

Professor: Wesley Van Tassel Mc105 963-2020

TH 546 TEACHING SHAKESPEARE PERFORMANCE (3)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Techniques to guide young actors for analysis, preparation and performance of Shakespeare's language will be studied.

INTENDED OUTCOMES -- upon completion of this class, the student will:

- * formulate his/her appreciation and understanding of blank verse;**
- * demonstrate the techniques of speaking blank verse aloud;**
- * comprehend script analysis, scansion, vocal support, breathing correctly, and antithesis;**
- * differentiate between reading Shakespeare for pleasure and getting on your feet and actually performing it;**
- * practice the technique applications to the language through many exercises;**
- * identify skills in performance;**
 - Practice performing the language skills in class.**

ASSESSMENT

- Write assigned lines on the board and demonstrate analysis of these lines;**
- Participate in all exercise needed to master the speaking techniques;**
- Demonstrate the techniques of end of line support and finding the antithesis by on-the-feet illustration;**
- Recite blank verse aloud and verbally apply the analysis to the oral presentation;**
- Perform selected and memorized sections of blank verse to illustrate understanding of scansion, line support, breathing, and antithesis;**
- Direct at least one peer to handle the techniques learned in class;**
- Present assigned work in public performance and receive feedback from peers and the instructor.**

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- TEXTS:**
- (1) Clues to Acting Shakespeare by Wesley Van Tassel
(We will work primarily from part 2, "For Secondary Schools.")
 - (2) A collection of the complete works of Shakespeare (Viking Edition recommended, but any will do.)

Skill worksheets from the text.

VIDEOS: Available to help you work with Shakespeare's language is the complete "Playing Shakespeare" series of the Royal Shakespeare Company and many BBC and other productions.

SONNETS: Select one you like.

MONOLOGUES: Prepare one monologue of 12 - 20 lines, memorized and ready to work with in class.

ABOUT THE CLASS: The techniques of performing heightened language are studied and practiced, primarily using Shakespeare's language. Tools will be the exercises developed by the instructor and by the Royal Shakespeare Company over many years.

GRADING: Based on classroom participation and application of the skills to the language in performance (but you don't have to be a professional actor).

RATIONALE: The need for drama teachers to stage Shakespeare's plays is widely known and accepted. However, there are few guides to the techniques required to handle the language. This course helps fill that need.

TOPICS AND WORKING SESSIONS

- 1. Scansion -- phrasing – caesura.**

Begin on monologues and sonnets.

- 2. Exercises: kick the box – breathing.**

Apply to monologues and sonnets.

- 3. Exercises: antithesis.**

Apply to monologues and sonnets.

- 4. Work monologues in teams: mark caesuras; breathing points; antithetical words, phrases, ideas; ending of lines.**

- 5. Analysis of a sonnet. Apply to your sonnet.**

- 6. Work monologues in class.**

- 7. Presentation of monologues.**

Student evaluations of the class and instructor are encouraged, as are ideas for lesson plans. The instructor invites all students to re-evaluate the class after directing a Shakespearean production and actually applying the skills learned in the class to the directing process.

In other words, let me hear from you.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

For additional study, add these books to your personal library.

Barton, John. *Playing Shakespeare*. London: Methuen, 1985. (The text is accompanied by the RSC video series of the same title.)

Berry, Cicely. *The Actor and the Text*. New York: Applause, 1988. (The most detailed study of acting Shakespeare available.)

---. *Voice and the Actor*. New York: Macmillan, 1973.

Cohen, Robert. *Acting in Shakespeare*. Mountain View, Ca.: Mayfield, 1991.

Daw, Kurt. *Acting Shakespeare & His Contemporaries*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1998.

Joseph, Bertram. *Acting Shakespeare*. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1960. Revised 1969.

Linklater, Kristin. *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1992.

Rodenburg, Patsy. (Any of her three voice books.)

**All plays on line: <http://eText.Lib.Virginia.edu>
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ADA STATEMENT

Students who have special needs or disabilities that may affect their ability to access information and or material presented in this course are encourage to contract the CWU ADA Affairs and Student Assistance Office on campus so that appropriate modifications can be provided. For information, call 963-2171.

Theatre Arts Mission Statements

University Mission

"Docendo Discimus" (By Teaching We Learn)

Department Mission

The Department of Theatre Arts is an ensemble of artists, scholars, educators, and practitioners located in the heart of the Pacific Northwest who:

- prepare students for advanced study and professional careers in theatre;
- promote creativity and excellence in a diverse educational environment;
- cultivate, educate, challenge and enrich audiences; and
- train and prepare students from diverse backgrounds to link art and life through experiential learning;

in order to nurture skilled, thoughtful, and courageous citizens who will promote a peaceful and tolerant global community .

Teaching Philosophy:

The Theatre Arts Department supports and practices constructivism as a teaching philosophy. Indeed, it may be argued that it has used this philosophy in almost all of the diverse areas within the discipline since the art of theatre was created by human beings. Teachers of Theatre Arts practice tenets from the three forms of constructivism exhaustively covered in the Conceptual Framework; Developmental, Social, and Socio-cultural. As a result, we apply the views commonly and generally held by constructivist teachers;

- Learning opportunities are best when accompanied by high levels of active engagement with tasks that characterize them.
- Formal knowledge is valued and made available to the learner, but the learner is encouraged to reflect on it and be skeptical about it, rather than simply accept it.
- Multiple examples and a variety of representations of content enable learners to derive meaning.
- Critical thinking, reflection, and problem solving are prized and encouraged.
- Interaction and conversation with others in the learning environment can improve the learner's ability to state her case, can widen perspective, and can motivate learning.
- Multiple and authentic measures of assessment provide richer insight into the learner's construction of knowledge.
- Verbal explanations can and should be supplemented by experiential learning.

