices could be made and more practice is necessary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-6.9</td>
<td><strong>Poor Work.</strong> The student has not or is not prepared for the work and it is painfully obvious to the both the student and the audience.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Below 6</td>
<td><strong>Failure.</strong> The student has not or is not prepared at all, has made no specific choices, and is wasting theirs and the audience’s time.</td>
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**NOTE: NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED. NO EXCEPTIONS.**
OVERALL CLASS Grading Breakdown:
Participation (10 pt scale) 10 pts
Live Production Acting Reflection – *Thinner Than Water* 10 pts
Live Production Acting Reflection – *Noises Off* 10 pts
Four (4) Pop Quizzes over Reading Assignments (5 pt grade scale each) 20 pts
Open Scene Performance 10 pts
Random Scene Performance 10 pts
*Red Coat / Lonely Impulse* Scene Exercise 10 pts
3-Minute Scene Performance (Perf 10 pts / Score 10 pts) 20 pts
1-Minute Monologue Performance (Perf 10 pts / Score 10 pts) 20 pts
Physicalized Monologue Exercise 10 pts
FINAL (Scene 10 pts perf / Monologue 10 pts perf / Class Reflection 10 pts) 30 pts

**Total Course Points Possible = 160 pts**

***Attendance can further affect final grade***

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.

SCHOOL OF THEATRE & DANCE:
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.

**Risk**: There is inherent risk involved in many Theatre & Dance classes as they are very physical in nature. Please proceed through class, shop, 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.

**Class Etiquette**: There is no eating, drinking, or gum chewing during the class. 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. When class has ended, please return space to its original condition (in other words, **clean up** after yourselves). Lastly, **electronic devices are to be stowed away** during class unless permission has been given to access them.

**Guests**: 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 the instructor’s consent. Presence of such unauthorized persons in a class, shop, or any backstage/off-stage area will negatively affect a student’s grade.

DISABILITY SERVICES:
The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

**BEYOND ACTING I . . .**
Acting I is a required course of all Theatre majors as well as a General Education elective for students across campus. It is also the first preparatory acting class for students interested in pursuing the Bachelors of Fine Arts with a specialization in Acting – a professional training program for aspiring actors. If you decide to pursue this degree (admittance via audition in a student's 2nd year of study and upon completion of the degree's foundational courses), please be aware of the following criteria in the School of Theatre & Dance Handbook, page 24: "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."