

THEATRE II: ACTING THE METHOD CURRICULUM MAP

Unit/Topic: Audition

Auditioning is an important skill actors need to learn and continuously refine for their continued professional advancement. In the world of film, television, and theatre, auditioning is akin to a job interview – actors must sell their unique talents to the auditors (directors, producers, etc.), convincing them that they are the right person for the role. Understanding how to audition will help high school students market themselves for roles in amateur and professional theatre. After studying casting director Michael Shurtleff's invaluable book *Audition*, students will study the play *The Exonerated*, memorize a monologue from it, and perform that monologue for the class in a "mock" audition. Also in this unit, students will learn how to create a theatrical resume and what the requirements are for a professional headshot.

Standards and Evidence of Learning (Learning Targets/I Can Statements)

HSAC.1PE: Develop a complete character using physical, emotional, and vocal techniques in a memorized scene or monologue.

HSAC.4RE: Justify and analyze personal artistic choices made throughout the artistic process and after self-evaluation.

HSAC.3CO: Integrate other art forms and academic disciplines in a theatrical experience.

HSAC.4CO: Analyze a theatrical work in the context of its time period and culture.

- I can identify the major issues and themes present in *The Exonerated* and connect them to the American criminal justice system.

Time Frame/Pacing:

This unit typically lasts between 5 - 6 weeks.

Instructional Resources

Audition by Michael Shurtleff
The Complete Professional Audition: A Commonsense Guide to Auditioning for Musicals and Plays by Darren Cohen, with Michael Perilstein
The Exonerated by Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen
The Exonerated Research Project
The Exonerated Monologue Performance
Resume / Headshot

- I can use Michael Shurtleff's 12 Guideposts to analyze my monologue, which includes defining an objective for my character.
- I can actively pursue that objective during my performance of the scene by raising the stakes and urgency.
- I can manipulate my body and voice to express a character.
- I can demonstrate my knowledge of audition skills during a "mock" audition held in class.
- I can create a professional theatrical resume and supply an appropriate headshot.
- I can provide feedback to my peers using appropriate terminology, with the goal of improving their performances.
- I can evaluate my own performance, articulating not only why I made certain choices but also how I can improve for my next performance.

Unit/Topic: Open Scenes

Contentless scenes often consist of A – B or 1 – 2 dialogues and are 'open' – in terms of the characterization, given circumstances, objectives, obstacles, and relationships – to the interpretation of the performers. In this unit, students will discover the "requirements for a good action" from *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*, then apply what they have learned to three open scenes. With partners, they will perform two open scenes provided by the instructor. After those performances, students will be given the opportunity to collaborate with one of their peers to write their own open scene. This playwriting exercise will culminate in their performance of a scene authored by another group.

Standards and Evidence of Learning (Learning Targets/I Can Statements)

HSAC.1CR: Identify the elements of a plot structure and write an act using those elements.

HSAC.1PE: Develop a complete character using physical, emotional, and vocal techniques in a memorized scene or monologue.

Time Frame/Pacing:

This unit typically lasts between 3 - 4 weeks.

Instructional Resources

"What Did You Do Last Night?" Open Scene

"Are We There?" Open Scene

A Practical Handbook for the Actor by Melissa Bruder, Lee Michael Cohn, Madeleine Olnek, Nathaniel Pollack, Robert Prveito, Scott Zigler

HSAC.4RE: Justify and analyze personal artistic choices made throughout the artistic process and after self-evaluation

- I can use requirements of a good action (objective) defined in *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* to choose an appropriate objective for each of the open scenes
- I can actively pursue that objective during my performance of each open scene by raising the stakes and urgency.
- I can manipulate my body and voice to express a character.
- I can apply my knowledge of plot structure to the writing of an open scene.
- I can provide feedback to my peers using appropriate terminology, with the goal of improving their performances.
- I can evaluate my own performance, articulating not only why I made certain choices but also how I can improve for my next performance.

Unit/Topic: Modern Theatre

In this unit, students will study a contemporary play, *She Kills Monsters: Young Adventurers Edition*, through reading and analysis. They will examine the play's dramatic structure and demonstrate their understanding of it through a creative improvisation exercise. After selecting a scene from the play to perform with a partner or partners, students will evaluate the scene and delineate their character's backstory and their character's relationship to the other character(s) in the scene. In addition, they will use the checklists / questions in *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* to define their character's physical and essential actions (objectives). The unit will culminate in a performance of the scenes for the class.