It should be noted that each teacher applies these precepts in diverse ways, according to their particular area within the discipline.

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HERE ARE SOME EXCELLENT SCENES FOR CLASSROOM WORK:

AS YOU LIKE IT

Celia and Rosalind III. ii. 172-266.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE	Isabella and Angelo II. ii. 26-187 or II. iv. 20-187. Isabella and Claudio III. i. 53-151.
TWELFTH NIGHT	Viola and Olivia III.i.95-176. (plus Malvolio)
THE TAMING OF THE SHREW	Kate and Petruchio II. i. 169-282. (plus others)
OTHELLO	Iago and Cassio II. iii. 259-368 Emilia, Desdamona, Iago IV. ii.
HENRY V	Henry and Williams IV. i. 91-238
THE COMEDY OF ERRORS	Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse III. ii. 1-70 Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse III. ii. 71-170.
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING	Beatrice, Benedict, Ursula IV. i.
HENRY IV	Hotspur, Lady Percy (others)
MACBETH	Macbeth, Lady Macbeth I. v, vii
THE TEMPEST	Prospero, Ariel I. ii.
JULIUS CAESAR	Various scenes

Many other possibilities ... find something you like.

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THE BEST EXERCISES FROM THE RSC WORK:

1. Vowels: speaking just the vowels makes the mind and mechanism aware of the vowel sounds, and helps elongate them where appropriate. After

doing the exercise of "just the vowels" the energy flows from word to word, and the fullness of the vowel adds a pleasantness to the sound.

2. Singing the language makes the actor aware of each syllable, as each syllable represents a note.
3. Whispering demands attention -- simply because the listener makes an effort to hear, plus the gimmick effect that is at work.
4. Running and shout the lines, holding all the vowels, helps to open it up.
5. Speaking in the dark -- the voice has to do it all. Therefore, there is a better follow-through from both speaker and listener. Listening is enhanced as you clarify for yourself what is being suggested through text and subtext. Speaking is clarified as you work harder to make something clear to an invisible listener.
6. Roll over on each change of thought -- this draws emphasis to the physical nature of dealing fresh with each thought.
7. Irritation of the speaker -- (a) irritate the speaker to force him/her to emphasize the ends of lines; (b) prevent the speaker from crossing the room, which he/she tries to do before running out of words.
8. Pass the speech word by word.
9. Attend to each word.
10. Tap out the sense stress and discuss meaning.
11. Hold all vowels-- then hold final vowel in each line.

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12. Mime the speech -- speak a thought, then mime it, then go on to the next thought, etc. Or speak a thought, then the entire group mime it.
13. Chair exercise -- move on punctuation marks -- stop completely to

13. **speak.**

14. **Kick box on final word at end of each line or thought.**

15. **Sitting back to back -- one speaks a thought through, the other states "what was said" in their own words, then states "what I'm going to say" -- then responds with a complete thought -- repeat.**

16. **Sit on floor -- rock back and forth gently while speaking the text. Feel the weight of your body going into the floor, plus let your voice lower itself in your body.**

17. **Spread books around the room. While speaking the text, collect the books and organize them on a shelf or desk in specific order. Notice how the language takes care of itself as you accomplish the physical objective. Make the objective specific, let that be your focus.**

18. **Draw a picture while speaking the text: (a) for meditative text draw something from your childhood, like a house you once lived in; (b) for fussy text draw a carpet pattern, or anything with a pattern; (c) for active text draw what you see out the window or across the room. Precise concentration leads to precise handling of the words.**

19. **For scene work: the back to back exercise where the non-speaker simply repeats one word per line. The speaker then repeats the speech emphasizing those words. New thoughts will emerge. Excellent exercise—takes time.**

20. **Back to back -- before you speak say "He/she said to me that ... (in your own words), then "I think I'll tell her/him that ... (in your words)." Then say the Shakespeare line. Continue. This exercise makes you clarify for yourself what you are hearing and saying. Excellent exercise: takes time.**

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21. **Roll over--two people (a scene) -- rolling half a turn, toward or away from your partner, with each thought. You have to reach out -- reach over space -- so you tend to become precise.**

22. Drawing a picture -- two people -- while speaking the scene. The language will become unforced, different. Very good exercise.

23. Two people -- resistance -- x speaks to y -- but y won't stand still -- x try to speak into y's eyes. This frees thought patterns.

24. To heighten suspense of a scene: two people make a square in which to play their scene. Two other people stand to each side like sentries. While the scene is playing, the sentries move at random. Whenever they cross the borders of the square, the actors must pause and wait for them to pass.

25. There are a great many exercises on pages 163 – 165 in Clues to Acting Shakespeare.

SOME SPEECH PATTERNS

The rebound -- echo -- example the "mock" speech in HV. Play the echo words -- climb the ladder.

Tropes -- words which turn the meaning or significance of the general use of the word. Metaphor and irony and ambiguity. Using words in a figurative sense. Trope means a "turning."

Trochee – foot of two syllables with the first stressed and second unstressed.

Climax -- building the ladder with words or sounds to the peak.

Patterns of words -- antithesis, etc -- sets or pairs of contracting ideas -- dig these out and play them. The meaning is revealed through the patterns, finding them simplifies the complexity of the text.

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Trumpet -- push your passion through your trumpet (your voice/mouth) to the ear -- just like a musical trumpet.

Acting is always the same -- but preparing to act Shakespeare is different

from preparing to act realism or musical comedy.

"The trouble with Shakespeare is that it goes on without you." (PB)

You can read lines exactly the same way every performance, and still be immediate and spontaneous -- because the "impulse" to speak is fresh each time. Technique doesn't change -- listening and responding honestly is the key.

Never look for how you want to play a role -- but for what the role requires.

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Good luck!