

ACTOR AS STORYTELLER: FROM NEUTRAL MASK TO SPOKEN WORD POETRY

by

Teisha Duncan

Dip. in Drama in Education, Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts, 2003

B.F.A. in Musical Theatre, Howard University, 2009

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

University of Pittsburgh

2018

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
KENNETH P. DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

This thesis was presented

by

Teisha Duncan

It was defended on

April 5, 2018

and approved by

Cynthia Croot, MFA, Associate Professor/Head of Performance

Karen J. Gilmer, MFA, Lecturer-Costume Designer

Thesis Director: Dennis Schebetta, MFA, Assistant Professor/Head of MFA Performance

Pedagogy

Copyright © by Teisha Duncan

2018

**ACTOR AS STORYTELLER: FROM NEUTRAL MASK TO SPOKEN WORD
POETRY**

Teisha Duncan, M.F.A.

University of Pittsburgh, 2018

Abstract

In a B.A. Stanislavsky-based actor-training course progression, students are usually exposed to texts from contemporary to classical works. In utilizing the Stanislavsky system as the foundational acting technique, students learn to build acting/performance skills, by engaging with these texts through monologue and/or scene study. This thesis details my process of researching, creating and teaching my proposed acting course: Actor as Storyteller. This course, specifically designed as an acting course under a BA theatre curriculum, poses the question: In reimagining actor-training, within the context of performative devisement, what performance skills can actors gain if ‘telling the story’ is the focus? The course emphasizes the creation and performance of actor-generated original work. The performance methods utilized are improvisation, mask work, pantomime, puppet play and spoken word poetry. These performance methods are explored in conjunction with selected elements of various voice, movement, and acting techniques. This cross-curricular course design makes Actor as Storyteller an ideal acting course to include in a B.A. actor-training curriculum; because it complements the multi-disciplinary structure of a Liberal Arts Education. The skills garnered from this, actor training-into-creation process, prepares students for the demands of the ever-changing world of theatre, film, and television. Additionally, it empowers students as self-producing artists in the unknown world of performance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	IX
1.0.....ACTOR AS STORYTELLER.....	1
1.1 DEBATING THE FALSE MODEL.....	1
1.2 IMPETUS FOR THE COURSE.....	3
1.3 PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH.....	5
1.4 THE ‘GIVENS’ OF A COURSE.....	11
2.0.....STORY PEDAGOGY.....	15
2.1 TELLING THE STORY.....	15
2.2 WRITING THE STORY.....	22
2.3 IMPROVISING THE STORY.....	25
3.0.....ACTOR AS STORYTELLER.....	30
3.1 THE BODY’S VOICE.....	30
3.2 THE ACTOR’S VOICE.....	38
3.3 THE ACTOR’S HEART.....	43
4.0.....ACTOR-AUDIENCE CONTRACT.....	49
4.1 PLAYING FOR AN AUDIENCE.....	49
4.2 PLAYING TO AN AUDIENCE.....	55
4.3 PLAYING WITH AN AUDIENCE.....	60

5.0.....	CONCLUSION.....	67
5.1	THE PERFORMANCE OF ACTING.....	67
5.2	REVISIONS AND FUTURE APPLICATION	73
5.3	FINAL REFLECTIONS	79
APPENDIX A		83
APPENDIX B		98
BIBLIOGRAPHY		130

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Class Structure	5
Table 2: Gardner’s Seven Knowledge Types and the Seven Learning Styles.....	8
Table 3: Diversity Inclusion Plan.....	10
Table 4. Performance Skills.....	68
Table 5: Course Calendar.....	93
Table 6: Puppet Play Performance Grade Sheet.....	119

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Neutral Mask 1	123
Figure 2: Neutral Mask 2	124
Figure 3: Puppetry 1.....	124
Figure 4: Puppetry 2.....	125
Figure 5: Puppetry 3.....	125
Figure 6: Puppetry 4.....	126
Figure 7: Puppetry 5.....	126
Figure 8: Center for Creativity 1.....	127
Figure 9: Center for Creativity 2.....	127
Figure 10: Center for Creativity 3.....	128
Figure 11: Center for Creativity 4.....	128
Figure 12: Action Theater Exercise	129

PREFACE

Thank you...

To my friends, family, students, and well-wishers for your continuous love, prayers, and support. I stood on your strength when mine wavered.

To Dennis Schebetta for your unfailing patience and support. You were tireless in your commitment to my growth and development during my tenure. I am forever grateful to you for granting me the opportunity to be a part of this amazing program. To Cynthia Croot and Karen J. Gilmer for your steady support and gentle guidance.

Thank you to the Faculty and Staff of the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Pittsburgh. A special thank you to students of the thesis class. You each encouraged my spirit, inspired my pedagogy, and invigorated my artistry.

To the keepers of my spirit, with my deepest gratitude I speak your name in honor of you.

To my love Shearrod, Carson, Maggie, Ariana, Tarisha, Jermaine, Sakina, Oris, Evette, Donisha, Amanda, Le'Mil, Ricardo, Elijah, Imari, Hakim, Elizabeth, Chevelle, Colleen, Akeem, Erika and Dr. Johnson.

This MFA is dedicated to my parents Cordella Facey and Linval Duncan.

1.0 ACTOR AS STORYTELLER

1.1 DEBATING THE FALSE MODEL

In his book *Playing the Audience*, James A. Nicola outlines the three roles actors play on stage: themselves, the character and the storyteller. As the storyteller, the main objective of the actor is “to tell the whole story, not just his own, clearly and compellingly” (109). Nicola further states that “life onstage is...formed life, conceived of passion, fertilized by imagination, and contrived by a storyteller for a purpose” (5). In popular society, the storyteller trope brings to mind a single narrator enacting various characters or adults telling bedtime stories. Similarly, the actor trope casts the actor as the narrator and great pretender committed to a performance. The actor versus storyteller debate is controversial and understandably so because “we can observe actors and recognize that we are being told a story, and we can observe storytellers and recognize the employment of practices that we would readily associate with acting” (Wilson 39). The term ‘practices’ as framed in the previous sentence refers to useful skills an actor develops during their training. These skills include audience engagement, narration, use of imagination, emotional engagement and physical and vocal expressiveness. Frequently, it is assumed that acting and storytelling are interchangeable forms because they share similar characteristics. In the book, *Storytelling and Theatre: Contemporary*

Professional Storytellers and their Art, Michael Wilson outline these assumptions through his creation of the false acting/ storytelling model. In explaining this model, he states:

The actor subsumes him/herself within the single character who they are called upon to portray, so that the actor's personality becomes invisible beneath the character. These five characteristics of acting are seen to be the key features that differentiate it from the job of storytelling and these commonly held, but ultimately misleading, assumptions might most easily be illustrated thus:

The False Acting/Storytelling Model

Acting

1. Group/Ensemble Project
2. Fourth Wall
3. Elaborate set/costume/props
4. Fixed, learned text
5. Character Based

Storytelling

1. Individual Endeavour
2. Direct contact with audience
3. Minimal set/costume/prop
4. Fluid, improvised text
5. Self-Based

The characteristics listed under acting are applicable to storytelling and vice versa. The model is 'false' because the characteristics listed under each form is meant to reflect only the confines of that specified theatrical form. However, the characteristics are interchangeable between the forms. Actor as Storyteller in its design and execution embraces the intersection between both forms. In acknowledging this intersection, I am not implying that acting and storytelling are the

same. They are two separate theatrical forms that share common characteristics in their process and performance. The premise and objective of the course title and the course itself are to position the actor in the role of a storyteller. The actor accepting his/her 'storyteller role' will discover new ways to communicate the world and life of characters to an audience. Wilson's false acting/storytelling model identifies the assumed characteristics of each form. In addition, it echoes my sentiments on the fluid exchange of performance practices found between acting and storytelling. In using Wilson's list, the five common characteristics can be re-imagined as five performance areas essential to the actor's work. The performance areas are 1) collaboration (group/solo) 2) actor- audience relationship (fourth wall/direct contact) 3) production design (set/costume/props) 4) actor and the text (Fixed/improvised) and 5) character work (character-based/self-based). These five areas will frame the course as we explore the actor's practice of 'telling the story' within a performance.

1.2 IMPETUS FOR THE COURSE

In a theatrical work, 'telling the story' through an actor's performance is not a novel concept. However, what makes Actor as Storyteller unique is its emphasis on the actor's storytelling in performance. The actor's storytelling in performance refers to the actor connecting to the text and world of the play beyond the givens. The story is the heart and soul of the play, "story is not plot...it is all the levels of meaning that coalesce into an aesthetic effect on the audience" (Rafael 183). Therefore, in order to accurately embody the heart of a play the actor should go beyond the plot when making performance choices. In my experience, I notice young actors

focus more on form over content. They are transfixed on ‘giving a show’ so they forget to employ the basic acting skills they have learned. These foundational acting practices defined under the Stanislavsky system are objectives, given circumstances, tactics, bits and tasks, and emotion memory. In focusing on the form (the empty look of a performance) a student quickens their process by generalizing the work. This is evident on stage in the student’s generic gestures and non-descript actions/reactions as they ‘indicate’ throughout the performance.

This ‘product without story approach’ creates cold and purposeless characters. The characters are built on low stakes and weak choices projected through an actor with an unexpressive voice and stilted/repetitive body language. The actor’s presence and performance are “surrounded by an aura of studied casualness” (Rodenburg 9). I find myself in acting classes repeating the same notes. The eight most common notes I give are:

1. “Raise the stakes.”
2. “Own your character’s truth and sell it.”
3. “Avoid making casual choices and instead be bold and deliberate about your choices and support them with strongactable verbs.”
4. “Action precedes emotion.”
5. “Avoid playing mood, open your channels to being truly affected.”
6. “Your body is your language as an actor.”
7. “Find the humanity in your character.”
8. “Own the space.”

Over the years I have tried many approaches to aid my storytelling as an actor. I was

successful when I acknowledged and embodied the heart of the work. Peter Guber in his article, “The Four Truths of the Storyteller” lists the four truths as truth to the teller, truth to the audience, truth to the moment and truth to the mission. I reconceived these truths as the four truths of the actor. Guber later states “although the mind may be part of your target, the heart is the bullseye.” This concept is frequently overlooked, forgotten, and/or minimized by actors ‘acting’ instead of ‘being’. Anne Bogart in her article, “The Role of Storytelling in the Theatre of the Twenty-First Century” reiterates the same concept Guber and I share by stating “you can’t change anybody’s view by telling them facts, you only change it through emotion.”

1.3 PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

Actor as Storyteller is a beginner acting course designed to guide young actors through the craft of telling a story. This is executed through performative devisement. Within the context of this course, performative devisement refers to an emphasis on developing performance skills while creating original text/work. Students will explore performance methods such as improvisation, pantomime, neutral mask work, puppetry and spoken word poetry. Students will write and direct solo and group projects. Each class assignment will have a written and a practical component. As illustrated in table 1 below, the course content is structured under three units of storytelling. Each unit has a specific emphasis and a focal performance method.

Table 1: Class Structure

Units of Storytelling	Unit Emphasis	Performance Method
------------------------------	----------------------	---------------------------

The Language of the Body	Storytelling through Physical Language(Without Words)	Pantomime/Mask Work
The Language of Inanimate Objects	Storytelling through breathing life into (animating) inanimate objects	Puppetry
The Language of the Written and Spoken word	Storytelling using the written word as the primary source of communication	Spoken Word Poetry

Students will construct masks and puppets and participate in exercises designed to expand their physical, vocal and emotional vocabulary.

This course is designed for a B.A. Stanislavsky-based actor training program. The prerequisite for this course is an introductory level performance course. This prerequisite denotes the students' exposure to basic acting concepts such as objectives, obstacles, tactics, choices, subtext, stakes, stage positions, improvisation, and the art of listening and responding. The course will feature specific elements of various acting and movement techniques. As an actress, I was trained in the discipline of a B.F.A. program. My experience teaching at the University of Pittsburgh is my first experience of a B.A. program. One of the highlights of this particular B.A. program is the hunger of the students. The students crave being challenged, doing the work and growing as an actor. The students with varied majors, double majors, and minors are consistently pulled in numerous directions. Despite their busy schedules theatre holds a solid place in their heart and calendars. As hard as they work I observe great insecurity in their eyes especially when they encounter students from B.F.A. programs. When I inquire about my observations the students openly express the four main reasons for their observed insecurity:

1. Their limited exposure to different techniques, styles, and forms of theatre and performance.
2. A B.A. program is less challenging and rigorous.
3. There are seemingly lower expectations placed on students in a B.A. program.
4. The mandatory academic commitment required for majors/minors limits their practice time. This hinders their artistic growth.

All in all, they are concerned about how grossly undertrained their talent may be in comparison to conservatory/B.F.A. trained performers.

The design and structure of a B.F.A. program differs from a B.A. program. Many aspects of that reality are unchangeable. However, both programs, especially for an actor in training, has its positives and negatives. I always encourage my students to be resourceful. I have no power nor intention to change the design of this B.A. program. However, I do have the power and intention to utilize the agency I have as an instructor. So in planning the execution of this course, I had three objectives in mind:

1. Expose students to new forms of performance.
2. Highlight the uniqueness of a B.A. program within the structure of the class.
3. Be culturally responsive by making deliberate pedagogical choices that embrace all areas of diversity in the students.

As I conceptualized strategies to implement these three objectives in my overall lesson plan structure, I thought of the seven styles of learning and the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy (C.R.P.). The learning-style theory was first popularized in the 1970's. There are

many different theories and taxonomies classified as learning styles. One such theory is Howard Gardner's *Multiple Intelligence Theory*. As outlined on the University of Washington's DO-IT Programs and Resources webpage, "Gardner's theory purports that people use these types of intelligence according to the type of learning that is necessary, their personal strengths and abilities, and the environment in which the learning takes place." There are seven commonly accepted styles of learning: visual, verbal, physical, logical, aural, social, and solitary. Table 2 below describes Howard Gardner's seven multiple intelligences and also it outlines the seven connected styles of learning as overviewed by learning-styles-online.com. In my practice, the seven styles of learning are a "useful means for understanding differences in students and adjusting instruction accordingly" (Davis 30). The students have different skill sets and different skill levels. Therefore, I utilize the seven styles of learning to craft instructional materials/activities to assist student's speed and quality of learning. The course is offered to both majors and non-majors so this is important.

Table 2: Gardner's Seven Knowledge Types and the Seven Learning Styles

Howard Gardner's Seven Knowledge Types	Student's Ability	Learning Styles	Student's Preference
Logical/Mathematical Intelligence	The ability to detect patterns, think logically, reason and analyze, and compute mathematical equations	Logical	Using logic, reasoning and systems
Linguistic Intelligence	The mastery of oral and written language in self-expression and memory	Verbal	Using words in speech and writing.

Spatial Intelligence	The ability to recognize and manipulate patterns (large or small) in spatial relationships	Visual	Pictures, Images, and Spatial Understanding
Musical Intelligence	The ability to recognize and compose musical quality (pitches, tones), and content (rhythms, patterns) for production and performance	Aural	Sound and Music
Kinesthetic Intelligence	The ability to use the body, or parts of the body to create products or solve problems	Physical	Using the body, hands and sense of touch
Interpersonal Intelligence	The ability to recognize another's intentions, and feelings	Solitary	Learning in groups or with other people
Intrapersonal Intelligence	The ability to understand oneself and use the information to self-manage	Social	Work alone and use self-study

Culturally responsive pedagogy is “based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly” (Gay 106). In using the seven styles of learning and considering the tenets of C.R.P.’s student-centered approach, I created the Diversity Inclusion Plan featured below in table 3. The plan’s main goal is to support my pedagogy as I strive to create a course that

hopefully “extends the learning beyond the classroom, thus creating a student-centered circular continuum that is ongoing and regenerating” (Davis 72). Table 3 illustrates my Diversity Inclusion Plan regarding content, student learning, and instructional delivery.

Table 3: Diversity Inclusion Plan

Performance Methods	Seven Styles of Learning	Instructional Aids	Connective methods of Transfer of Learning (Connecting content to...)
Pantomime	Visual	Class Readings	Student’s Areas of Study
Puppetry	Aural	Video Lectures	Student’s Classification
Mask-Work	Verbal	Workshops with Invited Guest Artists	Student’s Individual Cultural background
Action Theater (Improvisation)	Physical	Class Field Trips	Student’s Level of Experience
Spoken-word Poetry	Solitary	Attending Performances	Artistic Collaboration
	Social		
	Logical		

The plan highlights: A) performance methods B) the seven styles of learning, C) the instructional aids and D) the connective methods (the acquisition and integration of personal and cultural knowledge to the creative process). There is a built-in flexibility to this plan. It

is subject to change. I have given myself permission to make adjustments as the course progresses because I consider myself a learner in a class where my students, at times, act as teachers.

In this rich classroom composition, I encourage the students “to learn collaboratively, teach each other and be responsible for each other’s learning” (Ladson-Billings 163). The Diversity Inclusion Plan functions as a visual reminder to incorporate “a set of activities for various levels because it is important to understand exactly what students bring to the table in terms of content knowledge, as well as their own life experiences” (Davis 72). Since this course is offered to students from various majors, classifications and skill sets then I need to support their absorption of the content by varying my instructional delivery. If I use the seven styles of learning to build my lesson plans then it will engage the students from different angles. This approach is inclusive and supports each student’s learning style. Additionally, it will sustain the students' interests. The aim is to increase the students’ investment and application of the content to their artistic process.

1.4 THE ‘GIVENS’ OF A COURSE

In this thesis, I will catalog my process of teaching Actor as Storyteller. This course has the potential to bridge the gap between personal work and personalizing work. The content will be explored through in-class activities, lectures, workshops with guest artists, field trips, weekly readings, and attendance at live theatre performances. A primary feature of the course is the creation and performance of original text. Students will be guided through the written and

practical components of class projects. The strength of the student may be in both or none of those demands. However, the students will be expected to actively engage themselves in finding/creating a process that supports them through artistic strengths and weaknesses.

It is important to me that within the class environment there is space for students to bring their whole self. For the students, this can be an awkward part of the process because many of them are just beginning their journey to self-discovery. However, this is an important step in an actor's process. The actor has to first invite themselves to the process before they summon any character because as Uta Hagen states in her book *A Challenge for the Actor*, "the basic components of the characters we will play are somewhere within ourselves" (55). In my experience, I have encountered students who believe the work of an actor/artist begins when the *whole self* has been found. Consequently, students who believe they are still on the road to self-discovery, passively wait for inspiration from teachers/directors. The student will hinder their creativity and confidence if they succumb to creative laziness. Additionally, the student never learns a sense of responsibility for their work because there is always someone else to blame. The creation of original text gives the student an opportunity to access his/her creative agency. The process of creating original text to be further expanded into performance helps to develop performance skills. The student-actors invest in their creative bank by building their skills as 1) actors, 2) writers, 3) directors, 4) designers and puppet and mask makers. This type of multi-disciplinary investment expands the student's longevity and profit-making potential as a self-producing artist.

The pedagogical model in the course Actor as Storyteller utilizes a multi-disciplinary arts training approach. The student is exposed to various acting and movement techniques such

as Stanislavsky system, Alexander Technique, and Ruth Zaporah's Action Theater. The students are trained to think, create and express themselves making imaginative leaps in their work. There are progressively more actor training programs that demand that we "train our student-actors towards embracing an entrepreneurial model that promotes self-reliance, innovation, initiative, and most crucially, serving society" (Zazzali 200). Craig Fleming comments on this same concept in the article "What If... Traditional Theatre Training was replaced by a Multi-Disciplinary Approach." He states:

In our participatory culture, the artists of tomorrow will be diverse citizens in a land where the lingua franca is a grammar of all the arts. I already see this yearning in the eyes of my young students. They may be undergraduate theatre majors, but in their hearts they are not devotees of a single discipline. How can they and why should they be? Let them o'erjump the parapets to become what they truly are: artists who wear a multi-colored livery, acting and singing and dancing and filming and building and casting and metal-sculpting their dreams for the new millennium. 'Tis a consolidation devoutly to be wished.

In creating this course Actor as Storyteller, I am committed to empowering young student-actors to engross themselves in their process. I encourage them to find their way in all that is placed before them and seek/create the forms of expressions that are missing. An actor should never feel pressured to choose one technique and commit to it only. Instead, they should explore as many approaches to their craft. This approach is supported by the understanding that with time they will choose the specific technique(s) that will prepare them

to better navigate their talent, artistic aesthetic and the creative industry to which they belong.

