**Music 9504a / 9841a: ACTING FOR SINGERS**  
**Fall 2017**  
Michael Cavanagh  
Room 227, Music Building

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Class time: Thursdays, 9:30am – 12:30pm

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**  
A practical approach to the development of dramatic skills used by singers in theatrical genres. Students will gain an understanding of different acting techniques and their applications in sung storytelling (Half course: Three hours lecture/laboratory)  
Prerequisites: None

**COURSE CONTENT**  
1. Comprehension (identifying and understanding the essential elements that combine in the ideal singing actor)  
2. Preparation (learning techniques of role study, research, developing a backstory and understanding the context of one’s character within a narrative)  
3. Projection (gaining access to the multitude of expressive tools available to a performer beyond the voice)  
4. Connection (developing a relationship with the audience whether in recital, staged performance or audition)  
5. Co-operation (understanding and utilizing techniques for sharing the stage)  
6. Interpretation (creating different perspectives on any given theatrical moment)

If time permits, other topics that may be explored include:  
- Combat (building an arsenal of safe, repeatable and credible moments of violence, passion and exuberance)  
- Recit/Dialogue (dismantling one’s fear and/or loathing of these essential dramatic passages)  
- Stagecraft (the dos and don’ts of navigating the practicalities of stage business)

**NATURE OF THE COURSE**  
Acting for Singers is designed to introduce and develop techniques of dramatic preparation and performance. The ultimate goal is the integration of these tools to allow a student to begin the process of becoming an authentic, available and consistent actor. He or she will understand how these dramatic abilities can join forces with their skills as a singer and exponentially increase the power, ease, and enjoyment of their performances.

The classes will be structured with equal parts instruction, discussion and participation. Exercises in the various techniques will form the backdrop to all sessions, allowing the course to unfold like a series of workshops. During warm-ups and introductory exercises, ongoing question-and-answer sessions will be held, guided by the students’ individual interests. During these discussions, regular attention will be paid to the expectations in the professional world (audition and rehearsal practices, agents, unions, etc).
OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

The students will be expected:
1. To become familiar with the vernacular of acting in order to work with directors and other actors in an articulate and effective manner.
2. To gain an appreciation of different genres of sung storytelling and begin (or expand) their experience with them.
3. To differentiate the unique styles of performance that disparate pieces of theatre demand (baroque gesture, commedia, melodrama, naturalism, surrealism).
4. To become aware of their own strengths and limitations in the dramatic field and how these can be built on or redressed.
5. To understand that reliable acting technique can be developed in much the same way as vocal technique, with tangible results.
6. To establish or enhance the confidence that comes with building a solid foundation of acting technique.
7. To contribute to the process of building a performance, as opposed to the passive approach of awaiting instruction or direction.
8. To encourage and support others around them in a positive, generous manner at all times.
9. To foster creativity in themselves and others in all of their artistic endeavours.
10. To display bravery in the classroom, the studio, and the theatre.
11. To be decisive and take initiative.
12. To set high standards for achievement and strive to exceed them.

ATTENDANCE
Attendance and punctuality are mandatory. Students are required to attend all classes. Acceptable exceptions will be illness or personal crisis. Documentation may have to be provided. Students will be expected to participate in all exercises unless prior permission has been given.

DRESS
Students should be prepared for physical movement in all classes and should dress accordingly. Contact with the floor (kneeling, lying down, rolling around) should be anticipated in every case.

COURSE FORMAT
Each class will begin with a warm-up; stretching, movement, some vocalizing. Instruction will follow, with reference material handed out as necessary. A discussion of the session topic involving all students is next, followed by exercises allowing them to incorporate the ideas and techniques of the day. Each session will end with further discussions and/or demonstrations by the students themselves, along with a summary of the lesson topic by the instructor.
SUGGESTED READINGS
Stanislavski, Constantin. *Stanislavski on Opera*. Theatre Arts Books 1975
Bergman, Tracy and Moore, Alison. *Acting the Song: Performance skills for the Musical Theatre*. Allworth Press, 2008
Sutcliff, Tom. *Believing in Opera*. Faber and Faber, 1996

ACCOMODATIONS FOR MEDICAL ILLNESS AND ACADEMIC OFFENCES
The Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness may be found at https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm.
Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, as found at www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf.

EVALUATION

In-Class Work – MMus students: 50%, DMA candidates 40%
Students will be evaluated on their comprehension of the material presented in class, their participation in the exercises and demonstrations, and the improvement demonstrated in their abilities.

Gesamtquelquechose (Analytical Presentation / Performance) – 30%
Students will present an analysis of a character from a work of sung theatre, demonstrating their understanding of the role preparation techniques discussed in class. Students will also perform an aria, brief scene, song cycle or other acceptable theatrical passage to the class, demonstrating their integration of the performance techniques discussed and developed during the course. This should be the same piece used as the subject of their analysis. MMus students’ presentations must be approximately 10 minutes in duration; DMA candidates’ presentations must be approximately 20 minutes long. In both cases, the students must lead a brief question-and-answer session at the conclusion of their presentations.

Final Paper – MMus students 20%, DMA candidates 30%
Students will deliver an academic paper summarizing their analysis and detailing their research of the same character from their Analytical Presentation. The paper will provide evidence of original scholarship, as well as the ability to present arguments and make informed judgments based upon the techniques of role preparation discussed during the course. The papers from DMA candidates must be substantially greater in length and content than those of MMus students, to satisfy higher expectations of scholarship.
COURSE TIMETABLE

Class 1 September 7
Introductions, course discussion, exercises: *The ABCDEs of It All*

September 14
Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Our Arthurian Quest (Preparation)*

September 21
Instruction, discussion, exercises: *The Superhero Sing-orama (Projection)*

September 28
Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Empathy is Everything (Connection)*

**DEADLINE for submitting subject of Gesamtquelquechose Presentations**

October 5
Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Get Out of Your Bubble, Boy! (Co-operation)*

November 16
Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Making Bad Acting Work for You (Interpretation)*

November 23
Instruction, discussion, exercises: *Who’s afraid of Recit and Dialogue?*

November 30
- Instruction, discussion, exercises:
  - Presentations begin

December 7
- Summary, discussion, review)
  - Presentations continue
  – All papers due.