Standards and Evidence of Learning (Learning Targets/I Can Statements)

HSAC.3CR: Discuss the artistic choices a playwright makes in a dramatic work and how these influence the interpretation and message of the work.

Time Frame/Pacing:

This unit typically lasts between 4 - 5 weeks.

Instructional Resources

She Kills Monsters: Young Adventurers Edition by Qui Nguyen
A Practical Handbook for the Actor by Melissa Bruder, Lee Michael Cohn, Madeleine Olnek, Nathaniel Pollack, Robert Prveito, Scott Zigler

HSAC.1PE: Develop a complete character using physical, emotional, and vocal techniques in a memorized scene or monologue.

HSAC.4RE: Justify and analyze personal artistic choices made throughout the artistic process and after self-evaluation.

HSAC.4CO: Analyze a theatrical work in the context of its time period and culture.

- I can demonstrate my understanding of *She Kills Monsters*' dramatic structure and historical context by creating and performing an improvisation that delineates its story.
- I can use the requirements of a good action (objective) defined in *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* to choose an appropriate physical and essential action for the scene.
- I can actively pursue that objective during my performance of each open scene by raising the stakes and urgency.
- I can manipulate my body and voice to express a character.
- I can provide feedback to my peers using appropriate terminology, with the goal of improving their performances.
- I can evaluate my own performance, articulating not only why I made certain choices but also how I can improve for my next performance.

She Kills Monsters Performance

Unit/Topic: The Method and Realism

In this unit, students will learn about the development of Stanislavsky's acting system – specifically his concepts of actions, given circumstances, and the magic “if” – and how it was used to create believable characters in realistic plays. They will study the history of the theatrical arts in Russia and Europe from the time of Tsar Alexander I (circa 1801) to the Communist Revolution of 1917. Students will gain an understanding of how various forces impacted the arts in the 19th and early 20th centuries, steering them away from the dominant movements of Romanticism and Melodrama and toward Realism's reflection of life as it was lived.

Time Frame/Pacing:

This unit typically lasts 2 weeks.

Standards and Evidence of Learning (Learning Targets/I Can Statements)

HSAC.1CO: Analyze how cultural, social, and emotional perspectives influence audience interpretation and response to a dramatic or theatrical work.

HSAC.2CO: Examine and explain the impact of social, political, and technological trends on key theatrical figures and works in various eras and cultures.

- I can explicate how Realism developed as a direct refutation of Romanticism and Melodrama.
- I can connect social, political, and technological trends to Realism's development.
- I can defend Konstantin Stanislavsky's acting system as a necessary response to the advent of Realism.

Instructional Resources

History of the Theatre by Oscar Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy (excerpt)
An Actor's Work by Konstantin Stanislavsky, translated by Jean Benedetti
Russia, Land of the Tsars (clips)

Handouts
Worksheets

Unit/Topic: *Uncle Vanya* and *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*

After reading and studying a play that abides by the tenets of Realism, Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, students will select scenes from the play to perform. Using Stanislavsky's *An Actor's Work* as a guide for their character analyses, they will examine the given circumstances of the play, as well as their character's motivations (objectives), and define their magic "if." This textual analysis will culminate in a performance for the instructor and their peers. After their *Uncle Vanya* performances, students will study *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* – a contemporary comedy inspired by Chekhovian themes that won the Tony Award for Best Play in 2013 – and compare / contrast it with Chekhov's play. Lastly, they will perform scenes from it for the class.

Standards and Evidence of Learning (Learning Targets/I Can Statements)

HSAC.3CR: Discuss the artistic choices a playwright makes in a

Time Frame/Pacing:

This unit typically lasts between 4 - 5 weeks.

Instructional Resources

An Actor's Work by Konstantin Stanislavsky, translated by Jean Benedetti

dramatic work and how these influence the interpretation and message of the work.

HSAC.5CR: Compare and contrast the works of two playwrights from two distinct historic periods.

HSAC.1PE: Develop a complete character using physical, emotional, and vocal techniques in a memorized scene or monologue.

HSAC.4RE: Justify and analyze personal artistic choices made throughout the artistic process and after self-evaluation.