2.0 STORY PEDAGOGY

2.1 TELLING THE STORY

Rob Roznowski in his book *Roadblocks to Acting*, comments about the thin line between emotionally supporting students (empathy) and supporting students emotionally (therapy): “just as acting is not therapy, teaching acting does not turn an acting teacher into a therapist” (27). Trust is a primary feature of every classroom; this is especially true for an acting class. Students are constantly being asked to be vulnerable, trust themselves, be open, give in to their impulse, look into their partner’s eyes, let go, dig deeper and get out of their head. This transparency between student and teacher encourages trust and sometimes emotional reliance. Therefore, it is not accidental when students begin to confide in their acting teacher beyond the scope of the class content. Once the instructor begins to ask questions about 'your story' the students assume the objective is personal digging. The kind of personal digging that unearths only tragic memories and not happy ones. The students who have led good lives, get nervous because they fear they will not have much to contribute to the conversation. Those whose lives have been particularly challenging either shut down or begin to share secrets of their darkest moments. In any case, all present are made aware of the good and bad memories of those open enough to share. But, a question like “What is your story?” is not always designed with a cathartic purpose

in mind. The question is an invitation to share a memory, a dream, a goal and/or a thought. In Actor as Storyteller, my focus was to know the students through their story. Their story is dictated by what they are willing to share and if they arrive at smiles, tears or laughter it should be on their terms. This kind of truthfulness and heart, embodied in an actor's delivery, makes them captivating to watch.

In the course Actor as Storyteller, self-exploration is designed to heighten the student's awareness of the creative potential of self-knowledge. The first story the students told was their own. Uta Hagen in her book *A Challenge for the Actor* recommends that actors train in "self- observation, in self-stretching exercises" which she defines as a "source for a warehouse full of selves that can be called on to fill the complicated characters they will be called on to bring into being" (57). This is less about a social experiment and more about the students actively finding levels to their expressiveness. This unearthing of 'other-selves' would eventually enrich their storytelling to expand the students' emotional, and physical vocabulary. Anne Bogart in the article, "The Role of Storytelling in the Theatre of the Twenty-First Century" comments that "It is very powerful to actually tell your own story because the story that you tell creates your future." The collaborative nature of the course Actor as Storyteller requires that as much as each student gets to know themselves, they should get to know each other.

For honesty to permeate in revealing moments, I built a special rapport with the students. We began each class by talking. I arrived early and struck up a conversation with a student present. The conversation led to us talking in a circle. Sometimes the conversation stemmed from a comment at other times it began with a question. There was no hidden agenda. The

objective was to talk and listen. The discussion was not always in a large group. At other times I separated the students into smaller groups. I call these small talk sessions 'self-talk'. It is titled 'self-talk' because students were encouraged to talk about themselves releasing their thoughts, in an honest, nurturing space, and finding common ground with each other. This daily practice was at the start and end of each class session.

A beginning assignment was to write a six-word memoir. Students were instructed to choose an experience that left a lasting impression and write a six-word memoir for example Irony, I dream like an insomniac. They were given a worksheet with fifteen empty lines and instructed to write as many six-word memoirs about as many different moments of their lives as they could recall. This initial push to have them write numerous memoirs was not just to get them used to the writing demands of the course but to get them thinking about the stories of their lives. The students were placed in pairs. They were instructed to select three memoirs from their list. From the three chosen they were instructed to:

1st Memoir: Create a tableau of the memoir based on the memory that inspired it. 2nd Memoir: Give your partner the memoir. They will create a tableau to reflect their interpretation of the memoir.

3rd Memoir: At home create an illustration of the memoir. (Homework).

This assignment created the perfect balance of students getting to know each other but in a non-invasive way. In writing their memoirs, students were encouraged to write about only what they were comfortable sharing. In viewing the tableau of their memoir, the students could either admit or deny if their classmates' interpretation was correct or incorrect. This exercise gave the students the opportunity to be an audience and witness small parts of their

story.

When framing the assignment, I shared some six-word memoirs with the students. I asked for their interpretation of the memoirs. It was easy for them to allow their imagination to run wild about the supposed life the memoirs revealed. The students were invited to share a personal story about a moment in their life that was particularly noteworthy. After a few examples, one student with knit brows and a questioning smile asked, “Can’t it be a happy moment?” This student’s observation shocked me because I did not realize that all the examples, shared by the students and me, were indeed of sad moments only. The general tendency is to equate emotional depth to tragedy only and not to comedy. Somehow sadness is deemed harder to access than joy. Therefore, students often revert to playing the mood of sadness. This *playing of mood* is a common challenge for young actors because the tendency is to create an emotional hierarchy based on their comfort level.

For some students acting is therapy. The audience is given the role to play their therapist. The stage is the couch where they vent frustrations, discover their strengths and gain the clarity and peace that surpasses all understanding. Lecoq in his book *The Moving Body* exclaims, “I have heard that in the United States, they are attended by a ‘shrink.’ In Italy, they go onstage and play that’s my idea, too...” (59). The job of the acting teacher includes supporting students as they unearth painful memories and face possible emotional roadblocks. At times this is a byproduct of the work. The class objectives and the performance techniques employed may require it. However, this is not the aim of the self-observation exercises in Actor as Storyteller. The objectives of these exercise are to:

- Explore the Actor/self-relationship by using memories and experiences to access their

imagination and find a sense of emotional play. This will "...increase their ability to hold and express emotion... recover lost personal material...examine one's perceptive and responsive process, bringing awareness to and thereby disempowering distracting thoughts of self- obsessions, fears, judgments and analysis" - (Ruth Zaporah's article "What is Action Theater").

- Explore acting concepts that position self-knowledge as a source for character development. Concepts such as Uta Hagen's Transference as outlined in *The Challenge for the Actor*: "Begin to make transferences from your own experiences to those in the play until they become synonymous with them...from your own life to the very origins of the character" (61-62).

-Personalize the work. This speaks to the pride a student develops when their work ethic and high standards are evident. I encourage my students to engage in the process by cultivating high standards for their work. They should self-assess and make adjustments and not solely rely on others critique. The students explore characters with great specificity. They are building humanity and truthfulness and not from a disconnected state of creating caricatures.

- Use self-knowledge as a muse. How can the student's story be reimagined into artistic expressions? How can personal diversity be transformed into artistic diversity? How can a student's self-knowledge spurn artistic confidence resulting in their increased awareness of what they bring to the table as an artist?

These and other objectives will be examined throughout this thesis as the recurring theme of

‘self-expression’ takes form. There are three challenges of this ‘self-observation’ approach to connecting self to a process. First, students begin to believe that self-knowledge is the only way to expand their work; whereby, knowledge of self-equals accelerated artistic growth and development. Second, students who are still exploring themselves, their self-image declines because they feel they have nothing to offer. Third, students who are more self-assured either thrive by making artistic leaps with their stories or, they lose interest in telling stories outside of their own. Therefore, no matter the character or circumstance somehow they find a way to make it all about them. In all three challenges outlined above creative confidence is stifled and doubts and insecurities ensue. To stop this from happening it is important to frame these ‘self-observation’ exercises correctly. The dialogue should be prefaced with encouraging words as a reminder to confidently own what they have experienced and observed. In meeting students at their personal points of entry I intentionally assigned the writing of the six-word memoirs during the last 30 minutes of class. I knew some students would find it easy to quickly fill the 15-space sheet while others would find it challenging. I wanted to avoid students feeling incompetent and restrained. So I kept repeating, “Write as much as you want or as little.” Before the class ended, I led the students in a discussion where I posted the question: Was it more challenging to find a moment to write about, or to write about the moment itself? The students were transparent in their responses. For the most part, the students found both tasks equally challenging. Some students shared that some moments were harder to write about because they struggled to choose a specific aspect of the moment to describe. For other students moments were vivid. They quickly wrote about those moments. One student commented that a particular moment he recalled was so fresh in his mind that as he wrote felt he was reliving it. There were

many head nodding. I took the opportunity to highlight how palpable memories can be and how quickly when shared, they can create a bridge between us and others. The students smiled and nodded in agreement. I ended the session. I related our ‘unifying story moment’ to the captivating power of an actor on stage when they truly connect with their audience. The students were sent home to continue the process of supporting their storytelling by editing their six-word memoirs. The six- word memoir lesson occurred over the course of two days. The seven styles of learning were executed as follows:

- Visual (Spatial): Students were instructed to create a visual illustration of a memoir.
- Aural (Auditory-Musical): Students were encouraged to listen to music as they wrote their memoirs in class. Also, they were encouraged to think of a song/music that connects to a memory and then uses that memory as a writing prompt for the memoir(s)
- Verbal (Linguistics): Students had to write six-word memoirs.
- Physical (Kinesthetic): Students had to create tableaux of their memoirs and their group partner’s memoirs.
- Solitary (Intra-personal): The strategy of ‘pacing’ by giving the students, what seems like a free range of time, to complete the assignment. The students' had an agency of their time. This strategy supports a solitary (intra-personal) type of learning.
- Social (Interpersonal): Students were placed in small groups to share their memoirs.
- Logical (Mathematical): At the end of the class, during the class discussion students shared their personal reflection on what they presumed was the

objective of the exercise.

“Theatre saved my life, if it wasn’t for theatre I would have been a bitch with a bad attitude... but I found a place to lay it all down” (Jones). Emotions are a vital part of what we experience and share as actors as storytellers. In Actor as Storyteller, the student is asked to check in with self or to reveal self to others. The overall objective is to connect the actor to emotions from within their experience. The actor is invited to inhabit their body and memories. “This practice turns the mind inside out. Because when we place the activity of the mind into action, we can observe its ways, examine who we are and how we operate, we can consciously redirect our functioning” (Zaporah xxi). In applying this approach, the student can strengthen their capacity to feel, by accessing the emotions they have felt from their experiences. There is always a place for theatre in therapy and theatre certainly is therapeutic. However, my approach to exploring emotional discoveries is not in a psychological way. Instead, I guide students through memories they are willing to share.

2.2 WRITING THE STORY

The actor’s contribution and commitment to the written word extend beyond the words of playwrights. In theatre history the initial role of the playwright and the actor was interchangeable. An actor is a curator of words, characters, and stories. Many actors write and create solo performances about their story and others. Actors like Daniel Beatty, Whoopi Goldberg, Anna Deavere Smith, John Leguizamo, Billy Crystal, Rhodessa Jones, Lily Tomlin, and Sarah Jones just to name a few. The success of these actors/artists solo projects have

inspired many young actors to pursue the same path. In envisioning the course Actor as Storyteller, I wanted to explore the actor's voice from two angles 1) as a playwright and 2) as a person. I had two questions in mind: 1) do students connect more to a text they wrote versus a pre-written play-script? and 2) how can this course prepare students to create performances that expand the written work?

In creating this course I wanted the students to play an active role in storytelling and this had to include writing the stories. Also, I wanted to see if they were able to take the story they wrote and create a layered performance telling more of the story. This requires the student to search for more than what they know in the story. The student utilizes the full capacity of their instrument to create the performance. They are stretched to process not just the acting portion of their performance but also the design elements. This creative process is holistic and gives the student an insight into the multiple levels of storytelling offered by a performance. The dual function of writing and creating performances is not an easy task and undoubtedly proved challenging for some students. However, challenges aside, the students strengthened their skills in writing, devising and creating solo and group performances. Additionally, my desire was for them to discover and develop new talents and a healthy respect and appreciation for the written word.

The actor's agency in writing and creating a performance was explored with the assignment Silent Scream. For this assignment, students identify or create their alter-ego. The student makes a mask based on their alter-ego. The student writes a story about the moment in the life of the alter ego. This story is used to create a two-minute pantomime. This assignment follows the six-word memoir assignment. It is supported by class activities on techniques in

storyboarding, mask- making, physical storytelling, and neutral mask work. The most challenging parts of this assignment for the students were to identify/create their alter-ego and to formulate a story for this alter-ego. The students had various perceptions and definitions of an alter-ego. We defined an alter-ego as an alternative personality. This personality can take any shape or form from an animal to an inanimate object. This assignment was primarily designed to enliven the student's imagination. Many of the students struggled with giving themselves permission to just imagine. Even though identifying their alter ego initially presented itself as a challenge for the students, once I encouraged them to ask friends, and family members for help, they were more open and excited about the assignment. This 'community-based' research proved beneficial to the students because their friends and family gladly shared their opinions. In class the next day some of the students shared that the alter ego discussion between their loved ones was hilarious, enlightening, revealing and shocking. The students were able to hear first-hand their loved one's perception of them. Some of the students were genuinely shocked by the perceptions of their actions and personality. However, other students were not surprised by the perceptions. They felt the discussions provided an opportunity to show other sides of themselves.

The research was an important aspect. The students integrated their research into the writing and creation of masks and puppets. For the Silent Scream assignment, the students incorporated the input of their loved ones into the design and creation of the pantomime performance. Puppet Play and Actor Cypher are two additional assignments where students were expected to write. Puppet play is a group assignment and Actor Cypher a solo project. For Puppet play, students had to write a puppet play for a young audience. The Actor Cypher

assignment required them to write about something that makes them impassioned. The student functioning as a playwright is an extension of their role as a storyteller. In writing original text, they told stories from the perspective of the subject, the writer, and the interpreter.

2.3IMPROVISING THE STORY

There is always a strong demand for actors with improvisational skills. In the beginning stages of the course, improvisation was a tool to introduce students to acting from a sense of play. Ruth Zaporah's Action Theater, the improvisation of presence, was the main improvisation technique explored during the tenure of the class. In the article, "What is Action Theater?" Action Theater is defined as:

An improvisational physical theater training and performance method created by Ruth Zaporah. The practice of Action Theater incorporates the disciplined exploration of embodied exercises that lead to increased skills of strong, clear, spontaneous, and artful communication. Action Theater addresses and expands the vocabularies of expression including: movement, vocalization, and speech. Action Theater is a tool to examine one's perceptive and responsive process, bringing awareness to and thereby disempowering distracting thoughts of self-obsessions, fears, judgments and analysis.

I discovered Action Theater about a year and a half ago when I received a set of books from a friend. As I read the exercises, I was intrigued by the built-in flexibility of the assignments. All exercises can be structured/re-structured as a solo or group exercise. Within this flexibility, I saw the potential of the exercises to build camaraderie among the students as we established a

collaborative environment. Additionally, I chose Action Theater because of how the “exercises and ideas expand awareness, stimulate imagination, strengthen the capacity for feeling, and develop skills of expression” (Zaporah xxi). As outlined in her book, *Action Theater: The Improvisation of Presence* Ruth Zaporah states:

Action Theater exercises don’t set up life-like ‘scenes’. Instead, life-like and non-life-like situations arise through physical explorations within forms and frameworks. The forms are open, content-less, and address how we organize specific aspects of behavior and experience (xxi).

Once the students started to slowly warm-up to each other, I felt it was time to explore their voice and body through improvisation. The principal aim of improvisational work here is “to free the body to discover and express itself fully” (Lust 122). I used Action Theater exercises as daily warm-ups for each lesson. Exercises such as Sounder/Mover, Shape Alphabet, Lay/Sit/Stand, One Sound/One Move/One Speak and Breath Circle. I adjusted some of the exercises to suit my objective for the class. One exercise I adjusted was One Sound/One Move/One Speak. This exercise was used to practice physical storytelling. The exercise One Sound/One Move/One Speak as outlined by Action Theater requires everyone to arrange themselves in trios. In the trios, they build an improvisation with each person playing a different role. One moved, one created a sound and the other spoke. In adjusting this exercise, my objective was to use it as a tool to enhance the students’ physical awareness by cultivating the practice of specificity in the students’ movements. In my version of the exercise, the students were instructed to build a solo improvisation. They are only allowed to do one action at a time. They can either move, sound or speak. The improvisation should have a beginning,

middle and an end. The movements created should flow seamlessly from one to the other. They should not appear robotic and disconnected.

This exercise was the first solo improvisation. When I explained the exercise to the students there was a moment of hesitation. Then they privately created the improvisations. I encouraged the students to keep the exercise simple. Once they started to work, it was great to watch them edit as they created. As they explored their physical vocabulary, they were assessing the effectiveness of the action based on what they had in mind. They could only do one action at a time. They had to decide what action suited each moment. Each student presented their improvisation to the class. As they observed the presentations, I encouraged the students to pay attention. I wanted them to analyze the story based on the action and not based on their presumed intention. In other words, I wanted the students to avoid filling in the blanks of the story if the images were unclear. After they presented the improvisations, we discussed the challenges and successes.

In general, the students expressed that they enjoyed creating their improvisation. Most of the students admitted that in the beginning, they hesitated because they were not confident in the story they created. They thought the story was not fun or layered enough to present. Also, students were unsure if the story could accommodate fluid, isolated actions. As the discussion continued, the students started to comment on their interpretations of actions. Some, when checked against their classmate's intentions, were accurate and others were not. For the students, this was the first time to articulate their analysis of movement. In another exercise, the students were in pairs. In these pairs they were instructed to improvise a short story. The first person created a literal telling of the story while the other person created an abstract telling of

the story. This story had to be told in silence and using only the physical body. The students jumped at this exercise. Each person gravitated to the story style most comfortable. The students who were more comfortable in their physical acting chose to tell the abstract side of the story. These students were either trained in dance or practice some form of yoga or physical movement style. The discussion following the presentations revealed the students' fascination with physical storytelling. The abstract and concrete telling of the story allowed the students to witness a mirror image of the story. The abstract stories entertained the majority of the students. They were more interested in analyzing each movement to find meaning. Certain students found the 'concrete' story too straightforward. And when confused by the 'abstract' story, some students admitted looking at the 'concrete' story to clarify their perceptions.

The students were asked to share their feedback on what they gathered from this exercise. The majority of the comment focused on the need for specificity in physical storytelling. Specificity is the leading sentiment as we entered the physical storytelling unit. The improvisation exercises developed the student's attention to physical details in storytelling. As an audience member, they realized that all movement regardless of how minute is seen and read as a part of the story. In this course, the students build their improvisation skills through Performative Devisement. A Performative Devisement approach means, the students:

1. Create performances using their physical instrument.
2. Within an ensemble create from the center of their imagination.
3. Develop performance skills connected to stage presence and physical and vocal expressiveness.
4. Make emotional connections to characters and stories.
5. Explore environments and situations by isolating physical actions.

Improvisation is a tool used throughout the course to spark the student's imagination and creativity. In the class, improvisation exercises are used to create text. The students have to write a ten-step process outlining their pantomime performance. Improvisation exercises are done daily to build confidence, encourage creativity and empower self-expression. In preparing to explore physical storytelling, the openness and flexibility of Action Theater exercise provided us with a foundation to build on.

3.0 ACTOR AS STORYTELLER

3.1 THE BODY'S VOICE

In the article, “In the Beginning was the Body,” David Bridel states that: “imagination is the engine of the actor’s physical life.” The development of imagination is best exercised through play. This development is achievable in an environment that stimulates physical activity by rendering “expressive the individual parts of the body and help re-educate, liberate and bring spontaneity to bodies curved or limited by habitual and conventional movement” (Lust xi). The student through observational practices, begin to experiment with how their body and environment move. From animals to old rickety buildings, everything around us has a sense of movement. The student-actor has to develop an eye that sees the details.

The first unit of the course Actor as Storyteller is dedicated to developing the students' physical vocabulary. In developing physical vocabulary, the first step was to analyze movement through observation. The students were instructed to carefully assess each other's' gait identifying the length of strides, size of pressure placed on the ground, heel to toe movement, dominant features, speed, the position of shoulder and head, alignment of the spine, and position of the eyes.

During the second step, we explored the students' physical instrument. The Action

Theater exercise, Shape Alphabet, was used to identify points of opportunities and areas of limitations in the student's movement patterns. For this exercise, the letters of the alphabet A-Z were called out. The students had two to three seconds to form the shapes using their body and elements of the classroom environment. I challenged the students to refrain from using the first idea that comes to mind. But instead to search their imagination for additional ways to form the shapes. During the exercise, for the simpler shapes like C, L, O, the students kept their movements simple by using limited parts of their body. Also, they utilized very few elements of the environment. For the more complex shapes like H, M, N, Z, the students formed different angles by moving more parts of the body. They created each shape with great accuracy. As they moved on horizontal and vertical planes, they shaped the body by curving, elongating, stretching, turning, twisting, rotating, and lunging. Additionally, the students stretched the frame of the exercise by creating shapes with each other's body. In my instructions, I did not restrict the students from using each other's body. Therefore, it was encouraging when the students initiated using each other's body, in tandem and in opposition, to create the shapes. Rightfully so, they acknowledged and utilized a person as an element of the environment. As the students simultaneously worked the creativity and flexibility of their bodies, I observed their physical limitations when executing certain moves and postures. Students winced on knee bends, groaned on backbends and quickly straightened when they forced their bodies into shapes that proved too painful to hold. I noted these observations for future consideration. Throughout the exercise, I encouraged the students to safely challenge the limitations of their body. I reminded them never to put themselves in harm's way by refraining from 'tapping out' of an exercise. 'Tapping out' is a general safety precaution for the class whereby students are able to step out of

an activity/exercise if it is proving difficult for them to complete. They can use this strategy at any time without explanation.

