



SONG INTERPRETATION: THE SINGING ACTOR

Fall 2018

F 10:00am-1:00pm

Shafer 302

Chauntee' Schuler Irving

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Course Description

Song Interpretation is a research and workshop-based musical theatre course designed to introduce students to the analytical and performative demands of acting a song. The course aims to give students a working knowledge of music theory methods, exercises, and essential aesthetics in vocal production and vocal wellness, as well as in-depth study of script analysis, score analysis, and character development for the musical. Researching and physically preparing songs and scores from various musical genres is the primary focus of the course with preparation of song pieces for song books and audition settings being a secondary focus.

Course Objectives

1. Articulate and demonstrate techniques of music theory, vocal production, and vocal wellness for the musical theatre genre.
2. Establish a vocabulary and working knowledge of concepts surrounding script and score analysis as well as character development within a song.
3. Analyze and evaluate personal work and classmates' work based on assigned criteria and positive constructive feedback.

Required Texts

An Actor's Companion: Tools for the Working Actor (June 2015) by Seth Barrish

Music Theory for Musical Theatre by John Bell and Steven R. Chicurel

Acting the Song: Performance Skills for the Musical Theatre by Tracey Moore Allison Bergman

Participation and Performance Expectations

1. Basic working knowledge of piano notes and sheet music is essential. Elementary level music skills are necessary in approaching songs for performance. Understanding basic scales on the piano/keyboard, bars, measures, staff, and notations are prerequisites to course. If such knowledge is not exhibited, the student will have to attempt re-entry to the course at another time.
2. Memorization and consistent personal execution of instructor designed physical and vocal warmups is mandatory. Comprehensive knowledge and regular practice of class warmup is essential to succeed with the physical and vocal demands of the class. If the student is not warmed up prior to class, dismissal will follow.
3. Four (4) songs will be chosen as working pieces to be workshopped and presented in class. Two (2) contrasting songs will be selections from the working list of musicals chosen by the instructor. The additional two (2) songs will be contrasting selections chosen by the student.
4. Full participation in all discussions and presentations including but not limited to physical and vocal preparation, preparation of reading materials, and a professional attitude toward self, classmates, and instructor.

Written Assignments

1. Four (4) two to three (2-3) page research papers. There will be one paper for each song. The papers will focus on pertinent elements that pertain to historical context and intent, understanding of the performative and creative elements of the musical, as well as a working exploration of analytical structures pertaining to the score and song. Topics and questions posed by the instructor for song preparation can be added to assignment as well.
2. Four (4) written song analysis charts. Each analysis will be a written map of how the student plans to perform and interpret the piece. Copies of sheet music and typed lyrics are expected.

"Everyone has a beautiful voice. You just have to know how to use it." - Jo Estill

"When you're deciding how to approach a song, you have to know which turn in the road you're going to take. Of course, you can leave yourself a fair amount of leeway, take things a little faster or slower or move a little closer to the right or the left. But if you're going to make things come alive each time, all the elements of the performance have to be in the right place on the map--rhythm, lyrics, drama, emotional memory and so forth." -Barbara Cook

Grading

Participation 20%

Vocal Preparation and Execution 20%

Script and Score Analysis 20%

Research Papers 20%

Song Presentations 20%

Grading Scale

A: 93-100%;

B: 85-92%;

C: 77-84%;

D: 69-76%;

F: 68% and under

Grading Expectations

- A- Enthusiastic participation in all classroom work and discussions. Thoughtfully prepared presentations. Timely and professional completion of written work.
- B- Standard participation in discussions and classroom work. Basic and timely preparation for presentation material. Timely written work that lacks in revision and pertinent content.
- C- Little participation in discussions. Consistently distracted participation in classroom work. Unprepared presentation material. Late written assignments with no little to no revision and professionalism. Disrespect of classmates in any way will result in an immediate grade to reduction with a “C” as maximum grade for the semester.
- D- No preparation of reading materials for discussion. No participation in classroom work. Missing or incomplete written assignments. Lacks respect for classmates and classroom environment.
- F- No participation or written assignments. Complete lack of care and consideration for entirety of classwork, written assignments, and classmates. Regularly disrespectful to classmates and classroom environment.

