

Weekend Training Intensive Syllabus

Overall Weekend Objectives

- To spark curiosity about our work
- To build the actor's toolkit for working on Shakespeare's plays

Schedule: Friday 6:30–10:00 p.m.

■ Introduction [30 min.] 6:30-7:00

Objectives: For them to know us, for us to know them, and for them to know each other; to start the work as a group

- **Circle up**
- **Check in**
 - Name
 - Duration of time with MSC/Year in school
 - Prompt: Shameless brag, something you wouldn't normally share with a group, or similar
 - Keep it deep but brief
- **Lay out structure of weekend**
- **Ball game** [20 min.]
 - Ensemble building
 - Introduce play
 - Introduce actor tools
 - Commitment
 - Connection
 - Generosity
 - Specificity

■ History [40 min.] 7:00-7:40

Objectives: To give students a historical context of Shakespeare's plays applicable to contemporary productions of those plays; to learn history that affects our work

- **Elizabethan Society**
 - Elizabethan world picture: Elizabethans believed in a **highly ordered world**. Status mattered a great deal. Change in station wasn't part of this worldview, which affects both plots and staging.
 - Elizabethan England was an **aural society**—not everyone knew English well, and most people couldn't read.
 - Elizabethan England was a more physical world, and Elizabethan actors were **more physically aware**.

Dates and Times:

Friday 6:30 p.m.–10:00 p.m.
Saturday 10:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m.
Sunday 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Participant Numbers:

8-10 minimum
30 maximum (up to 12 performers,
the rest as auditors)

Info and Materials

Given to MSC in Advance:

- Information about the school's theater curriculum
- Information about participants

Given to Participants in Advance:

- Preparation packet
 - Shakespeare's history
 - Expectations for the weekend
 - Be memorized
 - Know your play (who's who, what's happening, given circumstances, etc.)

Given to Participants Afterward:

- Exit survey
 - Bibliography of resources
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Notes

- **The Elizabethan Stage**
 - Elizabethan **actors were independent**. They didn't rely on a director. (There wasn't one.) We're training actors to be more independent like this—to think and make decisions.
 - The **fourth wall didn't exist yet**. Audience interaction was integral to theater. Audiences were an active part of the performance.
 - Shakespeare's company performed on a **thrust stage in full daylight**.
 - All the roles in Shakespeare's plays (male and female) were written for men, so **gender didn't matter** for casting. Gender (and race) shouldn't matter now either.
 - Actors learned on an **apprenticeship** basis. Young boys played small (often female) roles and graduated to larger (often male) roles as they got older.
 - There are **limited roles for women** in Shakespeare's plays because of the structure of the company.
 - **Verse** was the only way to write a play at the time. Shakespeare's plays are singular in genius, but not in form.
- **"Role" exercise** as segue

■ **Break** [10 min.] 7:40-7:50

■ **Scansion and Verse (Structure Part 1)** [60 min.] 7:50-8:50

Objectives: To introduce the concept/tool of scansion; to explain why we scan, how it differs from scanning in English class, and how it affects our performance

- **Why we scan:** Physically scoring our scripts makes up for the fact that we're not as deeply connected to the rhythms of our language as Elizabethans were (as an aural society).
- **How it differs from scanning in English class:** As actors, scanning Shakespeare's text helps us discover ways the structure of the verse can inform our choices onstage.
- **How it affects our performance:** It helps us make sense of the language.
- Why did Shakespeare write in this **rhythm**?
 - It's the natural rhythm of English.
 - It's also the rhythm of a heartbeat.
- **Verse is heightened language.**
 - It's usually reserved for high-status characters or lovers.
 - It's the language of love, passion, and royalty.
 - Prose (which we'll talk about later) is usually for low-status characters, comedic characters, and servants.
- **Intro to Iambic Pentameter**
 - What is a foot?
 - Stressed and unstressed syllables
 - Line endings
 - Read examples with no stress and relative stress
- **Marking scripts**
 - Demonstrate line marking/script marking
 - Show how to find stresses in the lines
 - Operative words at ends of lines
 - Emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers, only better and worse choices (based on clarity of text)

■ **Break** [10 min.] 8:50-9:00

■ **Direct Address** [45 min.] 9:00-9:45

Objectives: To form a connection with the audience; to relieve the adversarial relationship with the audience; to get comfortable addressing the audience directly

- **Basics of direct address**
 - There is no fourth wall. We're not breaking it—it doesn't exist.
 - Talk to the audience, not over them.
- **Joke exercise**
 - Everyone gets up to tell a joke.
 - Everyone has permission to fail—not everyone will get a laugh. The goal is just to get up and talk to people.
- **Text exercise**
 - Everyone gets up to speak a piece of text (two times).
 - First time, do it with no eye contact.
 - Second time, do it with eye contact.
- **Share observations about the experience**

■ **Check Out** [15 min.] 9:45-10:00

Objectives: To reflect on the first night of work; to reinforce something to take away

Schedule: Saturday 10:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m.