Students in an attempt to both explore and develop a strong, flexible, physical instrument usually seek the assistance of additional movement forms. These movement forms include alexander technique, dance, yoga, pilates, and gym workouts. These movement forms, support the conditioning of the student's body but not the conditioning of the student's instrument as an actor. The student has to undertake additional activities to condition their body to embody characters, relationships, emotions, thoughts, environment, and circumstance. The student has to immerse themselves in exercises that awaken their imagination, activate their impulse, and expand their physical and emotional range. A limber physical instrument is a vital skill for an actor. Just as subtle gestures can bring clarity to a moment, so can clearly defined exaggerated movements. It is all about what the moment in the story requires from the actor.

During the course, students were introduced, through required class readings, to various movement training techniques used in actor-training programs across America. Some of those techniques were: Lecoq, Laban, Grotowski, Chekhov, and Suzuki. The class was assigned to read the article "In the Beginning was the Body" by David Bridel. This article gave an overview of each technique. I wanted to develop the students' awareness of the various forms of physical theatre training available. Despite the fact that they were not covered in the class. We discussed in great detail these readings and techniques. Some students were exposed to the techniques. As a class, we identified the objectives of each technique and discussed the similarities and differences.

The common belief behind the movement techniques is “imagination is the engine of the actor’s physical life” (Bridel). In leading the discussion about the techniques, my objective was to advise the students about the benefits. Whether they do not choose to study any of these techniques further, the knowledge is invaluable. The concept “One must give actors various paths” (Stanislavski 298) falls within my pedagogical principle that students should be exposed to as many acting, movement, and voice training techniques as possible and should be encouraged to find their way through them all; taking what works from each of them and storing the rest in their artistic arsenal. We discussed a general receptivity to different techniques. However, I emphasized the eventual goal should be to choose a specific technique and commit to training further in that technique. To this end, one student shared her experience of practicing different movement techniques. She eventually realized her affinity for one specific technique. We then briefly discussed her journey of gaining additional training in that technique.

The physical work we covered in the course closely resembles components of these techniques. For instance, our work on building stage presence reflects Suzuki’s approach to the actor channeling energy from their core; this is evident in the exercise HA. In this exercise, with bent knees, feet parallel and hip-width apart, students have to find a focal point in the room and jump in the air making a 180-degree turn landing flat on the soles of their feet. This move is repeated making a 360-degree turn. Once they have landed safely, they have to extend their arms out in front, engage their diaphragm and say ‘HA’ with great force and volume. This exercise forces the students to 1) consciously engage their core in maintaining their balance, this prevents them from toppling over, and 2) activate their diaphragm to gather the vocal power needed to project HA. This exercise can be challenging

for some students because while doing a vertical spin, they have to attain a constant orientation of their head and eyes, to enhance their control and prevent dizziness. The students who accurately execute this exercise are steady in doing the exercise in the correct stages. Usually, I guide the students through the stages of the movement. However, they often rush ahead to get to the turns because they are excited to try the jumps. Once they start to topple and the frustrations begin to build, this is when they usually give in to following the directions in great detail. The students steady their mind and body and execute the turns, step by step. Then they experience great fluidity, accuracy, and grace of their movement. This exercise provides an opportunity to discuss and demonstrate the importance of being meticulous in constructing movement. The specificity of taking time to execute the movement properly, for clear communication and to avoid injury.

I dedicated a class session to neutral mask work. In preparing the students physically for neutral mask work, the students were guided through Action Theater exercises such as Sounder-Mover, Shape Alphabet, Shape/Shape/Reshape, and Breath Circle. Neutral mask work was chosen as a point of emphasis because “the neutral mask opens up the actor to the space around him...it puts him [her] in a state of discovery, of openness, of freedom to receive...it allows him [her] to watch, to hear, to feel, to touch elementary things with the freshness of beginnings” (Lecoq 38).

In doing neutral mask work, we applied certain rules on how to work the mask “Lecoq explained it brilliantly...the mask displaces the principal communication methods...so in a mask, the whole face becomes the eye, the part that sees things, and the body becomes the expressive face, which registers the realizations” (Wilsher 31). I guided the students through

neutral-mask exercises. I adapted these exercises from Lecoq mask exercises like Waking up, Farewell to the Boat, and The Fundamental Journey. In adapting the Lecoq exercises, I created specific scenarios for the students to improvise while wearing the mask and facing a mirror. I guided the students' movements using Lecoq's seven levels of tension: catatonic, relaxed, neutral, alert, suspense, passionate, and tragic. The use of Lecoq's seven levels of tension functioned as a physical guide for the students to assess the depth and contrast of how these levels feel in their body. In one of the exercises, the students chose the level of tension they wanted to embody physically. They used their knowledge of the levels of tension to assess how it affects social engagement as they moved around and through each other during the exercises. I guided the students through the exercises, layering the action by randomly calling different levels of tension. Using the seven levels of tension as a frame, the students had to discover, through touch, the mask and their body. As soon as they discovered both, they were encouraged to explore their bodies, looking at each part as if they were seeing it for the first time. Then they had to discover and explore their body and the mask by seeing it in the mirror. This exploration led them to see and explore each other. The students chose a spot on each other to explore in great detail.

The students were in four groups. When it was not their turn to perform they sat and observed their classmates. They also had the opportunity to watch themselves in the mirror. The students did not do this because they were focusing on the exercise. They immersed themselves in the neutral mask work. As a result, the students discovered a range of movements. Students were curling and twisting in ways that I had never seen them move before. There were other students' whose movements were restricted by the mask. Their

stomach and legs contracted into the body instead of expanding out. In another exercise, the students stretched for an object meant for one person. The students had to move with great vigor, precision and purpose to attain this one object. The students were forced to move over and around each other's body in invasive ways. They had to reach for the object without touching each other. The students' commitment to the exercise was evident by 1) the sudden changes in their breathing patterns, from long breaths to quick, audible gulps of air and, 2) the bulking and tension in their muscles from exerting effort for the object. Despite any anxiety, the students stayed in their masks for the full duration of the exercise.

Afterward, during the class discussion, some students expressed how they felt uninhabited to move and express themselves under the protection of the mask. But other students explained that they felt restricted by the mask. Most of the students commented on how quickly they felt themselves emotionally committing to the exercises. In reaching for the object, it became personal for certain students. They privately endowed the object with a history. In making the desire so specific, it raised the stakes. Some students experienced discomfort when their classmates probed their body. Other students were more uncomfortable with probing their classmates' body. One male student expressed his deliberate choice to choose a safe part of a female student's body to probe, to avoid making her uncomfortable.

Interestingly, we all cosigned his statement, when we observed his activity it was clear that his objective was as he described. The student in showing respect to his female classmate chose the action "to retreat" as he explored her body part. This way he could observe her reaction and retreat if she seemed uncomfortable. We discussed mask work as it relates to 1) protocols to follow when engaging physically with a scene partner, 2) making choices that physically and

emotionally enhance storytelling, 3) individual body movement and physical engagement with others, and 4) specificity of movement when communicating emotion and mental state.

As with all physical exercises, the breath is needed to power the muscles in the body. During our neutral mask and Action Theater exercises, I encouraged the students to check in with their breath and to map their bodies. In the article “Body Mapping” by Stacy Gehman, she defines Body Mapping as “the term given by William and Barbara Conable to the process of constructively applying an understanding of anatomy to improving how we move.” This physical practice is a tenet of the Alexander Technique. As an actress, my practice of the Alexander Technique has proven invaluable over the years. I use it to condition my body for better breath support and to move with ease reducing pain and tension in my body and vocal cords. To introduce the students to the technique, I invited a certified Alexander Technique coach to lead a talk and demonstration with the class. It was during this workshop that the students were introduced to the concepts of ‘sensing the body’ and ‘body-mapping’. As outlined on alexandertechnique.com, The Alexander Technique is defined as:

A way of learning to move mindfully through life... It is a simple and practical method for improving ease and freedom of movement, balance, support, and coordination. The technique teaches the use of the appropriate amount of effort for a particular activity, giving you more energy for all your activities. It is not a series of treatments or exercises, but rather a re-education of the mind and body.

The technique was created by F.M. Alexander (1869-1955) who was an actor who began to experience chronic laryngitis when he performed. After many failed doctor visits, Alexander discovered a solution on his own. He realized that the excess tension in his neck and body were

causing his problems. As he explored his body, he began to find new ways to speak and move with greater ease. Similarly, I wanted the students to use body mapping exercises and the techniques they learned from the Alexander Technique workshop as a starting point for exploring their unique bodies. As the students begin to sense their entire body, they are opening themselves to the vast storytelling potential of their body. This workshop was a practical way to teach the students that it is never enough to let the face alone tell the story. But instead, they should align the motions of the ankles, lower legs, knees, upper legs, pelvis and hip joints, front & back of the torso, arms, wrists & hands, collar bones, shoulder blades, neck, and head to support and contribute to their physical storytelling. This approach is called acting from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet. It creates a strong through-line between the student's inner and outer choices.

3.2 THE ACTOR'S VOICE

The actor should simultaneously strengthen the language of their body and the body of their voice. I describe the actor's voice as being comprised of three components:

1. The Physical Voice (Anatomy).
2. The Literal Voice (Personal Narrative)
3. The Trained Voice (Expressive instrument)

This description is based on my assessment of the actor's voice, as it was categorized and explored during the course. This concept does not connect to any existing vocal technique. The course Actor as Storyteller is designed to emphasize each of these components, at different

times, over the semester. The student-actor learns about the anatomy of the voice, how breath facilitates power and how good vocal hygiene is paramount for longevity. We witnessed the importance of breath control during the Alexander Technique workshop. One student volunteered to receive hands-on work with body mapping. It was an enlightening moment for the student and for us who witnessed her transformation. The facilitator was gently scanning the tension points in the student's right shoulder. We could see the release of tension from the muscles. Within five minutes the student's right shoulder was visibly higher than the left shoulder. The muscles lengthened as it loosened. The student was encouraged to focus on her breath. As the facilitator gently released her back and spine, she became lightheaded. She was quickly placed to sit, taking deep breaths. At that moment, the facilitator aided the student to unlock the power of her breath. The experience enhanced the students' awareness of how to use their breath to give energy and power to their body.

The Literal Voice is challenged daily in the class. The nature of the class required the students connect to their thoughts and creative curiosities. They are empowered to take charge of the narrative by creating a theatrically inspired narration. The narrative being either a character's story or their own story. The narration refers to the telling of the story; and through the eyes of the actor, this telling implies embodiment. The student is required to compose and perform original material in an attempt "to contribute to the multiple conversations...with agency" (Milner 69). They are asked to create from their imagination, passions, and fears. The final assignment, Actor Cypher, requires each student to write a spoken word poem. There was no theme to this poem. This was a general concept that they had to make specific. This part of the assignment was subjective. I did this because I wanted to honor the student's full experience,

providing them with the opportunity to write from any aspect of their experience. Despite the fact that this assignment is open to interpretation, the students were responsible for their process. This process was fully described in a ‘process’ paper. After each assignment, students had to write and submit a process paper. This paper was due after the full completion of the assignment. In addition to the written description of their process, they had to include pictures of their rehearsal process and final presentation. Also, they had to attend and write production responses for a poetry show, a live theatre show for children, and the devised show *Recoil*. The whole concept of noting and recording personal narrative culminates with the students creating an e-portfolio. This electronic portfolio catalogs all assignments for the semester. It included: process papers for each assignment (including pictures), a copy of readings with the student’s visible notes and highlights and three production response papers.

The Trained Voice for an actor includes training in voice and speech. Throughout the course, students are guided through exercises to assist them to find the colors of their voice. The colors of the voice are in how they manipulate pitches, tones, inflections, breath, rhythm, and tempo. We explored speech using enunciation, pronunciation and projection exercises. As Alex Boon, in the article “Voice and Speech: A Craft” explains:

Building upon the enormous potential of the voice, with its color, emotion and carrying power, we can define speech as the meaningful end product of the voice...Every actor should begin with his individual speech and, through exercises, be able to identify all the existing sounds in his own language... The actor will thus be able to apply any and all variations in his speech.

Puppet Play is the second major assignment of the semester. Students in groups of four write and perform a puppet show designed for a young audience. Each student had to play a character in the puppet show. The students had to create voices distinctly different from their own and their group members. In creating these voices, they were not only considering the characteristics of the roles but also the given circumstances of the puppet play, and the intended audience. The more animated the voices, the more colorful the puppets, and the larger the story; then the better the entertainment value.

I began our vocal exploration work by creating a Voice Box. This Voice Box was a literal box that had the term voice box written on the side. The students were given pieces of paper to write down the different sound and vocal impersonations they can duplicate. They did not have to write a set amount of sound/voices; they just had to include any vocalization they could offer. They could either write the voices of family members, cartoon characters, friends or even the sound of an animal, or someone's laugh. We placed all our choices in the box. I randomly picked from the Voice Box. The student whose choices I picked immediately began to vocalize. Some students expressed their nervousness to try, due to their self-proclaimed inability to create sounds/voices. The students who were shy would giggle after creating any loud, deep-toned voice/sound. Some students created unique voices but once they began to speak their diction was unclear. For the most part, majority of the students only vocalized a pitch or two above/below their regular speaking voice. As a class, we analyzed the different sounds and voices by highlighting the distinct features. We discussed, and I guided them through vocal exercises that demonstrated the technical aspects of the voice. We explored the

articulators (lips, teeth, tongue, and hard palate) and the resonators (the throat, the mouth cavity, and the nasal passages).

During the Voice Box exercise, I witnessed a limited use of full vocal range and poor diction. In considering this, I guided the students through tongue twisters, vocal scales, and vocal sirens. These exercises explored how timing (tempo, rhythm), dynamics (loud, soft, and raspy) and articulation can affect sound production. In essence, we created character voices by using the properties of sound as a guide. Also, we explored using environmental sounds as inspiration when creating character voices. For example, we could match the deep drone of an old truck to the deep groan of an old man. When the students created the character voices for their puppet shows, they used the six properties of sound to manipulate their voice. With specific elements to use as a guide, the students were more confident in their efforts to explore creating different voices. In small groups, they playfully created sounds and voices using the system we created in class.

As students plan a career in theatre, they often overlook the hiring potential of the children's theatre market. Voice-over actors are more open to the possibilities of working in children's theatre as they consider lending their voices to commercials, animated features, and video games. The vocal work we engaged in for the puppet play assignment opened up the students' perspective on the many different ways and forms in which they can vocally tell stories. The students created many character voices expanding the dexterity of their vocal instrument.

3.3 THE ACTOR'S HEART

The Stanislavsky system is used “to penetrate, through the logical and correct fulfillment of physical actions, into those complicated, deep feelings and emotional experiences which the actor must call out of himself, in order to create the given stage image” (Stanislavski 16). For most students enrolled in the course, their primary frame of reference about acting concepts, was derived from Stanislavsky's Method of Physical Actions. Acting concepts such as imagination, motivation, objectives, analysis of text through actions, relaxation, subtext, truth, belief and the ‘Magic if’. These concepts are reinforced and employed during the course to find emotional truth in performances. Thalia R. Goldstein in her article, “The Mind on Stage: What, Cognitively, Does an Actor Do?” states:

Actors must use their emotion regulation skills—whether they decide they want to feel the emotions of a character or not. Everyone comes to their job with personal emotions in hand. But, when it's your job to feel something else (or nothing else), then you have to figure out a way to control your own emotions and replace them with the emotions that are correct for your job...for the actor, his or her "public face" can be anything from murderous to purely innocent. So, in the end, it's not just following what the director says... Instead, actors use a host of complex psychological skills to create realistic portrayals of characters.

Learning emotion regulation skills will help students to manage and change the way they feel and respond to situations. If using acting idioms, I would connect this skill to the skill of listening and responding. One way for students to develop emotion regulation skills is through

creative play.

Creative play as explored in Actor as Storyteller differs from the Method in that, my use of the term refers to creative child's play. However, it is similar to the Method's use of imagination. Students are encouraged to embrace any silliness, clumsiness, and cluelessness they experience as they participate in exercises. The hope is that they will avoid overthinking, which results in students judging and editing their natural impulses. I always share personal anecdotes to show them my connection to the work. For example, when exploring the colors of the voice I shared with the students my "train lady voice". I gave them a brief anecdote about how I discovered the voice and I encouraged them to share personal anecdotes. In another exercise, when exploring the role of props and costumes in the actor's storytelling, the students had to use their street clothes as costume/props. With each clap of my hand, they had to dress their body in different ways, noting the character/person each fit of the clothing brought to mind. I used myself as an example to explain this exercise. They were given the opportunity to instruct me on different ways to dress my body. Then we briefly discussed the possible characters behind each of my looks. As a general practice, the students are encouraged to articulate their fears, anxieties, and insecurities as they face any and every exercise. This approach facilitates a general creative play throughout exercises because the students are aware that we all enter the space with strengths and weaknesses. However, this should not stop us from having fun as we learn.

For the exercises leading up to the Puppet Play assignment, I adapted children theatre games into acting exercises. My adaptation of a traditional Hide and Seek game from Jamaica became the blueprint for identifying elements of puppet plays. Once we played the game, I then

asked the students to describe the experience using one word. The students shared words such as fun, effort, sweating, breath, fear, improvising, repetition, adrenaline, anticipation, subtlety, awareness, creative thinking, patience, flexibility, judgment-free, and instincts. We then discussed the parallels between these words and the performance and/or preparation of a puppet play. As an example, using the word fun, a student commented that a puppet play should be fun. Another student connecting to the word ‘improvising,’ stated that as puppeteers they may have to improvise 1) if something goes wrong during the performance and 2) as they engage with the children during the puppet play. In general, during the course, creative play reflected the general high energy, fun- filled atmosphere of the class. Even in activities that required more discipline and less giddy play; the student’s positive attitude and steady focus never allowed discipline to be the enemy of enthusiasm.

It can be a challenge for some students to find emotional truth either within their character or their work. This emotional involvement in their work is paramount to them connecting with their audience. If they captivate themselves then they will be able to captivate others. Aristotle said that “the secret to moving the passions in others is to be moved oneself, and that moving oneself is made possible by bringing to the fore “visions” of experiences from life that are no longer present.” In this course, finding emotional truth is about students striving to create a performance, connected to their dramatic function, “that is not only engaging and truthful but also relevant and useful to the lives of the spectators and thereby to the world” (Benedetti 7). As mentioned before, a requirement after each assignment is that students write a process paper. These process papers are a way for them to reflect on what they have done, how they did it and how they perceive their work was received. The three points of focus are the

work, the process, and the audience. There are various approaches (emotional recall, affective memory, etc.) to aid actors in finding the emotional truth. While these specific concepts were not taught during the course, they were discussed whenever we explored similar content.

In the course, we explored emotional truth through repetition. Students were gently pushed to repeat sections of their performance making stronger choices each repetition to connect the work to the audience. The students were always assessing their process. Therefore, they could identify moments they were and were not investing in their performance. During the rehearsals for the Silent Scream assignment, I would ask the students to locate their audience in their emotions, meaning they should refrain from playing emotions and play actions that solicit emotional responses in themselves and the spectator. This request forced the students to assess physical and vocal choices. Whatever action the student claimed they were playing, I would ask them to check in with their face, back, knee, elbows, etc. to see if they are all connected to playing that action. In other words, are they using their body to embody their objective? Therefore, are they indeed acting from the crown of your head to the sole of your feet? Through the act of repetition, the students were guided to be specific and meticulous. Each assignment was designed with a personal component to encourage the students to personalize the work. “Begin to make transferences from your own experiences...until they become synonymous with them” (Hagen 62). Therefore, drawing an emotional connection to what they do as a person to what they are doing as a character because “in all forms of spontaneous role-playing, your own being is always at the center of it” (Hagen 58).

Another way emotional truth in the class was explored was through three components of engagement: meaning, stakes, and connection. This was evident in the class activity My Gem.