HSAC.2CO: Examine and explain the impact of social, political, and technological trends on key theatrical figures and works in various eras and cultures.

HSAC.4CO: Analyze a theatrical work in the context of its time period and culture.

- I can identify the major issues and themes present in *Uncle Vanya* and *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* and explain how they continue to resonate with modern audiences.
- I can appraise the artistic choices made by Anton Chekhov and Christopher Durang in their plays and discuss how these influence the interpretation and message of the work.
- I can evaluate the similarities and differences between *Uncle Vanya* and *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*.
- I can actively pursue that objective during my performance of each open scene by raising the stakes and urgency.
- I can manipulate my body and voice to express a character.
- I can provide feedback to my peers using appropriate terminology, with the goal of improving their performances.
- I can evaluate my own performance, articulating not only why I made certain choices but also how I can improve for my next performance.

Uncle Vanya by Anton Chekhov, adapted by Annie Baker
Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike by Christopher Durang
Uncle Vanya Performance
Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike Performance

In this unit, students will apply their understanding of Konstantin Stanislavsky's "Method" to plays from antiquity. After learning about the theatre of the Greeks, specifically the development of tragedy, the class will read and study *Medea*, a Greek tragedy written by Euripides. Then, they will be divided into groups, and each group will decide how they would produce *Medea* for a contemporary audience. The groups will create a production proposal for their play and "pitch" their ideas to the instructor and their peers. These presentations will include short performances from *Medea*. Students will be responsible for action and character analyses for their performances.

Standards and Evidence of Learning (Learning Targets/I Can Statements)

HSAC.3CR: Discuss the artistic choices a playwright makes in a dramatic work and how these influence the interpretation and message of the work.

HSAC.4CR: Examine a given text and create design choices based on content and context of the script, time period and themes when provided with a budget-specific performance space.

HSAC.1PE: Develop a complete character using physical, emotional, and vocal techniques in a memorized scene or monologue.

HSAC.4RE: Justify and analyze personal artistic choices made throughout the artistic process and after self-evaluation.

HSAC.5RE: After reading a play, compare and contrast factors that actors and designers would consider adapting for staging different physical settings and contemporary social influences.

HSAC.2CO: Examine and explain the impact of social, political, and technological trends on key theatrical figures and works in various eras and cultures.

HSAC.4CO: Analyze a theatrical work in the context of its time period and culture.

This unit typically lasts 3 - 4 weeks.

Instructional Resources

Medea by Euripides, translated by Robin Robertson
Medea Group Project and Performance
Handouts
Worksheets

- I can identify the major issues and themes present in *Medea* and demonstrate how they continue to resonate with modern audiences.
- I can examine *Medea* and develop designs for a proposed performance in a specific theatrical setting based on the content and context of the script, time period, and themes.
- I can actively pursue that objective during my performance of each open scene by raising the stakes and urgency.
- I can manipulate my body and voice to express a character.
- I can provide feedback to my peers using appropriate terminology, with the goal of improving their performances.
- I can evaluate my own performance, articulating not only why I made certain choices but also how I can improve for my next performance.

Unit/Topic: Shakespearean England

Students will take a tour of the time in which William Shakespeare lived, Elizabethan England, and see how it impacted the writing of his plays. They will learn about Shakespeare's life, from growing up in Stratford-upon-Avon to his success as an actor and playwright in the thriving metropolis of London. Students will study the different kinds of plays Shakespeare wrote, comedies, histories, tragedies, as well as all the subcategories. How to perform the prose and verse Shakespeare used in his plays and how he wrote them for his two primary performance spaces – Blackfriars and the Globe – will also be discussed.

Standards and Evidence of Learning (Learning Targets/I Can Statements)

HSAC.1CO: Analyze how cultural, social, and emotional perspectives influence audience interpretation and response to a dramatic or theatrical work.

Time Frame/Pacing:

This unit typically lasts 2 weeks.

Instructional Resources

Handouts
Worksheets

HSAC.2CO: Examine and explain the impact of social, political, and technological trends on key theatrical figures and works in various eras and cultures.

- I can describe the time in which William Shakespeare wrote his plays and distinguish how it impacted his writing.
- I can connect social, political, and technological in Elizabethan and Jacobean England to Shakespeare's plays.
- I can explicate how to perform Shakespearean prose and verse.