Classroom Etiquette

1. Cell phones are not permitted in class as our classroom is a professional working space. Please place cell phones in the designated holding area until class is complete. Notify instructor if there is an emergency and arrangements will be made for you to handle such needs.
2. Respect for fellow students is expected at all times. The instructor reserves the right to remove any student from the classroom, which he/she deems as having disruptive. Respectful conduct includes and is not limited to: classroom work such as acting and vocal exercises, presentations, written assignments, discussions, out of classroom rehearsals, and any general discussion of the work presented by fellow class members.
3. Students are expected to exercise professional discipline during any and all warm-ups, exercises, character work, song presentations, and discussions. Professional discipline includes but is not limited to: being attentive and respectful during times when teacher or fellow student is leading class in warm-up, discussion, or acting work. Exercising professional audience etiquette—remaining silent, taking notes, and giving full attention to presenter during acting presentations. Laughing, talking, joking, or side conversations will not be permitted during classwork that does not pertain to the lesson, exercise, acting work, or discussion.
4. Attendance is mandatory. Each student is allowed two (2) absences for the semester. After two (2) absences, the student's final grade will drop one full letter grade with each additional absence. Class begins promptly at 10:00am and any entry after that time constitutes a late absence. There will be no entry into class after 10:10am as such lateness will result in an absence for the day. Two (2) late attendances to class will result in one (1) absence.

Dress Code

1. Students must wear black sweat pants, dance pants, exercise pants or tights; unitards are permitted.
2. Pants and tights must extend to the ankle. No shorts.
3. Pants and tights must be worn at the waist, not on the hips.
4. Pants and tights must be form fitting, not baggy.
5. From the waist up students must wear a black t-shirt with sleeves and without graphics. No tank tops.
6. T-shirts must be long enough so that when hands are raised above the head no skin is showing at the midriff. T-shirts must be form fitting and not baggy.
7. All students must wear supportive underwear.
8. All jewelry, including body jewelry (rings, watches, necklaces, earrings, studs, barbells, gauges, etc.) must be removed before entering class.
9. Long hair must be tied back unless the student is asked to wear it down.

VCU Code of Conduct

Please refer to the link below to read and understand all expectations and requirements of TheatreVCU, VCUarts departments, and VCU. <http://arts.vcu.edu/theatre/files/2012/09/Student-Handbook-18-19.pdf>

Calendar

Friday

- Aug 24 Introductions and Syllabus Overview, Begin Warmup Series, Music Theory Prep
- Aug 31 Music Theory Basics, Introduction to Estill Method and Vocal Wellness
- Sep 7 Fitzmaurice and Estill Review, Lecture – Researching the Musical, Song #1/Research Assignment
- Sep 14 Lecture – Understanding the Musical Score, Song #1 Showings, Analysis #1 Assignment (**Research Paper #1 Due**)
- Sep 21 Song #1 2nd Showings and Workshop (**Analysis Paper #1 Due**)
- Sep 28 Song #1 Final Showings, Feedback and Discussion, Song #2/Research Assignment and Discussion
- Oct 5 Lecture –Script and Score Analysis, Song #2 Showing and In Class Analysis Assignment (**Research Paper #2 Due**)
- Oct 12 Song #2 Final Showings, Lecture – Acting the Lyric and Creating Character (**Analysis Paper #2 Due**)
- Oct 19 Fall Break
- Oct 26 Vocal Check-In, Song Selection/Song Book Discussion, One-on Ones
- Nov 2 Song #3 Showings and Discussion (**Research and Analysis Paper #3 Due**)
- Nov 9 Song #3 2nd Showing, Lecture – *An Actor's Companion*
- Nov 16 Song #3 Final Showing and Feedback, Panel – Problems in Musical Theatre, Song #4/Final Assignments
- Nov 23 Thanksgiving Break
- Nov 30 Song #4 and Finals Workshop (**Research and Analysis Paper #4 Due**)
- Dec 7 Final Presentations



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STUDENT CONTRACT

The instructor reserves the right to update or change this syllabus and/or class schedule at any time throughout the semester. No additional assignments will be added to the syllabus.

I have read the entire syllabus and understand the policies, requirements, and consequences contained herein.

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____