Students brought to class an object that is of great significance to them. Using the given circumstances (who, what, where, when, why, how) as a guide they had to choose one word to express each given circumstance. The student wrote each word on a post-it. They had to create a pantomime performance where they had to add a movement to each word and use both the object and the post-it as a prop/costume. They had to do the pantomime twice through. The first time they had to slowly say the words and do the movements following the order (who, what, where, when, why, how) and the second time through they had to re-arrange the order of the given circumstances and quickly say the words and do the movements. The students had only ten minutes to choose six words (one for each given circumstance) to express their story, memorize the words, create a movement for each word and use the object and post-it as props/costume. I challenged the students to stay emotionally connected to the object. The extension of this focus in performance meant that the students had to use each element: post-it, object, words, movement, and voice, to communicate the sacredness of the object, pulling us the audience into the emotional relationship between them and the object. The three components of engagement, as outlined at the beginning of this paragraph, were highlighted in this assignment. The students had to focus on their 'connection' to the object throughout the assignment. Despite the multiple levels of the assignment the students had to focus on communicating to their audience, the 'connection' they share with their object.

The spirit of the class also contributed to the emotional work during the course. I made sure to positively reinforce, with words and action, each effort made by a student. I complimented each student by name, offering in detail the measures of their success. The support of their fellow classmates applauding them before and after each task and offering

constructive feedback after assignments encouraged the student's creative spirit. This created a built-in pride and emotional commitment to the work that showed in the care they took with creating and performing each assignment. There was the belief in the work as an actor, and that transferred into a belief in the circumstances as a character.

My entrance into teaching acting is more skills-based. Therefore, my focus is on the use of imagination, memory, and experiences as a way to connect the student's story to a character's story. For me, it is not about approaching acting from either outside in or inside out because it is all a fluid, continuous process that unites the actor's body, heart, and mind. Whether the Method, the Meisner Approach or the Stanislavsky System "all the various approaches to theater and acting throughout our history have tried to communicate experiences that would relate directly to the lives of the spectators in a meaningful way (Benedetti 7).

4.0 ACTOR-AUDIENCE CONTRACT

In this chapter, I will discuss the actor-audience relationship as defined by three playing styles: playing for an audience, playing to an audience and playing with an audience. These created terms for an actor's playing style describes the playing styles covered during the course. If taken out of the context of this course, these playing styles may be termed and defined differently.

4.1PLAYING FOR AN AUDIENCE

The Actor's work begins in solitude. They alone, at first, stand privy to the inner workings of their performance. However, "the art does not come into existence until he has an audience" (Darlington 20). Similar to the storyteller, the actor's primary focus is to engage an audience. Therefore, the actor has to be steadfast in how he/she cultivates their work for an audience. A foundational concept in the training of actors is communicating clearly to an audience. Within the context of this course and thesis, playing for an audience refers to the actor making/ adapting the style of a performance to meet the need of a specific audience. The emphasis of this playing style is in the preparation process of a performance. This style outlines the actor's work from the playmaking stage to mounting the performance. "An evolving work of drama has the potential to redefine the relationship of the actor to the audience and explore untried

and untested avenues of expression...to be an active part of that evolution is an incredibly demanding and exciting part of being an actor” (Rafael 177). This course, in its design, requires students to write and perform original text. Therefore, from the beginning of the creative process, the audience takes precedence, as the students write and develop performances for the viewing pleasure of an audience.

The course assignment Puppet Play is a great representation of ‘playing to an audience’ because the type of theater (children theatre) and the audience (young audience) is pre-selected for the students. However, the students had to outline the specifics of their ‘young audience’. For this assignment, the students had to write and perform a puppet play designed as a show for a young audience. There are numerous ways to create theatre for young audiences. And so I capitalized on that available creative freedom. In framing this assignment, I had them write the play first and then when it was completed they were instructed to choose a target audience. As they wrote the play they were not limited by a specific theme, list of characters, setting or plot. This was done intentionally because I wanted the students to create from their imagination versus create from specific given circumstances. This approach to creating the puppet plays supports an overall goal of mine which is teaching students how to stimulate their imagination and creativity. So, instead of waiting for inspiration the aim is to find things to inspire their creativity. To guide the students’ imagination, I used emojis as the catalyst. I had the students search the emojis on their phones, choosing some of their favorites. The students were in groups. Each group had four members. Within their groups, they were instructed to choose their favorite emojis, transform them into characters, create a world where these characters co-exist, choose a theme and then write a puppet play with those

elements in mind. At this juncture, research was introduced to the process.

With the play complete the students had to define the young audience. In defining young audience a specific age range must be chosen. Some students chose an age range for their audience based on the theme of the play. One group wrote about God and existential crisis. They chose early teens between the ages of 12-15 years old. This same group also chose their audience based on the language of the play. The play featured a lot of self-deprecating humor and their research showed that this age group also responds well to comedies of that nature. Other groups chose the age range based on the play's closing lesson. Those who had lessons featuring themes about building self-esteem and self-confidence and also against bullying, chose a younger age range because they wanted to target children in that demographic. Once the age range was chosen, the students had to gather information about that specific demographic. The research was centered around acquiring pertinent information, from popular culture, to be used during the creation and execution of their performance. Therefore, the information gathered had to be directly incorporated into all design elements of the show; the most listed of which were: puppet, set and music.

One group wrote a play about oral health. While doing their research, they realized that Filipino children around age six (6) are most affected by poor oral health. They decided to build their puppet play as a public service performance to educate children on how to take care of their teeth; from foods they should eat to dental practices they should follow. This research gave them information on a popular candy in the Philippines. They turned this candy into a character in the puppet play. One group's play was set in outer space, and to play on the audience they took the names of classmates and adapted them into names of surrounding

planets in the play. This is a choice that could be adapted to match any type of audience to create a sense of inclusivity. This assignment, not only taught the students how to create from imagination but it also taught them how to use research to further develop a performance. Research always makes the students work more specific.

The emphasis on the audience in sculpting a performance is more about making the students work specific and less about the student trying to preview the audience's response. Similarly, the idea of students thinking about their audience is not just beneficial to the student who writes and creates original performances; but, it is also valuable to the student who works within specific styles and forms that require a particular actor-audience interaction. This concept aligns with the course objective of exposing actors to various performance techniques. Each form of theatre requires the actor to engage differently with an audience. The more aware the actor is of the required style of performance then the more prepared the actor will be in making appropriate performance choices. For instance, puppetry in performance requires an actor to both alienate and integrate their audience. Some actors, in performing puppetry, live inside the body of the puppet and so the audience is only aware of the movement of the puppet; while there are other times when the actor is seen manipulating the puppet. In constructing puppets for their puppet play, some students created hand puppets that they then fit within a tight set so only their upper body was visible. Therefore, in these instances, the audience's focal point was the actor's facial expressions and upper body gestures. There was a student who created a puppet that was attached to a specific part of his body. This design engaged the student's entire body as part of the storytelling. One student created a cardboard puppet with a seemingly missing right hand. The actor positioned the puppet on his chest, aligning their right

shoulders, therefore, the ‘missing’ right hand was played by the actor’s right hand. In a case like this, the puppet moved with the actor because the actor became the puppet. In other cases, the student moved in opposition to the puppet because the student became an opposing character to the puppet.

In playing to an audience, the actor can decide to either break or maintain the fourth wall. One group staged their puppet show behind a wall. They were unable to see their audience, and as the audience, we could only see the puppets. Therefore, they were literally and figuratively playing behind a wall. Even in moments when their puppets were engaging with the audience, they were playing ‘blind’ because they could not see the audience. However, the students had to be specific about the eye-line of their puppets in order to accurately maintain eye contact with the audience. Additionally, in breaking the fourth wall and interacting with an audience, the actor can use research to learn about the body language of that community. Those body languages can be integrated into the plot of the play or the character work. One group created sea creature puppets. They were able to construct the puppets to visually resemble the sea creatures and they chose to construct puppets that made their entire body visible. This gave the students room to add variety to the puppets movements. They moved the puppets around each other, and around their bodies. The students formed their bodies into shapes that gave their puppets a place to hide. Also, the students took facts about the sea creatures and wove it into the dialogue scenes; as exemplified in the puppet play, *Sea We’re Not Scary*:

SHELLY

Are you going to

eat us? LUSEAL

Of course not! Just because I'm a shark doesn't mean I just eat everything! EELAN

Didn't you eat your twin in the womb? LUSEAL

That was animal instinct. And besides, now I'm a kelpetarian. I like to go through the ocean and go whoosh.... wooooooshhhh!

Their research gave them content that they then integrated into their work which added humor, substance, and shape to their play. As the examples show, the student who does the research, is always more prepared to create a performance that suits the specifics of their audience. The idea of acting in front of or behind the fourth wall could also metaphorically reflect the dual consciousness of the actor in performance. The fourth wall, in this sense, would be the actor. Therefore, playing in front of the fourth wall would reflect Diderot and Coquelin's belief that: "the actor stands outside of himself while performing, pulling his own strings" (Gillett 93). This is reflected in the actor's work as a puppeteer. When the students were unable to see the puppet during the performance, they had to imagine themselves as the puppet. Playing behind the fourth wall could also reflect Stanislavsky's idea of Dual Consciousness. For example, during rehearsals for puppet play, I had some of the students face their puppets as they manipulated them. This can be a useful technique for the students as they build their muscle memory because they can store the image of their puppets movement to guide their puppeteering. For other students, in being dually conscious, they had to multi-task. Some students played characters opposite their puppets while they were manipulating their puppet. Some students were manipulating a puppet they were not voicing. Therefore, they were listening and responding as the puppet and the puppeteer. In any case, both playing in front and behind the fourth wall requires

the student to focus, concentrate and be conscious of self and character whether they break or maintain the fourth wall.

4.2 PLAYING TO AN AUDIENCE

As defined, within the premise of this course, playing to an audience implies that the student engages with an audience behind the fourth wall. “This indirect form of presentation, where the performer supposedly does not ‘admit’ the presence of the audience and acts as though the activity performed has an autonomous existence...such indirect presentations prevail in most of what we recognize as drama” (Beckerman 111). Some of the puppets created in puppet plays did not directly interact with the audience. Within this style of representational acting, the audience plays the passive role of a voyeur. As Susan Bennett in *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* states:

Spectators are thus trained to be passive in their demonstrated behavior during a theatrical performance, but to be active in their decoding of the sign systems made available. Performers rely on the active decoding, but passive behavior of the audience so that they can unfold the planned on-stage activity (179).

These sign systems represent the actors’ skills in communicating the life of their character and the world of the play. In order for the actor to be effective at this, his/her work requires specificity. With specificity, the actor, through intentional physical actions and vocal and emotional choices, creates a sign system that functions as a vocabulary for the performance. The spectator then decodes this vocabulary and makes meaning of the performance. In manipulating

puppets, the students had to get used to the idea that puppets are brought to life by breath and their breathing has to be consistent. Just like living actors they have to actively listen and respond to other characters on stage, reflecting the physical and vocal cadence of a conversation. There were moments when the students' movements did not synchronize with their puppets. So as themselves they would breathe and move but the puppet would be still. As a warm-up exercise, I had the students talk to themselves, talk to other puppets and talk to an imaginary audience as the puppet. I did this as a practice to physically connect the students to the puppets. They had to move the puppet around and create a physical vocabulary for the puppet based on its construction. If the puppet was one dimensional, they had to explore how to give it a three-dimensional look. As they moved the puppets around, they started to find ways of bending, shaking, and twisting them to show different emotions and state of being. Throughout the exercise, I kept reiterating to the students that the puppet is a character that needs gestures, facial expressions, and emotions. If the puppet, has limited physical gestures; then the student should fill in those gaps by using their body. If characters do not possess a physical vocabulary for the audience to read then both the puppet and the puppet play has no meaning. In the course Actor as Storyteller, being specific in approaching the work is a central tactic to crafting performances. Specificity as a tool sharpens through paying attention to details. Through close observation and making steady, deliberate choices on stage; the students were able to articulate to their audience the intended meaning behind their actions.

In Actor as Storyteller, playing to an audience also refers to the student developing an awareness of how their audience interprets their action from the other side of the fourth wall. This is explored throughout the course during feedback sessions after in-class showings. One of

the first assignments of the semester is Silent Scream. For this assignment, the students identify their alter ego and create a short pantomime presentation that tells the story of a moment in the life of that alter ego. The students spent weeks building their physical vocabulary through Action Theater improvisation exercises to expand the flexibility and expressiveness of their bodies. For their alter ego story, some of the students created abstract concepts while others took a more concrete, literal approach to their storytelling. Regardless of their choices, the students were expected to accurately communicate the beginning, middle, and end of their story to the audience. The students who chose an abstract concept struggled with this assignment. Their challenge arose in choosing actions that create a readable image for an audience. One student presented a mystic being, who through the use of its breath created an entire forest. However, in the midst of his creation, a wildfire develops and consumes the being and all he created. When the student completed his pantomime, and I inquired about the class's perception of what forced him to the ground, none of the possibilities they suggested matched the actual reason. Therefore, the breakdown occurred when we, the audience, began constructing images other than the ones he intended.

The adjustments began with the student frantically searching the space. Through the student's gentle grab and a quick flick of the wrist, the student began to douse the ground. The student did this multiple times; after each dousing, he recoils his body covering his face with his elbow. The tension in his shoulder caused his stomach to sink into his back. He falls to the ground and with subtle body shakes side to side the scene ended in stillness. The student lay on the ground in a fetal position. The student's actions gave us a story that at points were probably interpreted differently from what he intended. However, we were all captivated by his choices.

Each action had a reaction and this created a continuity throughout the circumstances of the scene. Because his work was specific, though he stayed behind the fourth wall, we followed him into the forest and was viscerally affected by his and the forest's death by wildfire.

The nature of this assignment required great detail work from the students. I wanted the students to hear direct feedback from their audience (classmates). So, as I worked on each pantomime there was open space for honest feedback. The students were instructed to first describe what they saw. And then if they wanted to, they could share their thoughts on the work. While I coached each student privately, I only coached a few students in front of the class. This was by random selection. After the class coaching, we discussed the experience from the dual perspective of being coached and watching a coaching. There were some students who felt that watching the coaching session made them aware of how much the audience sees, which in turn, made them more detailed in their approach to their work. For those coached in front of the class, they expressed how useful it was to receive feedback from their classmates. Some students admitted that, in sculpting their pantomime, there were many moments they either ignored, never thought about or did not care to define. However, those moments were highlighted in their feedback. Therefore, hearing their classmates' feedback, reminded them how important specific actions are to the interpretation/understanding of a piece. Uta Hagen further expands the concept of specificity in her technique. She outlines an approach to achieving specificity, which she terms particularization. In defining particularization in *A Challenge for the Actor*, Hagen states:

Particularization: the making of each event, each person, and each place, down to the smallest physical object as particular as possible, exploring these things in detail to

discover in which way they are relevant to the character, in which way they further or hinder the behavior. Nothing should be left general or taken for granted. Everything must be made specific (66).

Because the students' were using a mask, their attention to details was important. Even though students directly engaged with their audience (classmates) to gather information about their perceptions, ultimately they added to that knowledge by making specific choices that supported the plot of their story.

As outlined in the examples above, the major challenge experienced by the students during this assignment was to create images that connected the audience to their intended action or emotion. The actions that were created for the most part could have been interpreted in different ways. Some students struggled to dramatize with precision “thought and introspection, and that inarticulate region we call human relationship” (Styan 249). In general, this is a challenge not just for young actors but for all actors. This is further complicated by the fact that; as an actor plays to an audience, they can never tell how each member of the audience defines the world around them, or the world they are witnessing on stage. However, the actor’s aim is not to create an image that everyone can accurately perceive as one thing, which leaves no room for interpretation. But instead, the actor should focus on doing the research and challenging themselves to be specific with the choices and actions they make; in an effort to accurately tell their intended story.

4.3 PLAYING WITH AN AUDIENCE

When an actor plays with his/her audience this implies that the actor breaks the fourth wall and directly engages with the audience. Darlington in *The Actor and his Audience* states:

There is no doubt at all that Shakespeare was a supreme storyteller. Why, then, a modern may ask, did he not tell better stories? The short answer to that question is that a man of the theatre must tell the sort of stories that his audience will take. The long-term answer is that it does not matter what sort of stories a supreme storyteller tells, for he will always hold an audience (23).

Shakespeare's plays, when performed in their original playing style, required the actors to break the fourth wall and directly engage the participation of the audience. In contemporary theatre, the works of improvisational groups like Steel City Improv Theater, The Groundlings, iO Chicago, Comedy Sportz, etc., and theater and television sketch comedy acts such as Upright Citizens Brigade, The Second City, Saturday Night Live, Chappelle Show and Key and Peele, position the involvement of the audience as a built-in feature of their performance. This style of performance can be a source of anxiety for less experienced actors. This anxiety demands that the actor feel the room, maintain constant eye contact, act spontaneously, trust their instincts, confidently own the stage, be entertaining, interject humor, and stay in control while making the audience feel as if they are in control. These are all required skills for an actor, at one point or another, so it benefits the student-actor to get used to these expectations. One of the greatest evidence of this kind of unapologetic boldness in live performance can be seen at a good Slam poetry competition. Marc Kelly Smith in his book entitled *Take the Mic: The Art of*

Performance Poetry, Slam, and the Spoken Word (A Poetry Speaks Experience) defines Slam as:

Slam is more than the spectacle...a spotlight for its poet-performers. Slam is community and slam poetry carries the oral tradition forward, encouraging today's poets and performance artists to address the modern human condition by bringing to life (and the spotlight), personal, political, social and spiritual concerns while knocking the socks off an audience through the artful and entertaining application of performance (18).

As the definition outlines, the emphasis is on the performance of a well-written poem; a win is dependent on both elements being present. I decided when writing the syllabus for Actor as Storyteller that I wanted to create an Actor Cypher. Like a Slam for poets, the Actor Cypher is a poetic performance for actors. The goal is for students to use poetry in performance to tell their story while demonstrating their unique artistic style. The tone of the performance takes on the raw, bold energy of a slam poetry show. The Actor Cypher assignment requires the students to write and perform a solo poem inspired by a topic that is personal to the student. The students perform this final class project in an alternate space. To honor the students' transparency and privacy, the final showing of the poems is a closed performance. The Actor Cypher assignment presents a two-fold challenge for the students. First, the writing of a spoken-word poem. Second, the crafting of a performance. As they wrote, the students were encouraged to see their work through the eyes of their audience and feel the response to it. The performance itself had to be a synthesis of performance elements covered over the semester. Therefore, in addition to being physically and vocally engaging to the audience, the students were encouraged to showcase their artistic aesthetic by employing, as performance aids, other artistic expressions.

These expressions could include the use of spectacle, visual accessories, musical accompaniment, sound effects, puppets, masks, dance, and mime just to name a few. The Actor Cypher has two main purposes. First, to facilitate the students integrating a personal story into an artistic creation. Second, to widen their playing wheel to include performance poetry. For the assignment, the students could solicit the assistance of friends and family to assist them to write the poems. The four main elements of the Actor Cypher assignment include 1) commitment to performance, 2) emphasis on artistic expression, 3) sense of community between audience and artist and 4) audience as a collaborator. Each element appeared in the course as follows:

1. Commitment to Performance: The students had to direct their performance, incorporating at least three performance elements explored during the course. Elements such as voice acting, masks, movement, puppetry, etc.
2. Emphasis on the artistic expression: The students had to incorporate some artistic element that demonstrates a unique ability. For e.g., one student speaks American Sign Language and so she integrated that into her performance.
3. The sense of community between audience and artist: The students had to directly include the audience in their piece at one point during the performance.
4. Audience as collaborator: The students had to choose an artistic partner. As they wrote and prepared their poem/ performance; their artistic partner functioned as a 'surrogate audience' supplying them with constructive feedback. After the final presentation, the student's artistic partner had to write a one sentence comment, to the

student, about the impact of their performance.

From the beginning of the course, the students are asked to bring their whole self to the class. So, in sharing a passion of theirs through poetry, I am asking them to “find ways to share the back of the eyes with the audience to involve them” (Nicola 14). The intention behind this request is to make the students aware that as actors, their own stories, behaviors, emotions, thoughts, and experiences can contribute significantly to their artistic reservoir. It is about narrative identity in solo performance. Students chose to write about social issues, personal struggles, observed injustices, lost dreams, and art and love. Even though the course emphasizes collaboration and ensemble building; the foundation for such work is the individual contribution. While this project emphasizes individual artistic aesthetic; the final presentation sees the class performing as a collective. Throughout the rehearsal process, the class as a whole functioned as an audience to each other by supplying feedback and support as we worked on the poems and performances. Additionally, due to the personal nature of the poems at times the artistic partners served as an emotional support system.

During the Actor Cypher, there were moments when some students engaged with the pieces as an audience member and there were other moments when they were able to observe the actual audience’s response to their work and the work of their classmates. Some students felt protected behind the fourth wall. Conversely, without the protection of an ensemble or the fourth wall, some students felt exposed to the elements of the audience’s acceptance and/or rejection. However, space was there for them to supposedly hide and be seen at the same time.