Unit/Topic: *The Merchant of Venice* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

After studying Shakespeare's biography, his theatricality, and exploring how his work is applicable in a modern context, students will collectively read one of two plays: *The Merchant of Venice*, a dark comedy or "problem play," or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a traditional romantic comedy. *The Merchant of Venice* is the story of Antonio, the merchant of the title, who takes out a loan from a Jewish usurer named Shylock to provide funding for his friend Bassanio's journey to Belmont, where Bassanio intends to woo the wealthy heiress, Portia. Shylock, however, has one condition for the loan: if Antonio defaults on repayment, he must surrender to him "a pound of [his] fair flesh". Set in Athens, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* consists of several subplots, all of which revolve around the impending nuptials of the royals Theseus and Hippolyta. One subplot revolves around the romantic conflict between four Athenian teenagers, while another follows an amateur band of actors rehearsing the play they plan to perform at the wedding. The teenagers and actors find themselves in a magical forest, where they are manipulated by the fairies and other magical creatures that reside there. After studying the text, students will select a monologue or scene from the play to perform in the class.

Standards and Evidence of Learning (Learning Targets/I Can Statements)

HSAC.3CR: Discuss the artistic choices a playwright makes in a

Time Frame/Pacing:

This unit typically lasts between 3 - 4 weeks.

Instructional Resources

The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare

dramatic work and how these influence the interpretation and message of the work.

HSAC.1PE: Develop a complete character using physical, emotional, and vocal techniques in a memorized scene or monologue.

HSAC.4RE: Justify and analyze personal artistic choices made throughout the artistic process and after self-evaluation.

HSAC.4CO: Analyze a theatrical work in the context of its time period and culture.

- I can identify the major issues and themes present in either *The Merchant of Venice* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and demonstrate how they continue to resonate with modern audiences.
- I can actively pursue that objective during my performance of each open scene by raising the stakes and urgency.
- I can manipulate my body and voice to express a character.
- I can provide feedback to my peers using appropriate terminology, with the goal of improving their performances.
- I can evaluate my own performance, articulating not only why I made certain choices but also how I can improve for my next performance.

A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare
Shakespearean Performance

Unit/Topic: "A Method to Their Madness"

Students will discover how Stanislavsky's system had a profound effect on theatre in the United States and heavily influenced the theatrical movements of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s (e.g. The Federal Theatre Project). The famous Actor's Studio grew out of his system, its founders drawing inspiration from his revolutionary approach. In this unit, students will not only study the unique approach to Stanislavsky's system taken by the Actor's Studio and apply said approach in their performances, they also will research other acting methods and present them to the class. Finally, they will study a classic American play from that time: Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. After studying the impact this play had on modern theatre

Time Frame/Pacing:

This unit typically lasts between 4 - 5 weeks.

and society, they will select a monologue or scene from it to perform for the class.

Standards and Evidence of Learning (Learning Targets/I Can Statements)

HSAC.3CR: Discuss the artistic choices a playwright makes in a dramatic work and how these influence the interpretation and message of the work.

HSAC.1PE: Develop a complete character using physical, emotional, and vocal techniques in a memorized scene or monologue.

HSAC.4RE: Justify and analyze personal artistic choices made throughout the artistic process and after self-evaluation.

HSAC.1CO: Analyze how cultural, social, and emotional perspectives influence audience interpretation and response to a dramatic or theatrical work.

HSAC.2CO: Examine and explain the impact of social, political, and technological trends on key theatrical figures and works in various eras and cultures.

HSAC.4CO: Analyze a theatrical work in the context of its time period and culture.

- I can defend the effect Konstantin Stanislavsky's acting system had on American creatives.
- I can detail different acting methodologies that were influenced by Stanislavsky's acting system or were created as a refutation of it.
- I can identify the major issues and themes present in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and demonstrate how it continues to resonate with modern audiences.
- I can actively pursue that objective during my performance of each open scene by raising the stakes and urgency.
- I can manipulate my body and voice to express a character.

Instructional Resources

A Method to Their Madness: The History of the Actors Studio by Foster Hirsch (excerpts)

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams

A Streetcar Named Desire Performance

Handouts

Worksheets

- I can provide feedback to my peers using appropriate terminology, with the goal of improving their performances.
- I can evaluate my own performance, articulating not only why I made certain choices but also how I can improve for my next performance.