■ **Check In and Set Up Day** [20 min.] 10:00-10:20

Objectives: To reflect on the previous day's work; to set expectations for the present day's work

■ **Physical and Vocal Awareness** [20 min.] 10:20-10:40

Objectives: To facilitate individual physical awareness; to experience being in your body and on your voice

- Influenced by **Linklater**
- Wake up **body and voice** (instructor choice)
 - Physically engage the whole body
 - Vibration
 - Resonance
 - Articulators
 - Personal stretching

■ **Spatial and Relational Awareness** [20 min.] 10:40-11:00

Objectives: To facilitate and expand awareness to the space and the people in the space

- Start with **milling and seething**
- Move from **internal to external**
 - Think about how movement in space affects storytelling
 - Think about how you move in relation to others
 - Think about how movements in relation tell a story

■ **Ensemble Awareness** [20 min.] 11:00-11:20

Objectives: To facilitate an openness to the impulses of the group; to start collaborating on an impulse level rather than an intellectual level

- **Ensemble games** (options below)
 - Circle—pass sound and movement
 - Group songs
 - Viewpoints work

- Dragon and shield
- Flocking
- Circle counting
- Corner to corner
- Balancing the room
- **Improv/collaborative movement**
 - Turning your back to the audience
 - Working diagonals

■ **Break** [10 min.] 11:20-11:30

■ **Scansion and Verse (Structure Part 2) + Folio** [90 min.] 11:30-1:00

Objectives: To shed light on exploiting opportunities presented with irregular verse as a tool; to begin to recognize the possibility of using the first folio as an actor score (like a musical score)

- **Irregular verse** (and what opportunities it presents) [45 min.]
 - Feminine endings
 - Double onsets
 - Epic caesura
 - Shared lines
 - Line endings
- **First Folio** [45 min.]
 - What is a folio? What is the folio?
 - How does it differ from “modern text” editions?
 - Modern editors have made choices in the text
 - Sometimes modern editors have changed things
 - We won’t ever really know what is really Shakespeare’s work and what was changed after the fact
 - How to use the folio as a reference
 - Punctuation
 - Capitalization
 - Extra letters/alternate spellings
 - When to breathe
 - Line endings—gives the emotional sense of the speech
 - Grammar—gives the intellectual sense of the speech
 - Example: Hermione (*Winter’s Tale*)
 - How does this approach change the way you prepare for rehearsal?

■ **Lunch** [60 min.] 1:00-2:00

■ **Game** [5 min.] 2:00-2:05

Objectives: To refocus the group after lunch; to prepare for the afternoon’s work

■ **Status/Concrete Improv Staging** [45 min.] 2:05-2:50

Objectives: To illuminate text, character, and story through status, physicality, and nonverbal storytelling; to reflect the Elizabethan world picture accurately

- Status vs. rank
- Status games
 - Status tableaux—join on one by one
 - Card games
 - A-B status lines
- How does status affect playing Shakespeare?

- Concrete improve staging
 - How to take focus/rank/status
 - How to give focus/rank/status
 - Nonverbal storytelling—showing relationships physically

■ **Prose and Rhetoric** [60 min.] 2:50-3:50

Objectives: To present yet another way to think about how language is structured and how it can affect performance; to explore rhetoric as a tool for activating argument/persuasion, convincing the audience to see your character's point of view; to gain clarity of thought (for the actor and the audience)

- **What is rhetoric?**
 - The counterpoint to logic
 - An emotional appeal
 - The art of persuasion/emotional manipulation
 - Example: Marc Antony (*Julius Caesar*)
- **History** of rhetoric
 - Greek and Roman roots—as old as Western thought
 - Shakespeare wrote this way because of his schooling
- **Rhetorical Structures:** BORE
 - Balance
 - Omission
 - Repetition
 - Expansion
- Rhetoric in **Prose**
 - When you strip away the structure of poetry, what remains is rhetoric.
 - In prose, speech still has rhythm—vowels and consonants still count—but rhetoric shapes your argument
 - Lining out text
 - Example: Benedick (*Much Ado About Nothing*)
- How to **physicalize** rhetorical structures

■ **Break** [10 min.] 3:50-4:00

■ **Read Scenes** [20 min. per scene] 4:00-6:40

Objectives: To execute concepts learned earlier

- Each scene gets up to read (sitting at music stands)
- Facilitators ask questions about...
 - Characters
 - Motivations
 - Given circumstances
- Facilitators clarify actor questions
 - Share info about where to look things up
 - OED
 - Lexicon
 - Editors' notes
- Everyone in the room should be an active audience.

■ **Check Out** [20 min.] 6:40-7:00

Objectives: To reflect on the second day of work; to reinforce something learned and something to work on

Schedule: Sunday 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Notes

■ Check In and Set Up Day [15 min.] 10:00-10:15

Objectives: To reflect on the previous day's work; to set expectations for the present day's work

■ Warm Up [25 min.] 10:15-10:40

Objectives: To warm up our bodies and voices to support the day's work

- Wake up **body and voice** (instructor choice)
 - Physically engage the whole body
 - Vibration
 - Resonance
 - Articulators
 - Personal stretching
 - Abbreviated milling and seething
 - Short group game if time

■ Work Scenes [20 min. per scene] 10:40-1:00

Objectives: To continue executing concepts learned on previous days

- Facilitators work each scene on its feet
- Everyone in the room should be an active audience.

■ Lunch [30 min.] 1:00-1:30

■ Work with Partners [30 min.] 1:30-2:00

Objectives: To apply adjustments made by facilitators; to experiment with techniques observed in other groups' scene work

- Scenes work on their own while facilitators circulate.
- Everyone in the room should remain actively working on their scene, not socializing.

■ Final Scene Showings [15 min. per scene] 2:00-4:15

Objectives: To utilize techniques learned over the weekend to present lively, informed scenes

- Each group presents, followed by feedback from group and facilitators.
- Everyone in the room should be an active audience when they are not presenting.

■ Wrap Up and Check Out [45 min.] 4:15-5:00

Objectives: To share what made an impact; to reinforce participants' experiences

- Check out
- Exit survey
- Final questions