In moments like asides, soliloquies, or direct address by a narrator, a student can fall prey to sweaty palms, shaky knees, dry mouth, lump in the throat and all other symptoms of stage

fright. This shift in security affects the student's presence on stage. He/she is susceptible to becoming a fickle performer. A student who is a fickle performer, as defined under these circumstances, refers to a student who gives up their power and allows the response of the audience to control their performance. This student can be likened to Diderot's concept of the passionate actor who can be depended upon neither to control nor to repeat his performance. This 'passionate actor' who is a 'fickle performer' more than likely accedes to the belief that an "actor's art is at all times conditioned and limited by the quality of his [her] audience" (Darlington 21). Typically, in a cypher, the audience functions as a collaborator with the artist. However, the artist remains in control of the performance. In preparation for the Actor Cypher assignment students were introduced to Slammin' fundamentals that taught them how to play with their audience by inviting them into their performance. In learning slam fundamentals, the students explored practical techniques on lifting the language off the page, varying tempo, varying volume, articulation, breathe deep and pause, maintaining eye contact, and memorization. These techniques can also be utilized by the students when they encounter classical text or a theatrical form that is poetic in nature. The projection of poetic text goes beyond the increase of vocal volume. It speaks to the student patiently doing the work of lifting the images from their mind to ours (the audience) because "every gesture is made to involve the audience in another facet of the inner life" (Nicola 8). With a focused stage presence, they can avoid common pitfalls in poetic performance such as playing text without a story, locking the body in caricatured movements, misusing vocal dynamics (pitch, tone, timbre, tempo), and playing mood. 'Playing mood' is evident in actions such as:

1. Exhaling after every line of text.

2. Taking a moment after every line to ‘act’ their thoughts before they speak.
3. Blank stares away from their scene partner to give the illusion they are in deep thought.
4. Pointless pacing on stage.
5. Placing small unmotivated gestures to indicate an inner circumstance (biting of lips to show nervousness, the shaking of a leg to show impatience, etc.).

Using elements of Slam performance in this course also introduced the students to the concept of healthy competition in performance. For one class session, a mock cypher was created. The students were asked to submit their favorite poems. In a class session, they had to choose their favorite four sentences. I erased words from the sentences. They had to reconstruct the poem with their own words. They rehearsed the poems at home and presented them to their classmates the following class session. The students cast a vote. I did not reveal the winner of the vote because the voting process was just an illusion of a competition. The objective of this mock cypher was to empower the students to build, in solitude, a performance they believed would engage an audience for the win. This forced the students to make performance choices designed to captivate an audience. Also, it challenged them to perform an unfamiliar piece which meant they had to find purpose in the piece. This challenged the actor to perform beyond pure passion because some may have found a connection with the piece but for those who had not; they still had to commit to telling the poem’s story casting aside their personal feelings. This challenge was helpful to students who struggle with being satisfied with their work and for those who, in general, find it challenging to perform a piece well unless they like it. This mock cypher tested all the students’ belief in themselves and their craft and their judgment of what

they deemed effective in performance. This kind of competition sees the actor pushing to be 'their best' in the fight to win and rise to the top. This is a concept that sets some actors working off balance but it is a useful discomfort in an industry where competition and rejection have foiled some of the best of us. The effort to be their best keeps the students accountable to themselves and their craft. Whether the student is practicing his art by playing for an audience, playing to an audience or playing with an audience they should keep in mind that "life onstage is not just like life off stage; it is formed life, conceived of passion, fertilized by imagination, and contrived by a storyteller for a purpose" (Nicola 5).

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 THE PERFORMANCE OF ACTING

From the beginning of my M.F.A. journey, I knew creating my own performance course was an inevitable part of the process. For months, I wrestled with countless ideas, but none seemed to fit what I had in mind. My thoughts kept bringing me back to storytelling, puppetry and masks. Being three of my favorite theatre forms, I was not surprised by those repeated images. As my frustrations mounted, I decided to take control of my thoughts. So, instead of allowing my mind to rest on form I focused it on content, as dictated by the observed struggles of my students in acting classes. One of the main challenges I observed in my students' work, was their inability to communicate characters/circumstance beyond the givens. They would communicate the plot but there was no heart. Patsy Rodenburg in her book *Speaking Shakespeare* states:

If you...only fulfil the givens, you will communicate primarily the form and the thoughts in the text. You will probably tell the story-the surface of the work-but not the heart or the passion within it. You will not communicate the play's real soul or its world (195).

While I wholeheartedly agree with Rodenburg that if the actor only fulfils the givens then they will not communicate the heart of the work; I differ from Rodenburg in that, I believe 'the

surface of the work’ is the plot not the story because the story is indeed the heart of the work.

Story is not plot. It is multifaceted. The story is all the details and background that give the events a context. It is also the specific relationships between characters that allow events to have importance. But it is more. It is the structure of the telling. By seeing the structure, we understand how a play unfolds and how it is meant to reveal itself to an audience...by looking at the story of a play this way, we begin to see it more holistically (Rafael 17).

In creating this acting course, I formulated the thesis question: In reimagining actor-training within the context of performative devisement what performance skills can actors gain if the focus is on the telling of the story? The long and short answer to this question is, the skill the actor gains is the developed eye of an artist to see the reality of what they have created. The course began with students who were open and excited to work. Their enthusiasm for the work motivated their discoveries. The greatest of this discovery was the development of an artistic awareness that gave them the ability to articulate their work with clarity. As the course progressed, the students’ skills of self-assessment grew stronger. Their work became increasingly specific, connected and imaginative. Table: 4 shows a summary of performance skills covered during the course.

Table 4. Performance Skills

Use of the Voice	Use of the Body	Use of the Space	Approaching a Script	Collaboration
Pitch	Body Language	Spatial Awareness	Research	Listening
Volume	Posture	Levels	Script analysis	Actor-Actor Relationship

Tone	Gestures	Blocking and Direction	Script writing	Actor-Audience Relationship
Articulation	Gait	Proxemics	Adaptation	Focus
Enunciation	Coordination	Design		Energy
Language	Stillness	Movement		Devising
Tempo	Timing	Stage Presence		Animation
	Eye Contact			
	Expression of Mood			

Actor as Storyteller is an acting course, designed for majors and non-majors, that teaches both acting and performance skills. The course was designed for a B.A. curriculum that provides students with the opportunity to pursue a multi-faceted course of study divided into dramaturgy, performance (acting, directing, devising, etc.) and design and production. Within this diverse curriculum, Actor as Storyteller could be offered as an Acting I course as well as a performance technique course. The course employed theatre performance forms such as neutral mask work, puppetry, pantomime, action theater improvisation, and spoken word poetry. From these forms, the students' memorization, observation, scriptwriting, mask making and puppet building skills improved. The course activities and assignments assisted the students to develop acting and performance skills such as the ability to transform, employ improvisation, and emotionally engage themselves and an audience. They did so by engaging the full range of their vocal and physical instrument. Whether the course is positioned as an acting class or as a performance technique class, the skills learned in both classes are essential to creating characters, establishing relationships and circumstance and engaging an audience.

Performance technique courses, in the performing arts, are mostly offered under the disciplines of dance, and music. Dance as categorized by styles like jazz, modern, and tap. Music as exemplified by a musical instrument course such as basic performance techniques on brass instruments and a vocal performance course like opera performance studies. However, under an acting discipline, separating acting training from performance training is not readily practiced by actor training programs. Acting students usually learn performance skills as a result of the combined skills they acquired in acting, movement and voice and speech classes. As the students train in a variety of forms, they learn how to size and style their performances. In Actor as Storyteller, we explored many aspects of performance by using a Performative Devisement approach; whereby students, through observational practice and imaginative work, collaborated on writing original text and creating solo and group performances. Performance skills are vital for all artist-in-training, as seen through the practice of the music industry, to assign singers to performance coaches who assist them to craft their show and stage presence. Additionally, the singer may be given a creative director, choreographer, and a glam squad (make-up artist, stylist etc.) to support the overall package. This approach is the practice because the belief is that the product of a great musical artist does not solely rest on their talent as a musician. If in fact, giving a performance is the product of any great actor or musician, then the practice of performance training separate from acting training should be considered for actor training. A course such as Actor as Storyteller could fill that gap in a curriculum because the actor gets to focus on building a character as well as building a performance.

Many of the students in this course were strong performers, writers, and visual artists. Therefore, the students were able to support each other and support me in supporting them.

They were open and prepared for the demands of writing, designing and constructing plays, poems, masks and puppets. Subsequently, I was able to use a single class session to teach them techniques that would assist their process. If I had students who were less proficient in these areas, then, I would have needed more class time to teach the content. If the situation existed, I would have created a system to monitor their work and rehearsal outside of class times. This could include rehearsal logs and assignment workbooks. During the course, the students' artistic confidence grew. Therefore, eyes that gazed down before now look up and out. Backs that were usually slouched are now erect. The students enjoyed using their tactile skills to design and construct masks and puppets. Even those who were not artistically inclined gave their best efforts and kept their mask and puppet design and construction within their artistic reach. In the beginning of the course, it was vital for me to assess the students' skill sets in the above mentioned areas. I did this by leading practice writing sessions and puppet/mask making sessions. Students also completed each assignment in stages; therefore, I was able to take my time through the process, observing both what areas proved challenging and useful for the students. The longest work sessions were the writing and the designing sessions. However, once the students' imagination and creativity were aroused, they thrived in the rehearsal sessions. Therefore, with coaching, they were always able to make adjustments to their performances.

While I entered each class with well thought-out lesson plans; I am a huge advocate for spontaneity in teaching. My research for the course continued during the process of me teaching the course, and I wanted to integrate my discoveries into the class. I wanted the content to be fresh, relatable and relevant. For instance, the course readings, for the most part, were given a week in advance. I already had a selection of readings chosen for the class but by giving the

readings a week in advance it gave me more time to read and collect new and in some cases more relatable material. Before we covered the spoken word poetry unit, I discovered a great book on slam poetry. This book discovery was, *Take the Mic: The Art of Performance Poetry, Slam, and the Spoken Word* by Marc Kelly Smith. I added selections from this book to the class readings and it also gave me additional insights on 'Slammin' which I integrated into the performance poetry lessons. There was a section on slam history and that inspired my choice to do a video lecture where I shared with the students' various types of spoken word poets in America. During the discussion that followed the viewing of each poet's performance, we explored both the common elements found in all performance poetry and the uniqueness of each poet. This performance analysis reinforced the students' confidence in locating their artistic niche and artistic aesthetic.

One of the objectives of the course was to introduce students to various forms and styles of theatre. I did not want to inundate the students with too much of everything. My hope is one day they will find the form they are interested in studying further. I chose Action Theater, puppetry, neutral mask work and spoken word poetry as my four main forms. Each of these forms have specific performance styles. One student had the opportunity to exercise the puppetry skills she learned in class when she worked on the mainstage production as a puppeteer. Before taking the course, this student had an affinity for performing physical theatre in particular stage combat. After her puppetry experience, she added puppetry and mask to her physical theatre repertoire. There were other students who came in with specific interests and, having engaged with different forms, found connections during the course. A highlight of teaching a course like Actor as Storyteller in a B.A. program, is the diversity of the students

and their majors. The syllabus was flexible in regards to assignment due dates and time allocation for lessons. Therefore, I had enough processing time during class for each assignment, so I was able to adapt areas of the content to suit the specific interests and skill sets of each student. An objective of the course is to develop the students' transfer of learning. Therefore, connecting the class content to the student's major, was one way of facilitating this transfer of knowledge. Students were encouraged to use aspects of their major in the assignments. For instance, for her Silent Scream pantomime, a psychology major created a mask and scenario that showed the right side of the brain struggling with the left side. In moments such as this, the content proves even more relevant to the student because they are able to merge their academic interests with their artistic talents. Some students were able to immediately transfer the knowledge they acquired during the course to their areas of study, assignments in other classes and productions they were working on. I am confident, the information we covered will prove beneficial to the students as their artistic training and journey continue.

5.2 REVISIONS AND FUTURE APPLICATION

In my initial design of the course, Acting I was the desired pre-requisite for the course. I felt students needed to have a certain level of experience and enough knowledge base in acting fundamentals before engaging with the forms and techniques we would cover during the course. Also, I felt it would be a bonus if the student has a strong interest in further pursuing acting and performance. Once the decision was made to make an introductory performance course the only

pre-requisite for the course, I focused my attention on creating a syllabus that was open and flexible. The content of the introductory courses in this B.A. are standardized. However, even with a standardized curriculum, there is no system that I could put in place to accurately diagnose the skill level and theatre knowledge base of each individual student registered to take the course.

Adaptability was a key feature of my pedagogical process during this course. I added flexibility to my syllabus by turning class sessions into rehearsals and by creating open rubrics for production responses and mask and puppet construction activities. The students were expected to view and write a production response for three productions: 1) *Recoil* (a devised piece produced as a main stage show in the department), 2) a children show created for a young audience, and 3) a poetry show. *Recoil* was the only show that was mandatory for the students. Students who participated in shows from any of these categories could write their production review based on their experience of working on the show. In writing the responses, students were expected to engage with what they saw by connecting their observations to content covered during the course, whether they were on the stage or in the audience. These responses were due the last day of classes. I knew heading into the process that some students may struggle with the tactile expectations of the course. So, I created a rubric that featured a general guide for the construction of the masks and puppets. The specifics of the rubric guided the students on basic design and construction elements of mask and puppet making. They had to include color, different textures/material and most importantly be built for a specific purpose. The students were not bounded to create a specific mask or puppet. I guided each student through design and construction ideas. Some students were already proficient in

creating puppets and masks and they provided their fellow classmates with design and construction support. We all worked on our puppets and masks together at the Center for Creativity. Even though many of the students gathered their own raw material, the center had a wide variety of materials.

The very design of these assignments reflects a pedagogical challenge of mine. As a teacher, I try not to give my students too much busy work. While the requirement is that the students have to work on assignments outside of class time, I try to limit their homework. When the students rehearse and create in front of me, I can apply more hands on coaching. This has prompted me to include class rehearsals and puppet and mask making sessions during class sessions. This is done because I want to make sure I give the students adequate time to complete each assignment. I do not accept work that is poorly rehearsed and incomplete. Therefore, I prefer to give students extensions on class assignments, in class coaching sessions and open rubrics that can be adjusted to fit their specific circumstance. With any outside class requirements, I want to ensure that time spent to complete these assignments, matches the assignment weight outlined on the grade scale. However, the late due date and non-specific rubric guideline for the production responses, mask and puppet construction proved problematic.

Throughout the semester, some students consistently submitted late work. All students who submitted late work were penalized. On the course web page, I uploaded all productions/events that match the required productions. However, most of the students did not attend these productions because, with the end of term due date, there was no urgency to complete the assignments. Also, in not requiring early submissions of production responses, I

missed the opportunity to monitor the students' processing of class content in connecting how they view theatre. If I was doing the course over again, I would set the deadlines for each of those assignments earlier in the course. Also, I would seek events connected to the school that match the criteria of each assignment, and those would be the only options available for the students. I would also require students to complete two rehearsal logs for each assignment. I did implement certain tools to assist myself and the students to assess their progress. For instance, the students had to:

1. Upload all readings with notes and highlights visible.
2. Complete a feedback card after each class discussion about the readings. For the feedback cards they were given specific questions to answer.
3. Complete review cards: The students had to comment on their work after each showing. In commenting, they had to propose a plan for addressing any issues they encountered during performance.
4. Complete process papers after all assignments. This paper detailed their rehearsal process and features pictures of them in performance.

The students also had to create an e-portfolio for the course. This e-portfolio would include process papers for all assignments, pictures of each presentation, notes on readings and production response papers. The e-portfolio should be designed to resemble a website. This was also due at the end of the semester. I would revise this as well and implement three intermittent viewings of the e-portfolio; this way I could guide the students design and construction of this e-portfolio because there is the potential for this assignment to enrich their practice of cataloguing their work beyond this class.

Actor as Storyteller turned out to be an acting/ performance course that reinforced practices in acting such as the actor's specificity in physical and vocal choices, development of artistic pride through work ethic, and building creativity and imagination through consistent effort and openness. However, there were days when the content felt abstract. I would veer off topic listening to students' stories or sharing my own. I can recognize the value in these moments, but I am not sure if those moments proved helpful for students in building practical skills or empowering their artistic spirit as they work. In teaching the course, I discovered resources attached to the University that proved beneficial to our process in the class. One such resource was the Center for Creativity. The center is equipped with a plethora of art supplies at the student's disposal and provides the students with an artistic space to express themselves. The center welcomed the students, as they made their masks and puppets.

Like 'swings' are to a production so can Actor as Storyteller be to an actor-training curriculum. The actor as a storyteller, as a frame for an acting/performance course, is a more flexible concept than I had imagined. In conjunction to regular acting classes, I can see this course being used to provide students with supplemental acting styles or performance techniques. Now I am considering Actor as Storyteller II as a continuation course. In Actor as Storyteller II, students will continue the physical and vocal work started in Actor as Storyteller I. However, the focus of the class will be on integrating the skills they have learned to different forms of theatre-based performance arts. With the exception of selected in-class activities, the class structure will be less collaborative and will instead revolve around individual artistic exploration. The students will be exposed to a variety of performance artists and their works, and will be encouraged to devise their own performance art pieces. The students will not be

mandated to work with text. If they do choose to work with text, they will have the option to either adapt scripted text or they can create their own. This class is designed for a small group of students no more than ten. This small class size is because the emphasis is individual work. To foster the students' individual aesthetic sufficient time is needed. Actor as Storyteller II will be an intermediate level Special-Topics acting class. The pre-requisite for the course is Actor as Storyteller I or a beginner acting class like Acting I. All graded assignments must be conceptualized and developed as a solo artist but the student can either use students from the class or students from outside the class. Each student will be responsible for coordinating anyone involved in their performances. The students in the class will not be obligated to be in their classmates' performance. Actor as Storyteller II is designed to expose students to their theatrical potential in performance art. Similarly to Actor as Storyteller I, the students have to research, invent, create and perform the kind of theatre they are interested in doing.

Actor as Storyteller relied heavily on students speaking their thoughts out loud in an effort to hear it and then use it as creative leverage. The work required layers of self-evaluation and concentrated effort. However, there were days the work felt abstract. We would sit and have these amazing artistic discussions, but I am unsure if those discussions yielded practical takeaways for the students to apply, especially to their work with scripted plays. We only worked with original text in the course, except for one activity, where the students brought in their favorite poems. After they shared their poems I omitted sections of the poem and the students had to write a new version of the poem that told their story. This activity was done during the writing session for the Actor Cypher assignment. This was the only time the students worked with text that was not original. By the end of the semester, the students' work was more

specific and emotionally charged. But in order to assess the effectiveness of the content covered the final measure of what was learned will be based on the work they do with classical and contemporary plays.

5.3 FINAL REFLECTIONS

Mark Rafael in *Telling Stories: A Grand Unifying Theory of Acting Techniques* states:

Every movement, every look, every breath taken onstage is a process of revelation and communication. Storytelling affords the actor the means to take control of and the opportunity to take responsibility for that process (2).

Stories have been scratched, carved, painted, printed, etched into wood, pottery, bamboo, ivory bones, clay tablets, silk, canvas, recorded on film and stored electronically. We have explored our stories in similar ways during this course. Students were able to physicalize their work by constructing puppets and masks out of wood, paper, foil, foam, cloth, seeds, plastic, fabric, buttons, and zips. It was amazing to see these young actors/artists extend their stage craft by gluing, painting, sewing, and drawing physical manifestations of their ideas. There were unplanned workshops, talks and demonstrations that reinforced the content covered during the course.

1. Talk and Demonstration of Alexander Technique- Barbara Hois.
2. Q and A session with Rhodessa Jones, Fe Bongolan and Felicia Scaggs.
3. Talk with Kensey Coleman (Props Mistress): Topic: The Role of Props in the Actor's Storytelling.

4. Talk with Karen J. Gilmer (Costume Designer): Topic: The Role of Costumes and Makeup in the Actor's Storytelling.

These sessions proved beneficial to the students. The content shared by all these women with the students, reinforced different topics explored during the course. The students were able to confirm their knowledge in specific areas and share stories with working artists as they talked about their struggles and triumphs in this unpredictable entertainment industry. Rhodessa Jones during her Q and A session with the students mentioned the idea of Collective Care. Collective Care is about people taking care of themselves by taking care of each other. This concept of Collective Care resonated with myself and the students. The students and I built a special rapport. I looked forward to collaborating with them every class. Students would share ideas, cupcakes, and encouraging words, uplifting each other's spirit and confidence. I could not have asked for a better set of students to take this journey with me.

The students created work that came solely from them and there was so much power in their walk and talk by the end of the semester. This growth was steady throughout the semester. Some of the highlights, noted by the students on the mid-semester evaluation form were 1) working at the center for creativity, 2) one-on-one coaching, 3) writing sessions, 4) group warm-ups and 5) in-class rehearsals. I asked the students "What was their biggest takeaway from the work we have done?" Some of the responses included the importance of trust and curiosity for actors, and the technical advantages of puppetry in building the actor's physical vocabulary. In one response a student wrote, "There is strength in silence." By the end of the semester, the students were more articulate about their process and more effective in their acting choices. It

was evident in how they described their work and process, and how they shared insights on their classmates' work. Some of the more reserved students were confident enough to attend departmental auditions and, audition for agencies outside of school. There were students who added theatre as a minor and shared plans with me about future projects they were spearheading as an actor-artist.

One objective for crafting this course, especially for a B.A. program, was to situate the knowledge in the lived experience of the students. The lived experience as dictated by their personal life with art and their life as a student. Every day I left class empowered by the strength and tenacity of the students. They showed up every Monday and Wednesday and they gave their best efforts. There were days I had to motivate them to do more because I could see that fatigue was setting in but they always showed up to the next class stronger than ever. A class such as this requires a deep connection between the teacher and the student because there is so much of themselves that is required in the space and so much of myself that has to foster and nurture what they share. If the students did not trust me and trust themselves that the work we did was indeed making them stronger actors, then the blend of the content could have been interpreted as abstract theatre games and nothing more.

Actor as Storyteller started as an acting course shaped in my imagination by my desire to empower acting students to explore the full potential of their instrument as an actor. This course served the students well by having them create original texts. The students wrote and told stories through characters that sprung from their imagination and life. The various acting/performance techniques explored have equipped the students with the skills to ground their work in specificity, passion, and purpose. The students inspired my tenacity as an artist

and echoed the sentiments of my heart through their performances. Their trust in me was evident, and my belief in them was rich with confidence. I could not have asked for a better group of students. I was challenged daily by questions, comments, and revelations that kept me thinking long after the class sessions were over. We collaborated in a space where discipline was not the enemy of enthusiasm. I was committed to giving them my best self, and I knew if ever I felt short they would be understanding and encouraging to my spirit. They kept their artistic channels open despite the insecurities. They were bold, brave and gracious to each other. I witnessed each student blossomed into artists who could defend their work, securely praise the efforts of others and support artistic choices outside their aesthetic. It was an honor to teach the course and be in the presence of the students. The process of teaching the course has taught me that actor-training can be as dynamic as our stories and imaginings. I am mindful that within my wheelhouse of artistic desires I can identify where actor training intersects with my cultural interests and identities. There are many ways to train an actor. But I never imagined I would successfully cultivate an approach that yielded such growth and development in young actors. This course has planted a seed in me to continue to explore the creation of acting courses situated in the lived experiences of my life and art and by extension those who engage in the practices.

APPENDIX A

SYLLABUS AND COURSE CALENDAR

Actor as Storyteller

Spring 2018

Course Number: THEA 1102

Days/Times: M/W 3-4:50pm

Location: Henry Heymann
Theatre

Instructor: Teisha Duncan
MFA Performance Pedagogy
Candidate

1602 Cathedral of Learning
16th Floor

Office Hours: TBD
Email: TMD55@pitt.edu

Note: Email is the best way to contact me. Please feel free to email any questions or concerns that you may have at any time. I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours; excluding weekend and holidays.

I think the actor has a tribal role as the archetypal story teller. I think there was a time when the storyteller, the priest, the healer, were all one person in one body. That person used to weave stories at night around a small fire to keep the tribe from being terrified that sun had gone down...The tribe has elected you to tell its story. You are the shaman/healer, that's what the storyteller is, and I think it's important for actors to appreciate that.

(Ben Kingsley)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Actor as Storyteller is a course designed for Beginning Actors. In this course, students will develop acting/performance skills by employing techniques that include: mask work, vocal acting, physical interplay, puppetry, pantomime, and spoken-word poetry. Through the use of devising theatre methods, students will write and craft original solo and group projects. Students will learn how to synthesize the physical, vocal, intellectual/Imaginative and emotional elements of their instrument as actors therefore enhancing their storytelling skills as performance artists. They will work in a collaborative environment that will: 1. Support them in discovering their own unique creative voice as an Artist and 2. Provide them with the skills necessary to create and perform works that reflect their unique artistic aesthetic.

Pre-requisite: Introduction to Performance or an equivalent introductory performance course.

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Create visual narrative in performance through the use of voice, gesture, movement and performance aids such as music, costumes, and props.
- Write short structured sketches that feature pithy, economical dialogue that establishes character, conflict and relationships.
- Strengthen acting skills rooted in the concept of actor as storyteller. (Use of imagination, actor- audience rapport, public solitude, dual-consciousness, sense memory, vocal and physical expressiveness, listening, and reacting).
- Generate ideas and bring them to life collaboratively through performance.
- Create and maintain an artistic portfolio documenting the projects created in the class.
- Design and construct a mask and a puppet for use in specified class performances.

Course Format

This class will be structured as follows: in-class acting/storytelling exercises (including improvisation games, vocal and movement exercises), homework assignments “Mask and Puppet Making”, discussions, writing assignments, performance viewing (video and in person attendance), and solo and group projects.

Classroom Etiquette

Code of Conduct

- 1. Timeliness:** “Early is on time, on time is late, late is unacceptable”- (Eric Jerome Dickey). Please be early for classes and rehearsals outside of classes. It is expected that all students will be present in the classroom space before the start of the class. This time is crucial for the individual student to begin their personal preparation for the class be it reviewing their pieces, doing extra stretches etc.
- 2. Preparation and Presence:** All Students are expected to be fully prepared for class. They are expected to do all required readings, be appropriately dressed, and be ready with an open, positive attitude. It is vital that all students are open to a collaborative process, that they are present in mind and spirit in the room and ready to participate. Students need to engage themselves in their own development by participating wholeheartedly in warmups, exercises, solo and group work in and outside of class.
- 3. Food and Drink:** No food, gum, sweets or drinks, with the exception of bottled water, are permitted in the classroom space. Please eat before class and remove your trash at the end of the class.
- 4. Clothing:** Please dress for movement each class; you should be comfortable rolling on the floor. Minimum jewelry, no facial piercings that will hinder speech or body piercings that might get caught on clothing. No shorts, hats, flip flops, or heels; rubber soles or barefoot are acceptable. As a courtesy to your classmates please wear deodorant and keep the use of perfume/cologne to a light application. Keep hair tied away from the face. Please dress neutral until you are invited to dress in costumes to enhance your work.
- 5. Cellphones:** All electronic devices should be off and stowed. Any interruption by an electronic device or any sight of a student using a device to text and/or surf the web will result in points being deducted from their participation grade. Photos or video of classes can be taken but requires prior consent of the Instructor and clearance from fellow classmates. This is applicable to the Instructor as well, full consent of all students registered for the class is required before any recording.
- 6. Classroom Space:** Students are expected to keep the physical classroom space clean. It is important to treat all parts of the room, props and personnel present with care and consideration. The classroom space is expected to be an atmosphere of mutual respect and support at all times. There will be no tolerance of any form of bullying. Everyone must respect each other by not talking when someone is talking, be attentive when someone is working, be constructive in their critique, be a team player in exercises and assignments and exercise patience in all given circumstances.

In the nature of our work, we will be examining various issues and diverse cultures. We each

have a unique point of view—part of this class is identifying and strengthening that point of view to enable you to hone it in your craft. This class offers an opportunity to share our different experiences that influence our perspectives of the world—we can enlighten and educate each other. You may share the same thoughts and ideas as others, but you also may disagree or feel uncomfortable with certain ideas, topics and views shared in this class. This classroom should be a lively, interactive, and brave space where we are free to take risks, dream, inspire, create and test our ideas about acting (and life). We (myself, students) will strive to create an open, respectful, and trusting environment in this course.

In class, if you notice or are experiencing any issue or concern, with a partner or otherwise, please bring it to my attention immediately. I will do my best to address all concerns and this is best done when I am given adequate time; so please do not wait until it is too late to inform me.

Course Requirements

Required Texts:

There are no required texts for this course. However, there are required course readings and video viewings. All required course readings and video assignments will be posted on Courseweb a week or more in advance of the due date.

Selected sections of the books listed below will be assigned for required class readings. These selections will be properly sourced on the document if students wish to read further:

- Miller, Bruce. *The Actor as Storyteller: An Introduction to Acting*. 2nd ed., Limelight, 2012.
- Alburger, James R. *The Art of Voice Acting*. 5th ed., Focal Press, 2014.
- Graham, Scott and Steve Hoggett. *The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2014.

Required Materials

- Loose sheets, pen and pencil for note taking
- Print out of required class readings for use in class discussions

*Students will need to purchase/gather materials to construct a papier mache mask and a puppet. The exact materials will be dependent on the method of construction. The Instructor will provide a guide on how to source materials with a list of construction options. *

Required Performances for the Semester

Students will be expected to attend and write a production reflection for...

- A **Poetry show**, of their choice, either on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh, within the local Pittsburgh community or otherwise if possible.
- A **Children's Show-Live Theater for kids**. This can either be in the form of a musical, a clown show, a mime show, a storytelling session, a play, or a puppet theatre show. *Any theatrical show or show with theatrical components designed for a young audience.
- The University of Pittsburgh Theatre Arts Department Mainstage Production of:

Recoil

Location: Richard E. Rauh Studio

Theatre Date: April 5-25, 2018

Wed-Saturday at

8pm Sunday at

2pm

Written and Directed by Cynthia Croot

***This world premiere performance was devised by students at the University of Pittsburgh in collaboration with Professor Cynthia Croot. ***

*** To aid students in locating suitable performances based on the course requirements a resource list of performances will be posted on courseweb. If students are engaged in or know of any other performances and wish to add to the list, please feel free to email the information to the Instructor. ***

Attendance Policy

You are only permitted three absences during the entire semester. Each absence after three will lower your grade 1/3 letter grade (i.e. B+ to B).

Late arrival interrupts the focus of those students who are on time; therefore **3 late arrivals will count as 1 absence**. If you are absent on a day you are scheduled to present, it is your responsibility to contact your group partner or another member of the class and switch your time slot with another pair/person. Otherwise failing to present on the day you are assigned will result in loss of credit.

This includes any midterm and final exam presentations. It is solely your responsibility to know when your presentations take place. No exceptions!

Sports absences and intent to observe religious holidays should be announced to your instructor in the first week of class, with a complete schedule of any days you will not be in attendance. You should also notify your instructor of your Athletic Academic Advisor's name and contact information

Assignments

Note: Students will write a 2-page process paper outlining their creative process as they prepared, executed and completed “Silent Scream, and Puppet Play”. Pictures must be included in each paper. All written assignments (process papers and production reflections) should be emailed to the instructor on or before the due date. The student will receive, within 24 hours, a confirmation email upon receipt of each submission. No hard copies of assignments will be accepted.

Students will be provided with a rubric at the beginning of each project to guide their preparation

E-Portfolio Book

Students will create an electronic portfolio that features all projects they complete in the class.

This portfolio will include:

- Reading assignments showing highlights and any notes taken. This should be uploaded after reading where highlights and notes taken will be visible.
- Production Response Papers (3) and Process Papers (2).
- One picture capturing each work presented and constructed: Silent Scream, Puppet Play, Actor Cypher, alter ego mask and puppet. There should be a minimum of 5 pictures submitted; but students can submit more if they so desire.

*There is no specific design requirement for this e-Portfolio. Students will be provided with resources on how to create an e-portfolio. Prezi, PowerPoint and/or Panopto are suitable alternative software to use in creating an e-portfolio.

Alter ego Mask: Students will construct, with guidance from the instructor, an ‘alter ego’ mask.

Silent Scream: Students will create a two-minute solo pantomime that reflects an embodiment of their ‘alter ego’ in action. Students are expected to execute this pantomime while wearing their created ‘alter- ego’ mask.

Puppet: Students will create their own puppet. This puppet will be their featured character in the ‘Puppet Play’ show.

Puppet Play: Students will work in groups of four and create a five-minute puppet show. They will create a puppet to match their character in the show. Students will be graded individually for the construction of their puppet and receive a group grade for specific sections of the puppet show.

Actor Cypher: Students will write a solo rhythmic narrative inspired by a deep rooted passion and designed to be expressed poetically. This is the final project of the class and will be performed in an alternative performance space open to the public. The performance will take the tone and structure of a poetry show and students are encouraged to invite friends and family to attend.

Assessment and Grading

Students will be graded on a 1000 point scale based on the following:

- Participation (In class) 100
- Production Response 150 (50 Points each; 3 in total)
- E-Portfolio Book 100
- Production Response (3)
 - Process Papers for 2 of the Major Assignments: Silent Scream, and Puppet Play and a
 - Copy of the Spoken Word Poem created for Actor Cypher: 3 papers
- Picture of Mask and Puppet (1 picture each; 2 total)
- Performance pictures of assignments (Silent Scream, Puppet Play, and Actor Cypher)
- Scanned copies of all assigned readings with visible highlights, and notes taken.

Silent Scream (Solo Piece)	200 (Total)
Papier Mache Mask	25
Process paper	25
Performance	150

Puppet Play	200 (Total)
Puppet	25
Process paper	25
Puppet Show	125
Script (2 minutes)	25

Actor Cypher	250
(Total) Written Poem	100
Performance	150

*There will be no process paper for Poetic Pulse. The Spoken word Poem written by the student will serve as the written evidence of the Student’s process.

Total Points 1000

Grading Scale

97-100= A+	87-89=B+	77-79=C+	65-69=D
93-96= A	83-86= B	73-76=C	64>= F
90-92=A-	80-82=B-	70-72=C-	

THEATRE DEPARTMENT POLICIES

Theatre Arts Department Responsible Uses of Media Policy

In accordance with “The Pitt Promise: A Commitment to Civility,” The University of Pittsburgh Student Code of Conduct, and the professional standards and expectations of our field, students, staff and faculty in the Theatre Arts Department agree to the positive, responsible and respectful use of social media, including: zero tolerance for public aspersion upon students, classes, facilities; the un-approved posting of production videos or photos, per Equity guidelines; cyber bullying.

Additionally, any recording of rehearsals or performances shall be carried out in accordance with AEA guidelines for professional productions. For the full policy, please go to our homepage, play.pitt.edu. For additional information, please refer to

http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/pitt_promise;

<http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/studentconduct>, www.actorsequity.org).

Departmental Casting Policy and Mainstage and Lab Season Mission

We are committed to producing stories from multiple cultural perspectives, of diverse styles and structures and from multiple time periods. To tell every story upon our stage, students and artists of all abilities, races, genders, sexualities, nationalities, and religions are needed for our casts, our crew, and our production teams.

As a department, we are committed to analyzing and understanding a playwright’s intentions for location, time and character. We are equally committed to challenging ourselves to think beyond the strictures of given circumstances and historical expectations in production. We are committing to cultivating within our students and faculty a space for artists who are willing to take risks, to stretch themselves and to see each class, audition and production opportunity as a fresh opportunity for greatness.

University Policies

Special Accommodations

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890/412-383-7355 (TTY), as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Academic Integrity Policy

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. (Plagiarism, copying of assignments, and cheating will not be tolerated. Violating the University-wide policy on academic honesty will result in automatic failure of the assignment and possible failure of the course.)

E-mail Communication Policy

Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address. To forward e-mail sent to your University account, go to <http://accounts.pitt.edu>, log into your account, click on **Edit Forwarding Addresses**, and follow the instructions on the page. Be sure to log out of your account when you have finished. (For the full E-mail Communication Policy, go to www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/09/09-10-01.html.)

ACTOR AS STORYTELLER

SYLLABUS CONTRACT

To be signed after reviewing the syllabus and returned to instructor to keep on file.

I, _____, (print name) have read the syllabus and course timeline for Actor as Storyteller in Spring, 2018 and understand the classroom policies, expectations, and rules as stated in the syllabus and timeline. By signing this form, I agree to comply with the policies, requirements, expectations and consequences, accept the outline for this class, and acknowledge the instructors' right to adjust the timeline with due notice.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____

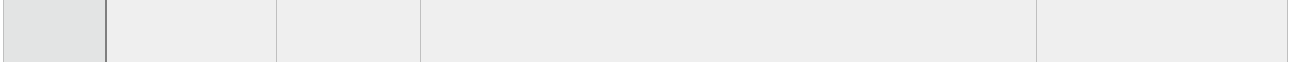
Table 5: Course Calendar

WEEK	DAY	DATE	CLASS TOPIC	HOMEWORK
1	Monday	1/8	What is my story?...What is the story I want to tell?... (Introduction/ Review Syllabus)	
	Wednesday	1/10	Memory and Imagination (Remembering and crafting stories)	{Class Discussion} <u>Reading</u> <i>The role of storytelling in the theatre of the 21st century- Anne Bogart</i>
2	Monday	1/15	No Class	
	Wednesday	1/17	The Body's Voice: Physical Exploration (Ensemble building and Gesture work) <i>Special Alexander Technique workshop with Barbara Hois</i>	{Class Discussion} <u>Readings</u> <i>Action Theater and In the beginning was the body</i>
3	Monday	1/22	"My Body's Voice"- Solo Physical Storytelling"	{Cont'd Class Discussion} <u>Readings</u> <i>Action Theater and In the beginning was the body</i>

	Wednesday	1/24	“Mask Work”	{Class Discussion} <u>Readings</u> <i>Neutral Mask and Mask (Part 1 & 2)</i>
4	Monday	1/29	In-class “Mask Making”	<i>Bring “Alter ego Mask” to class to complete construction</i>
	Wednesday	1/31	In-class Rehearsal of <i>Silent Scream</i> Presentations	
5	Monday	2/5		Silent Scream Presentations
	Wednesday	2/7	Introductory session to “Puppet Theatre”	{Class Discussion} <u>Readings</u> <i>Origins of Puppets (Part 1, 2 & 3)</i> <u>Due</u> <i>Process Paper for “Silent Scream” Presentation</i>
6	Monday	2/12	“Playing Puppets”	{Class Discussion} <u>Reading</u> <i>Manipulating Puppets</i>
	Wednesday	2/14	“Voicing Puppets”	

7	Monday	2/19	“Puppet Theatre” Writing	{Class Discussion}
	Wednesday	2/21		Workshop Special Guest: Rhodessa Jones and Company
8	Monday	2/26	(In-class “Puppet Play” Rehearsal) 1st Half: Read through of Puppet Plays/discussion of performance concept 2nd Half: Complete Construction of Puppets	<i>Bring hardcopy of puppet plays and partially completed puppets to class</i>
	Wednesday	2/28	In-class "Puppet Play" Rehearsal	<i>Bring completed Puppets</i>
9	Monday	3/5		SPRING RECESS
	Wednesday	3/7		SPRING RECESS
10	Monday	3/12	Full In-class "Puppet Play" Rehearsal	
	Wednesday	3/14		Puppet Play Presentations
11	Monday	3/19	“Spitting Truth/Verse”- Introduction to Performance Poetry	<u>Reading</u> <i>Introduction to Performance Poetry</i> <u>Due</u> <i>Process paper</i>

				<i>for ‘Puppet Play’ assignment</i>
12	Wednesday	3/21	Theory and Practice: Poetic Imaginings and Improvisation <i>Guest Artist- Props Mistress Kensey Coleman speaks on “The Role of Props in the actor’s storytelling”</i>	
	Monday	3/26	Vocal Interplay (Narrative identity in solo performance)	<i>Reading: Tips for Poetry Performance</i>
	Wednesday	3/28	Vocal Interplay (Ensemble building choral work)	
13	Monday	4/2	In-class Spoken word Poem Writing Session	<i>Reading Performance Poetry Writing Part 1 & 2</i>
	Wednesday	4/4	Final Presentation “Jam Session”	<i>Reading Slam fundamentals Part 1 & 2</i>
14	Monday	4/9	Final Presentation in-class rehearsal session	
	Wednesday	4/11	Final Presentation in-class rehearsal session	
15	Monday	4/16	Final Presentation	Actor Cypher
	Wednesday	4/18	“Wrap up” Session	Due: Final Artistic ePortfolio



APPENDIX B

SAMPLE LESSON PLANS AND RUBRICS

Sample Lesson Plan 1

Course: Acting as Storyteller THEA

1102 Unit: Poetic Performance

Introduction to Performance Poetry: Spitting Truth/Verse

Date: Monday March 19, 2018

Instructor: Teisha Duncan

School: University Pittsburgh

Expectation(s):

Students should have read and prepared the article “Getting into the Spirit of Slam.” The illness of a group member prevented Group 2 from presenting their puppet play last class.

Therefore, group 2 will present their puppet play at the end of class.

Student Outcome(s): Students will be able to...

1. Describe why observation and awareness is crucial to acting
2. List at least three (3) text-based features of Performance Poetry
3. List at least three (3) performance-based features of Performance Poetry
4. List 5 common characteristics featured in all Performance Poetry

Context for Learning

Text Based Features of Performance Poetry (Poetic Devices): Powerful verbs, adjectives, adverbs and precise nouns, surprising and illuminating combination of words, repetition, alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm and rhyme.

Performance based Features of Performance Poetry: Volume, space, expression, movement, music, rhythm, body percussion, eye contact, projection, enunciation, facial expressions, gestures, props, and memorization.

Common Characteristics

1. Sets Tone
2. Razor sharp lines
3. Transformation
4. Ordinary into Extraordinary
5. Extensive Research of subject matter
6. Engages audience
7. Emotional Connection

Instructional Delivery

Check in/Reminders: 3- 3:05pm

Warm-up game “I see you”: 3:06-3:15pm

Discussion of Reading: 3:16- 3:25pm

Video Lecture (Poetry in Performance): 3:26-

4:30pm Five Minute Break: 4:31pm- 4:36pm

Group 2 Present their Puppet Play: 4:37-

4:42pm Feedback and Re-Cap: 4:44-4:50pm

Class Dismissed: 4:50pm

Opening Activities/Motivations

1. Announcement and Reminders

Announcement: Cindy Croot is joining us today. Reminders:

Process Paper for Puppet Play Due at 11:59pm

Bring an item that is significant to you for next class

Warm up Game: “I see you”

Quick Shakedown then

- ♣ Students form groups of 2: Partner A and B
- ♣ Partner A says “I see you”

Partner B responds “You see me?”

Partner A responds “Yes”

Partner B says “Then tell me, what you see?”

- ♣ Partner A then begins to describe everything he/she sees (outfit, expression, stance, etc.)
- ♣ Instructor says “Freeze”
- ♣ Partner A and Partner B freezes
- ♣ Partner A walks around Partner B to note the details of Partner A’s frozen position (Partner B notes his/her own stance as well).
- ♣ Partner A after circling Partner B stands in front of Partner B and closes his/her eyes.
- ♣ Partner B then changes something about themselves. He/she can either add something to their body or move body position. Partner B can only make 3 changes or less.
- ♣ Partner B freezes into the changes
- ♣ Partner A opens their eyes and Partner B asks “Now, what do you see?”
- ♣ Partner A describes the changes they see.
- ♣ Partner B should remain neutral (poker face) as Partner A describes the changes. They should not give on whether the changes are correct or incorrect.
- ♣ When Partner B completes the description of Changes both Partner A and Partner B should stand neutral (hip over knee, feet parallel, and arms to the side)
- ♣ Partner B then begins “I see you”. The game is repeated with Partner B making the observations.

Post Discussion of Game: Connecting it to the importance of an actor’s awareness of self, others and environment. The concept of looking with a purpose. Today’s class will primarily feature analysis of live poetry performance via video clips of performances. Developing a finely honed skill of observation.

Acting is said to be the study of human behavior. So, in addition to their own memories and imaginations, actors must depend on their powers of observation. As an actor, you must become aware of how people feel, move, speak, think, and behave. You must be able to recall what you observe, and possibly use it to build believable characters.

Before the video lecture begins, students will be given the poetry performance analysis sheet where they will write their observations of the videos. The observations will fall under 3 categories: Impression (s), Performance-based features, and text-based features. The Instructor will verbally supply examples of responses under each category. The students’ observation and processing skills will be tested because they will only get one opportunity to watch, process and write/comment on the videos. After each video, the students will be given time to write their responses before the class engages in a discussion about the video. The analysis form will be submitted to the Instructor at the end of the class. The students will be encouraged to write at least 3 points under each category for each performance poetry viewed. If they are unable to

do so they should feel free to add to each category based on the points presented by their classmates during the class discussion.

Discussion of Required Reading: “Getting into the Spirit of Slam” (Marc Kelly Smith.

Discussion Question: State one new information that you gathered from this reading?

Video Performances

Video Lecture Time

Allocation 1st Video: 3:28-

3:38pm

2nd Video: 3:39-3:49pm

3rd Video: 3:50pm-

4:00pm 4th Video:

4:00-4:10pm

5th Video: 4:11-

4:21pm 6th Video:

4:22-4:30pm

Muthabaruka at Poetry Africa 2010 (3 minutes 18 seconds)

Focus Area (Poet- Audience Relationship). Take careful note how the poet weaves the expected audience reaction into the construction and performance of his poem).

Darius Simpson and Scout Bostly- “Lost Voices” (3 Minutes)

Focus Area: Take note of how the Poets synced their performances: The Power of Collaboration and Mirroring).

Rachel Wiley- “For fat girls who considered starvation when bulimia wasn’t enough” (3minutes 27 seconds)

Focus Area: (Self-Art- Transforming personal narrative into an engaging artistic testimony).

Kate Hao and Kristen Sze-Tu: “Yet still I wait” (3 minutes and 18 seconds)

Focus Area: The intersection between images and emotions in performance... How did the poets embody humanity in their performance and how were they able to summon empathy and sympathy from their audience?

Jesse Parent “To the boys who may date my daughter” (3 minutes 14 seconds)

Focus Area: Use of Props, creating nuances of a character, use of contrast in performance)

Neil Hilburn “OCD” Rustbelt 2013 (2 minutes 51 seconds)

Focus Area: Transformation during Performance and the role research plays in performance.

Instructional Materials:

2 Copies of Lesson Plan.

18 Copies of Poetry Performance Analysis Sheet. 2 Copies of class reading.

Assessment/Evaluation (Formative/Summative)

What did the students note as common characteristics of Poetry Performances?

What features did students list as text-based features?

What features did students list as performance- based features?

List the challenges students encountered during exercises and the videolecture?

Were you able to complete each section of the lesson in the allocated time? Did you rush or was a steady process...allowing the students adequate time to truly process?

Closure:

*Assignment for Wednesday's Class: Please bring an item that is of great significance to you.

*If we are unable to view and analyze all the videos during the class time, the students will be asked to watch the remaining videos (posted on courseweb) and complete and submit the analysis sheet next class (21.3.2018).

Sample Lesson Plan 2

Course:

Actor as Storyteller THEA 1102

Unit: Performance Poetry

Lesson Topic: Theory and Practice: Poetic Imaginings and Improvisation

Date: Wednesday March 21, 2018 **Instructor:** Teisha Duncan **School:** University of Pittsburgh

Expectation(s): Students are expected to bring an object that is of great significance to them.

Student Outcome(s): Students will be able to...

- Dramatize a pantomime using the given circumstances of their personal object
- List three (3) ways to trigger creative imagination
- Write a free verse poem by choosing one word, for each given circumstance (who, what, where, when, why, how) that expresses the story of the object they brought to class
- Explain the role of props and costume in an actor's storytelling

Context for Learning

Given Circumstances as outlined within the context of this lesson is outlined below:

Who? Name, relationship... of who the object came from whether it was given to you, bought by yourself or was found, etc.

What? What is the object?

Where? Physical or social environment of where you acquired it

When? When did you acquire the object...In the present, in the past, in a dream, in an imagination, time of day, time of year, etc.

Why? Main event (The circumstances around how you acquired it) Reasons behind how the object came into your life, as a gift, as a purchase, as a find.

How? A word that metaphorically describes either how the object makes you feel or what the object prevents you from feeling

Free Verse Poem

Free verse is a literary device that can be defined as poetry that is free from limitations of regular meter or rhythm, and does not rhyme with fixed forms. Such poems are without rhythm and rhyme schemes, do not follow regular rhyme scheme rules, yet still provide artistic expression.

In

this way, the poet can give his own shape to a poem however he or she desires. However, it still allows poets to use alliteration, rhyme, cadences, and rhythms to get the effects that they consider are suitable for the piece.

Five steps to free verse. (Source: Poetry through the ages “Light your fire with free verse”).

Nevertheless, follow your instincts. The best way to write free verse is to start with wild abandon and funnel your choice of words and movement through a tightly-focused editing process. Try these five steps to unleash your inner poet:

♣Choose your subject and write about it. Get it all out. Stay deep and true to the rhythm of the poetic movement rolling through you, but get everything about the subject down on paper.

♣Check your rough poem to see if anything is missing. If you need to add a line, or even a stanza, do so. If you’re missing a metaphor, simile, or turn of phrase, add it.

♣Read the rough poem aloud. Free verse is a rhythmic dance with voice and words, so check the sequence of lines and make sure that one flows into the other.

♣Move through your poem with an editor’s pen and make sure you’ve selected the words that

give proper accent and cadence to the overall poem.

♣Read the poem aloud until it flows like honey and you *feel* it inside. That's a sure sign of a well-completed piece of free verse.

Instructional Delivery Opening Activities/Motivation:

Announcement and Welcomes (Karen Gilmer and Kensey Coleman) 3-3:05pm

Discussion with props Mistress Kensey Coleman "The Role of Props in an Actor's Storytelling"
3:06pm- 3:26pm

Warm-up: "My prop, my costume, my skin" 3:27-3:37pm

Writing Activity: Post-it Game... "My Gem" 3:38-3:43pm

Rehearsal of Improvisation based on writing 3:44-3:50pm

Presentation of Improvisations 3:51pm-4:10pm

Post Discussion of Improvisations 4:11-4:24pm

Talk with Costume Designer Karen Gilmer 4:25-4:45pm

Wrap-Up 4 : 4 5 p m

Class Dismissed: 4:50pm

Description of Activities

"My prop, my costume, my skin"

Students will use their street clothes as props/costume. With each clap of the Instructor's hands the students will find different ways to dress their body with the clothing. As they do so, they should make note of who do they feel like in each attire? Whether the garment is loose or snug, neat or sloppy, what character does the fit bring to mind?

"My Gem"

The students will create a solo pantomime. They will choose one word for each given circumstance as described above. They will create a physical gesture/embodiment for each word. In the pantomime...

1st They will say each word slowly in the order who, what, where, when, why, how, as they execute the movement

2nd They will quickly say the words and execute the movements. They have to switch up the order of how they say and express the given circumstances.

The movements should be smooth and cohesive. They should not look like six separate tableaux; but instead should resemble a fluid physical conversation.

Side note: In addition to their object they will have 6 post-it sheets. The word they chose for each given circumstance must be written on these post-it sheets. They have to use the post-it sheets as an additional object. They can utilize their object and the post-it sheets in any way they prefer. Their usage of the object and the post-it sheets should add to their performance; it should not be a distraction.

Post Discussion after Improvisation will focus on...

Students' feedback on the exercises

Ways an actor can trigger their imagination

Were they able to accurately portray the breadth of the story about their object within the limited word count?

How did they use their body and prop (post-it and object) to add other levels to their story?

For the Wrap-up: Students will write and submit to the Instructor their answer to the question ... What role do you think costume and props play in an actor's storytelling?
(This is a short writing feedback. The students will have two minutes to write their response).

Assessment/Evaluation (Formative/Summative)

Were you able to complete all activities?

Were you steady in guiding the students through the activities and discussions?

Was the allotted time frame for each activity sufficient?

What was your observation of the students during the discussions and exercises?

What was the feedback of the students during the discussions?

Did the students use their body and props (post-it and object) to tell parts of the story that the word count could not tell?... did the limit in the word count forced them to stretch their physical and creative limit to fill in the bits of the story that were absent?

Materials Needed:

Two copies of Lesson Plan Post-it
Blank sheets of paper

Cue sheets for the Given Circumstances

Closure:

♣Home Work: Email the Instructor a copy of your favorite poem by Saturday night at
11:59pm

Sample Lesson Plan 3

Course: Actor as Storyteller THEA 1102

Unit: Puppetry in Performance

Lesson Topic: Puppet Play Final Performance

Date: March 14, 2018 **Instructor:** Teisha Duncan **School:** University of Pittsburgh

Expectation(s):

Students spent seven (7) class sessions working on different aspects of Puppet performance: Puppet Theatre history, manipulating puppets, voicing puppets, constructing puppets, writing puppet plays and rehearsing puppet plays. Before spring break some students had completed the construction of their puppets. The students wrote and submitted all puppet plays by February 26, 2018. All plays should be fully memorized. The students have had two class sessions of coaching in puppetry in preparation for today's Finals.

*Rubric for Puppet Play Presentation is attached.

Student Outcome(s): Students will be able to...

- Perform a character in a puppet play by applying vocal variety (distinct character voice in rate of speaking, pitch, volume, pausing, projection, diction and inflection), physical expressiveness and by staying in character
- Critically evaluate and provide classmates with feedback about their puppet play and performance using the following categories as a guide: puppet manipulation, use of body, scenery, voice projection, accuracy of story, expression (vocal variety), and staying in character.
- Critically evaluate their own performance using the following categories as a guide: puppet manipulation, use of body, voice projection, expression (vocal variety), and staying in

character.

- List two takeaways/performance skills they have acquired from working on performing puppets.

Context for Learning

The Puppet Play assignment by its very nature will deal with and allow the students to internalize a number of concepts and issues.

COMMUNICATION AND TEAM WORK: For the assignment to be successful, the students have to get along with each, they need to learn how to listen to, and respect the ideas of others. But rather than having to deal with direct interaction, the focus is on the puppetry activities. All energy is concentrated on, and channeled through a medium: puppetry.

REHEARSALS and RESEARCH: Participating in the puppet plays allowed the students to experience other people's situations and viewpoints; to understand how others feel; to experience "real life", without physically going through it themselves during scriptwriting, scene improvisation and performance

CONCEPTS: When constructing a puppet, sets and props, one is actively involved in dealing with, learning and talking about concepts such as color, numbers, proportion, size, shapes, sorting, measuring, spatial relationships, scale, etc.

PROPERTIES: The properties of light, sound, color, music, movement, mood and atmosphere are dealt with in a practical manner through discussion, observation and activity.

MOTOR SKILLS: When participating in activities such as sewing, cutting, drawing, etc, one's motor skills can be developed and improved through practical exercise.

LANGUAGE SKILLS: In the creation of a puppet play, the spoken word is used in relation to one's activities and one's performance, and the written word through work on scripts, posters, lists, invitations, etc.

BODY AWARENESS AND COORDINATION: Through performance exercises, warm-ups, and the exploration of the movement of the puppet on its own, and in relation to one's own movement, one can develop an understanding of one's body and how it works, and improve coordination and spatial awareness.

CONFIDENCE AND SELF ESTEEM: Being involved in a puppetry project, gives people of differing abilities and levels of confidence the opportunity to participate, to share a variety of personal strengths and to contribute something that is seen as worthwhile.

Points discussed during rehearsals

The story is to be performed. Performance means that you will bring the story to life (or animate it), it will unfold in real time, and an audience will be watching. This means that all elements of the story must be accessible to actors creating them in the moment. The elements of the story must be understood and accessible to the watching audience in real time.

The story is to be performed by puppets. What are the specific elements, limitations, differences and problems of puppetry? Sometimes, puppet's faces, eyes and mouths don't move. Therefore they must not try to make long speeches, or engage in monologues because there is no action, i.e. nothing to watch, and the audience gets bored very quickly. The student should use whatever part of the body that is visual to the audience as much as possible.

Performance is audiovisual. The audience sees and hears the action/story unfold. Both elements must be included in the script. Don't discuss what can be shown.

Performance is dialogue. Characters talking - and not talking - to each other and the audience not describing things. Never describe. It is a script not a novel.

Performance is communication - telling your story to another. A performance script is about dialogue, and dialogue is communication, for the story teller, characters and the audience - even when it is in actions not words.

Performance is to an audience. An audience is fully half of a performance, without one there is no point.

Interaction (dialogue) between puppets should be quick, concise and to the point.

Puppet theatre is action theatre. For the story to work and hold interest it must contain lots of action - not only the physical action of movement through the space, but also character action with gesture and interaction and plot action and movement. Never describe. Scenes should move from beginning to end, be short and to the point of the action/plot.

Puppet theatre is visual theatre. Don't discuss what can be shown. Most puppets have a limited capability with props. Puppet /prop interaction must be limited to only that prop which is essential at that moment to the plot.

Instructional Delivery

Check-in and Reminders 3- 3:05pm

Process paper for "Puppet Play" is due on March 19 at 11:59pm Complete Readings for Monday's class "Introduction to Poetic Performance"

Warm-ups

Punchinella Funny Fellow
Partner work (Puppeting my friend) 3:06- 3:20pm

In-Class last minute Rehearsal 3:21-3:50pm

Set up for Puppet Play Performance 3:51-3:59pm Choose photographer/videographer Prep set/sound/puppets

Puppet Play Presentations 4- 4:30pm 3 Groups

Closing Comments and Discussion 4:31- 4:45pm Feedback on personal and classmates Performances... Takeaways from content covered during this unit

Class Dismissed: 4:50pm

Procedures:

(Punchinello Funny Fellow)

*This playful children's game will be used to warm up the students. To energize them and get them in a playful mood and to connect the child's play of this game to the child's play of puppetry.

1 Have Students form a circle. Ask one student to stand in the center as the leader, Punchinello. 2 The children in the circle sing the following song:

What can you do, Punchinello, funny fellow?

What can you do, Punchinello, funny fellow?

The student in the center makes a movement. All the others imitate him/her while they sing:

We can do it too Punchinello, funny fellow. We can do it too, Punchinello funny fellow.

The child in the middle picks a new Punchinello. As he/she sings:

Who is coming next Punchinello, funny fellow who is coming next Punchinello, funny fellow

5. Continue until everyone has had a turn.

(Puppeting your friend)

Students in groups of two will play puppet and puppeteer. The student who plays the puppeteer will move the student who is the puppet as if they were a rod with strings attached to different parts of the body. The student playing the puppet will follow the movements created by the student playing the puppeteer. Students will take turns.

Materials Needed:

Hard Copies of Rubric (16 Rubric Sheets) 2 Copies of Lesson Plan Book for Caleb (Shadow Puppetry) Small pieces of paper

Copy of Points discussed during Rehearsals

Closure

-There is a possibility that Group 2 will present at the end of class on Monday March 19th due to a student's illness and subsequent absence last class. If the student is present for class today. The group will present their puppet play at 3:30pm for feedback but they will not be graded. Their final presentation will be at the end of next class.

Assessment/Evaluation:

Sample Lesson Plan 4

Course: Actor as Storyteller THEA 1102 **Unit:** Physical Storytelling

Lesson Topic: Mask Work

Date: January 24, 2018

Instructor: Teisha Duncan

School: University of Pittsburgh

Expectation(s):

Students are expected to have read and prepared the articles "Neutral Mask" and "Masks Part 1 & 2". The first article outlines the purpose of the neutral mask in actor training. The second article "Masks Part 1 & 2" gives a general overview of the use of masks in theatre and performance especially during the 21st century. Students are expected to bring a copy of all readings to class with visible highlights and notes. The readings will be discussed in class framed by the following questions...

What new information did you gather from the reading?

List two 'takeaways' from the reading? (Areas of the content that you can incorporate in your process as an actor. Either from the 'show' or 'business' side of acting.

Student Outcome(s): Students will be able to...

- List the 7 Levels of Tension outlined by Lecoq
- Collaborate in small groups and dramatize a pantomime where 3 out of the 7 Levels of Tension (Lecoq) is incorporated into their storytelling
- Demonstrate an awareness of space (environment), conflict (relationship), and purposed body expressivity (Gestures) as it relates to mask performance
- Role-play wearing a mask
- Manipulate tension within their body and re-imagine it as different forms of energy and focus (presence) in performance.

Context for Learning

The Seven Levels of Tension

Jacques Lecoq uses the Seven Levels of Tension in acting exercises to help actors transition into different emotions that could be incorporated into a scene. The first level is **Exhausted** and there is no tension in the body, the body is relaxed. The next level is **Laid Back**, it is very cool, lazy, and chill. **Neutral** is the third level and it is when a character has no story to tell, it shows no emotion at all. Being **Curious** means you are looking around, sitting down, or being suspicious. **Suspense** is when the problem is about to happen. It portrays a person that has tension in their body, in their eyes, and within the breaths they take. **Passionate** shows tension on the person's body because the problem occurring. Not knowing what to do, causes the actor to become angry as well. **Tragic** portrays the event where the problem is happening, but the character does not know what to do. At this point, the body has solid tension.

Neutral Mask

Aristotle claims:

Imitation is natural to man from childhood; he differs from other animals in that he is most imitative. Then too all men take pleasure in imitative representations...The reason is that learning things is most enjoyable. Thus for Aristotle, miming is part of the learning process.

The neutral mask affirms Aristotle's claims, namely an affirmation of knowledge accrued through movement. This is both self-knowledge and knowledge of the world in all its material, ideological and conceptual complexity.

The practice of Neutral Mask operates at two reinforcing levels: as metaphor to facilitate a different way of seeing and being in the world, and as pragmatic teaching instruction to help students open themselves up corporeally and psychologically to a range of possibilities which will help them as actors and theatre makers. [2] It is the discovery of the self but not through the self.

For Lecoq, the mask facilitates a discovery of the central point, the essence of a relationship, or a conflict. [3] "Neutral" Lecoq explains, "Does not mean absent. It means without a past, open, ready. One cannot act psychologically because the eye doesn't travel. The eye is replaced by the head."

These constraints, along with others develop a sense of space for the actor improvising. "To be an author of space we must build an awareness of space...it is a fundamental element of acting" (CITA International Center for Theatre Arts)

Instructional Delivery

Opening Activities/Motivation:

* The activities done throughout the warm-ups will be guided by one or more of the 7 Levels of tension outlined by Lecoq.

Warm-ups with Mask 3:00-3:40pm • Large Group; Small Group

Snap catch

Back to Back Reflectors

Fall like a piece of paper (Mirror...direct observation Acting) Mask Movement (In small Groups)

-Wake up on a plain

-Go through a forest, find a beach, and throw a stone

-Go into a forest, it's on fire

-Falling Forward

-Wild Jungle

-Starting point...finishing point

-Farewell Exercise

Class Activity 3:40- 3:50pm

In groups of 3 create a maximum two- minute pantomime performance (a dramatic/comedic piece where meaning/a story is expressed through gestures with no vocal sound (Sound can be created by the body and environment) using 3 out of these seven levels of Tension as your inspiration based for the physical story of the world you create.

Catatonic: Exhausted; the jellyfish; there is no tension in the body

Relaxed: "Californian" cool. Relaxed; possibly lacking in credibility

Neutral: Economic Present. Nothing more, nothing less; the right amount...no past, no future

Alert: Curious, Indecisive

Suspense: Impending Crisis...is there a bomb in the room/ reactive, tension throughout, an in-breath,
delay in your reaction

Passionate: 'There is a bomb in the room'

Tragic: The bomb is about to go off...petrified...the body in solid tension...tension explodes out of the body, difficulty in control, Anger, Fear, Hilarity and Despair

Transition to the Heymann Theatre 3:50-4:00pm In- Class Pantomime Demonstrations 4-4:20pm Discussion of Readings/Class Content 4:20- 4:40pm Discussion of "Alter-ego"
Assignment 4:40pm Class Dismissed: 4:50pm

Procedures:

The first hour of class will be in Room 423 in Bellefield for the use of mirrors to aid mask work...the last 50 minutes of class will be in the Henry Heymann Theatre

Materials Needed

Masks
Handouts on the 7 Levels of Tension
Assessment/Evaluation (Formative/Summative)

* Lesson Plan is always subject to Change. Any adjustments will be noted here in this section.

Closure: Class Dismissed at 4:50pm

Silent Scream Rubric

Actor as Storyteller THEA 1392- 1060

Instructor: Teisha Duncan

February 5, 2018

Assignment: Silent Scream Rubric

Summary

Students will write a process paper for their ***Silent Scream Presentation*** which will include information about their ***Mask making process***. The process paper should be a minimum of 500 words. The written paper should be double spaced, times new roman, and 12-point font. The heading of the paper should include subject, course number, instructor's name, student's name, date, and title of paper. The title of the paper should include the name of the assignment and the title of the presentation; for e.g. ***"Silent Scream: Hot Sugar"***. The paper should describe their process as they worked on all aspects of their Silent Scream presentation. The content should include a discussion on points of inspiration, challenges, discoveries, and lessons learnt from the process. The process paper should include two pictures minimum. One picture showing the process and the second picture should show the final product.

Outline

Students will create a two-minute solo pantomime that reflects an embodiment of their 'alter

ego' in action. Students are expected to execute this pantomime while wearing their created 'alter-ego' mask, for a fraction of the performance.

Alter-Ego: Your alter ego is the other side of your personality from the one that people normally see.

Students will create a character profile of their 'alter-ego'. The student will use the character profile to create a memory reflective of an Aha moment experienced by the 'alter-ego'. The student will create a pantomime presentation of this memory. The memory (story) of the pantomime should feature a solid beginning, middle and end.

Requirements:

The pantomime should feature some kind of signage with the title.

The pantomime should be two minutes in length.

All props and any additional objects must be mimed.

No vocals, mouthing is not permitted.

Music can be used or created with the body but not with the voice.

Students should be wearing their 'alter ego' mask for a fraction of their presentation. Facial expressions should be clear in sections of the presentation. There should be a smooth manipulation of the mask during the presentation from masked to unmask.

Mask:

Students will create a mask to complement their pantomime presentation. The features of the mask can be symbolic or literal matching the 'look' of the student's 'alter-ego'. Students must be able to see through the mask. The mask should feature 3 additional design materials (paint, buttons, feathers, etc.).

The creation of the mask will be a separate grade but there are sections of the pantomime where the manipulation of the mask will be included in the presentation grade.

Grading:

Mask 25 Points

Silent Scream Presentation 150 Points

Process Paper 25 Points

Silent Scream Pantomime Performance Rubric

Student's Name _____ *Date* _____

Title _____ *Length* _____ *Score* _____

Process Paper: 25 Points

Character Profile	10
Description of Memory	5
Structure of Memory/Story (beginning, middle, end)	5
Description of Performance Choices/Inspiration for Mask	5

Introduction: 5 Point Possible

Poster with title	2.5
Title is easy to read and creatively rendered	2.5

Environment: 10 Points Possible

Where is clearly established	10
------------------------------	----

Characterization: 25 Points Possible

Fully developed character	15
Facial expressions/mask match character's emotions and situation	10

Physicalization: 40 Points Possible

Consistent to portray character	10
Detailed	10
Muscle control	10
Resistance	10

Object Solidity and Weight: 30 Points Possible

Clearly identified objects	10
Clearly defined size and weight	10
Object continuity	10

Storyline: 20 Points Possible

Complete story: beginning/middle/end	15
Entertaining	5

Time Limit: 5 Points Possible

Fall within required limit (2 minutes)	5
--	---

Ending: 5 Points Possible

Allow moment to complete	2.5
--------------------------	-----

Remove poster/music

2.5

Technical Presentation: 10 Points Possible

Clearly defined (mimed) props 2

No vocals 2

No mouthing of words 2

Includes music 2

Smooth Manipulation of Mask 2

Overall Impression/Comments

It is obvious to the teacher that the student prepared adequately for the presentation Yes/No

Mask Construction

Creativity of Mask (Construction) 15

Mask Eyes 5

3 Additional Design Materials 5

Total (Process Paper):/25 Points

Total (Silent Scream Presentation):/150 Points

Mask: /25 Points

Overall Total: /200 Points

Puppet Play Rubric

Actor as Storyteller THEA 1392- 1060

Instructor: Teisha Duncan

March 14, 2018

Assignment: Puppet Play Rubric

Summary

Students will work in groups of four and create a five-minute puppet show meant for a young audience. They will create a puppet to match their character in the show. Students will be graded individually for the construction, manipulation and characterization of their puppet and receive a group grade for the playwriting, scenery and accuracy of the story.

Requirements:

- Puppet play should be original; collectively written by all members of each group.
- Puppet play should feature a kid/ child friendly theme. There has to be a clear lesson stated at the end of the play.
- Puppet play should be 4-5 minutes in length.
- Students are encouraged to choose any type of puppet construction that best suits them and their teammates' interest and ability. It is imperative that the puppet construction they choose meets their skill set, challenges their creativity and enhances their interest/fun in puppet play. Students are encouraged to work smart not hard. Students will be guided through their choices and construction.

The main types of puppets constructions are:

Finger Puppet
Pop-up Puppet
Paddle Puppet
Jumping Jack
Hand Puppet
Rod Puppet and Bunraku
Shadow Puppet
Hand and Rod Puppet
Hand and Glove Puppet
Marionette (String Puppet)
Ventriloquist Figure
Junk Puppet (Found Object)
Humanette
Cable-controlled puppet
Radio-controlled puppet
Animatronic

Body Suits/Walkabouts
Pneumatic (air-controlled) puppet
Hydraulic puppet
Stop-action Puppet
Computer-generated Puppet
Waldo-input Computer Puppet
Motion Capture Puppet/Digital Monkey

Process Paper

Students will write a process paper for their *Puppet Play Presentation* and their *Puppet making*. The paper should be a minimum of 500 words. The written paper should be double spaced, times new roman, and 12-point font. The heading of the paper should include subject, course number, instructor's name, student's name, date, and title of paper. The title of the paper should include the name of the assignment and the title of the presentation; for e.g. "*Puppet Play: Mary has a little goat*". The paper should describe their process as they worked on all aspects of their Puppet play presentation. The content should include a discussion on points of inspiration, challenges, discoveries, puppet construction and lessons learnt from the process. Each process paper should include two pictures minimum. One picture showing the process and the second picture should show the final product.

Table 6: Puppet Play Performance Grade Sheet

CATEGORY	TARGET POINTS	25	20	15
Elements of Standard	200			
Puppet Manipulation	Skills/Abilities	Puppeteers always manipulated puppets so audience could see them.	Puppeteers generally manipulated puppets so audience could see them.	Puppeteers rarely manipulated puppets so audience could see them.
Puppet Construction	Skills/Abilities	Puppets were original, creative, and constructed well. No pieces fell off during the performance.	Puppets were original and constructed fairly well. No pieces fell off during the performance.	Puppets were not constructed well. Pieces fell off during the performance.
Playwriting	Skills/Abilities	Play was creative and really held the audience's interest.	Play had several creative elements and usually held the audience's interest.	Play needed more creative elements and did not hold the audience's interest..
Scenery	Skills/Abilities	Scenery was creative, added interest to the play, and did not get in the way of the puppets.	Scenery was creative and did not get in the way of the puppets.	Scenery got in the way of the puppets OR distracted the audience.
Voice Projection	Skills/Abilities	Voices of puppeteers were always audible to people sitting in the back row.	Voices of puppeteers were generally audible to people sitting in the back row.	Voices of puppeteers were rarely audible to people sitting in the back row.

Process paper	Skills/Abilities	All important parts of the process were included (reflection on writing, rehearsals and presentation) Pictures were included.	Almost all important parts of the process were included.	Much of the process was left out. There were no pictures.
Expression (Vocal variety in rate of speaking, pitch, volume, pausing, and inflection.)	Skills/Abilities	Puppeteers' voices showed a lot of expression and emotion.	Puppeteers' voices showed some expression and emotion.	Puppeteers' voices were monotone and not expressive.
Stay in Character	Skills/Abilities	Puppeteers stayed in character throughout the performance.	Puppeteers stayed in character generally throughout the performance.	Puppeteers acted silly or showed off.

Actor Cypher Rubric

Actor as Storyteller THEA 1392- 1060

Instructor: Teisha Duncan

April 16, 2018

Assessment Rubric: “Actor Cypher” Personal Poem

The Actor Cypher presentation gives the students an opportunity to read their own poems with emotion, gestures, body language, and facial expressions.

Categories & Criteria (30 Points Each)

- Directly addressing the audience. Not reading.
- Verbal Cues (Tone, pace, volume, intended pauses).
- Non-Verbal Cues (Gestures, facial expressions, body language).
- Enthusiasm (Positive energy, speaking animatedly, avoiding monotone).
- Planning/Preparation

Showing rehearsal and practice. Planning is very evident. Pauses & Prompts

Points deducted for long pauses to remember and prompts.

Actor Cypher Assessment Total: /150

Created by: Anna Krider

Adjusted by: Teisha Duncan

Actor Cypher (Original Poetry) Assessment Rubric

After you present your poem in the poetry slam, you will submit a good copy of the poem for a poetry assessment. Before writing your poem, make sure you look at the criteria listed below to ensure you have satisfied all the poetry elements.

Categories and Criteria (20 Points each)

Subject & Theme

Is the focus on the subject throughout the poem? In other words, is the focus consistent from beginning to end?

Poetry Elements (Sensory Details)

Do sensory details and figurative language create vivid images that contribute significantly to the meaning of the poem?

Poetry Elements (Diction)

Is the word choice compelling and exact throughout the poem? Try to avoid easy word choices.

Grammar, Usage, Mechanics

On careful reading, are there no intentional errors in mechanics, punctuation, grammar, and spelling?

Coffin Caliber: Overall Impact

Does the poem incite the senses and make the reader think about the subject in new/ different ways? Were you captivated by the student's poem and performance? Did the student seem connected to their own work?

Total Points: __/100 Points



Figure 1: Neutral Mask 1



Figure 2: Neutral Mask 2



Figure 3: Puppetry 1



Figure 4: Puppetry 2



Figure 5: Puppetry 3

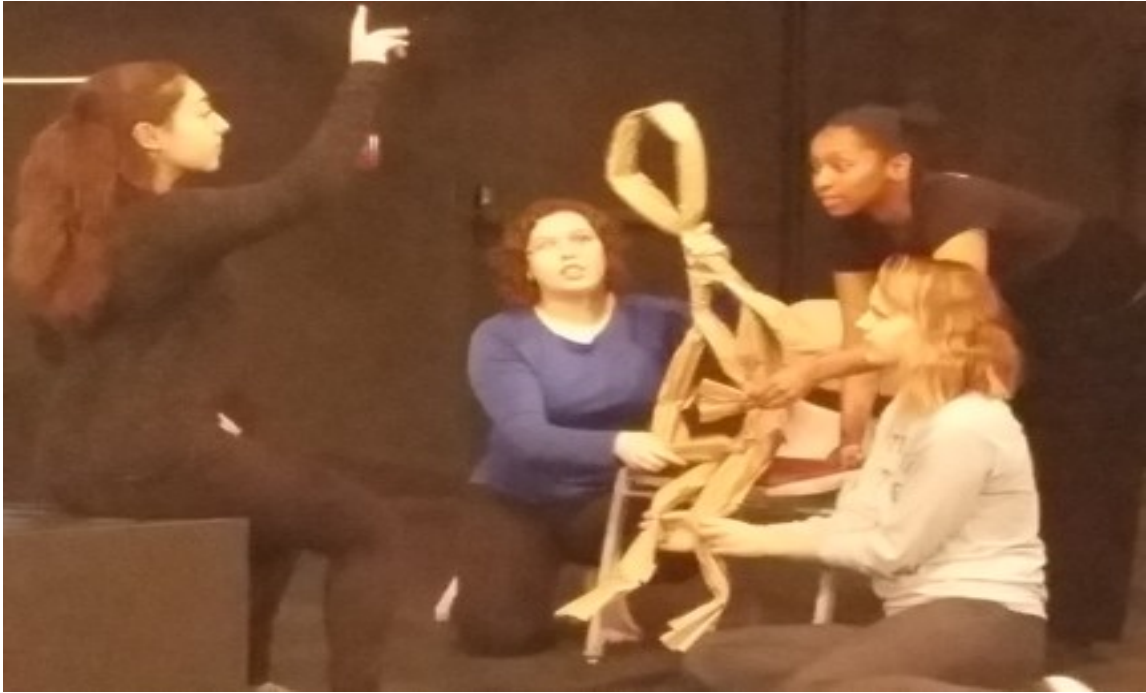


Figure 6: Puppetry 4



Figure 7: Puppetry 5



Figure 8: Center for Creativity 1



Figure 9: Center for Creativity 2



Figure 10: Center for Creativity 3



Figure 11: Center for Creativity 4



Figure 12: Action Theater Exercise

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beckerman, Bernard, and William Coco. *Theatrical Presentation Performer, Audience and Act*. Routledge, 1990.
- Benedetti, Robert. *The Actor in You*. Pearson, 2015.
- Bogart, Anne. "The Role of Storytelling in the Theatre of the Twenty-First Century." *Howlround*, 13 May 2015, <http://howlround.com/the-role-of-storytelling-in-the-theatre-of-the-twenty-first-century>.
- Boon, Alex. "Voice and Speech: A Craft." Translated by Jonathan Reeder. July 2005, <http://www.rondjestem.com/artikelen/Voice%20and%20Speech.pdf>.
- Bridel, David. "In the Beginning was the Body: From Lecoq and Laban to Michael Chekhov and Suzuki, U.S. Movement Training Derives its Strength and Purpose from Abroad." *American Theatre*, 1 January 2011, <https://www.americantheatre.org/2011/01/01/in-the-beginning-was-the-body/>.
- Darlington, William Aubrey. *The Actor and His Audience*. Phoenix House, 1949.
- Davis, James R., and Bridget D. Arend. *Facilitating Seven Ways of Learning: A Resource for More Purposeful, Effective, and Enjoyable College Teaching*. Stylus Publishing, LLC., 2012.
- Davis, Donna M., and Shirley Marie McCarther. "Following the Drinking Gourd: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Curriculum Development Through the Arts." *The Educational Forum*. Vol. 79. No. 1. Routledge, 2015.
- Fleming, Craig. "What if Traditional Theatre Training was replaced by a Multi-Disciplinary approach?" *TCG Circle*, <http://www.tcgcircle.org/2011/05/what-if-traditional-theatre-training-was-replaced-by-a-multi-disciplinary-approach/>.
- Gay, Geneva. "Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching." *Journal of Teacher Education* 53.2 (2002): 106-116.
- Gehman, Stacy. "Body Mapping." Alexander Technique.com, <https://www.alexandertechnique.com/articles/bodymap/>.

- Gillett, John. *Acting Stanislavski: A Practical Guide to Stanislavski's Approach and Legacy*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014.
- Goldstein, Thalia R. "What, Cognitively, Does an Actor Actually Do?" *Psychology Today*, 2012, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-mind-stage/201201/what-cognitively-does-actor-actually-do>.
- Guber, Peter. "The Four Truths of the Storyteller." *Harvard Business Review*, December 2007, <https://hbr.org/2007/12/the-four-truths-of-the-storyteller>.
- Hagen, Uta. *Challenge for the Actor*. Simon and Schuster, 1991.
- Jones, Rhodessa. "A Woman for the 21st Century." Pitt Arts, February Artist-In-Residence, 2 February 2018, Frick Fine Arts Auditorium, Pittsburgh, PA. Keynote Address.
- Ladson-Billings, Gloria. "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy." *Theory into Practice* 34.3 (1995): 159-165.
- Lecoq, Jacques. *The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre*. Translated by David Bradby, Methuen, 2000.
- Lust, Annette. *Bringing the Body to the Stage and Screen: Expressive Movement for Performers*. Scarecrow Press, 2011.
- Miller, Bruce. *The Actor as Storyteller: An Introduction to Acting*. Limelight Editions, 2012.
- Milner, H. Richard. "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in a Diverse Urban Classroom." *The Urban Review* 43.1 (2011): 66-89.
- Nicola, James B. *Playing the Audience: The Practical Actor's Guide to Live Performance*. Hal Leonard Corporation, 2002.
- "Overview of Learning Styles". *Learning-Styles-Online*, 2018, <https://www.learning-styles-online.com/overview/index.php>.
- Rafael, Mark. *Telling Stories: A Grand Unifying Theory of Acting Techniques*. Smith & Kraus Pub Incorporated, 2008.
- Rodenburg, Patsy. *Speaking Shakespeare*. Macmillan, 2004.
- Roznowski, Rob. *Roadblocks in Acting*. Palgrave, 2017.
- Smith, Marc Kelly, and Joe Kraynak. *Take the Mic: The Art of Performance Poetry, Slam, and the Spoken Word*. Sourcebooks, Inc., 2009.

- Stanislavski, Konstantin. *An Actor's Work*. Routledge, 2016.
- Susan, Bennett. *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*. Routledge (1990).
- “The Seven Styles of Learning.” *Educational Technology and Mobile Learning*, 2012, <https://www.educatorstechnology.com/2012/11/the-seven-learning-styles-teachers.html>.
- “Types of Learning.” *University of Washington*, 2018, <https://www.washington.edu/doit/types-learning>.
- “What is Action Theater.” *Action Theater.com*, 1997, <http://www.actiontheater.com/action.htm>.
- “What is Alexander Technique: What are the benefits of lessons or classes?” *Alexander Technique.com*, <https://www.alexandertechnique.com/at.htm>.
- Wilsher, Toby. *The Mask Handbook: A Practical Guide*. Routledge, 2006.
- Wilson, Michael. *Storytelling and Theatre: Contemporary Professional Storytellers and Their Art*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Zaporah, Ruth. *Action Theater: The Improvisation of Presence*. North Atlantic Books, 1995.
- Zazzali, Peter. *Acting in the Academy: The History of Professional Actor Training in US Higher Education*. Routledge, 2016.