



**Fiona Shaw**

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**B-PH231: Acting 2A: Classical Performance Techniques**

Tue: 10:30am-12:00 pm;    Thur: 1:00pm-2:30pm

Dr. Peter Zazzali  
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*COURSE DESCRIPTION*

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The celebrated stage actress Fiona Shaw eloquently summarizes the significance of speaking:

Each time we speak, we reveal our nationality, disposition, attitudes, background, idiosyncrasies, familial traits and mannerisms. We carry our lives and childhoods in our voice [and body] and this is an important part of the armoury of any artist or person who wishes to be heard.<sup>1</sup>

As Shaw asserts, voice (and speech) is an expression of the self, a conceit that is particularly crucial for actors. Having a free, open, articulate, versatile, and expressive vocal instrument allows a performer to fill the shoes of her character and serve the demands of a given text.

Such is our goal for a “classical” approach to acting. Within a laboratory environment, you will develop the classical actor’s imagination in conjunction with your physical and vocal instrument towards engaging and delivering heightened-language texts. Doing so requires full investment in the words and given circumstances assigned to your character. Your work in voice class will correlate with what we cover in classical acting techniques. In short, the experience will be transformative. Your bodies, minds, and voices will transcend

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from David Carey and Rebecca Clark Carey, *Vocal Arts Workbook: A Practical Course for Vocal Clarity and Expression* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), iv.

the pedestrian and instead access a larger-than-life sensibility of character, speaking, and emotional expressivity.

We will cover a range of texts that begin with Shakespeare and the Indian dramatist Kālidāsa , before shifting to Ibsen and an offshoot, Lucas Hnath's *A Doll's House Part 2*. While the writers and their styles are each quite distinct, they require the techniques that you will be developing throughout this course: e.g., vocal variety; speaking as action; communicating complex ideas; filling the emotional demands of heightened texts; etc.

### *REQUIRED COURSE READING*

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**Available in LASALLE's Library or Online for Purchase:** Kristin Linklater, *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice: The Actor's Guide to Talking the Text* (London: Methuen, 1992); Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971); William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (available in multiple places); Kālidāsa, *Shakuntala* (available on learning portal); Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*, trans. Frank McGuiness (available on learning portal); Lucas Hnath, *A Doll's House Part 2* (available on learning portal)

Supplementary texts to be provided on Learning Portal

### *COURSE REQUIREMENTS*

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**Attendance:** Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. Please be sure to swipe your card at the door before entering each session. You must be on time and prepared to work for all classes. This is an ensemble-oriented course that requires everyone's mutual support. If you are absent or arrive late you compromise not only your own experience, but that of your classmates as well. If you must miss a session, please notify me beforehand, if at all possible, and if you are missing a day on which you are supposed to present your scene you must also alert your partner in advance.

**Preparation:** You are expected to arrive at class prepared to discuss the reading(s) and ready to present whatever exercise or scene has been assigned for a given session. This means that you will be spending time outside class rehearsing and completing various homework assignments. This class addresses and develops your critical thinking skills as much as it does your creative learning. You are expected to complete all assignments by their due dates.

**Participation:** You are expected to fully participate in all projects and exercises. This includes keeping up with the course readings and participating in both class and online. You will also be responsible for sourcing any props, costume pieces, or related materials to facilitate the completion of assignments.

**Professional Decorum:** The nature of an acting laboratory is ensemble-oriented. Thus, we all must demonstrate mutual respect and support, which means remaining conscientious of one another. Please be sure to turn off your cell phones before entering class. Also, there is no eating or drinking during class (water is fine). When a classmate is working before the group, they deserve our full support, encouragement, and attention. Let's work as a team in the best sense to ensure everyone's learning.

### ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

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1. Apply acting and vocal techniques to performing heightened-language texts
2. Vocal variety: demonstrating a range of voice qualities and vocal presence by varying the pitch, volume, and rhythms of speaking
3. Strength, contrast and accuracy of speech sounds and overall articulation
4. Connecting thought, breath, and speaking while communicating from a place of authenticity
5. Effective use of phrasing and oratorical nuance in serving the demands of heightened text
6. Embodiment and psychophysical ownership of language/text/words
7. Truthful rendering of character through speaking
8. Imaginative expression and connection to the text and character
9. Demonstration of emotional expressivity and action through speaking: "suit the action to the word, the word to the action" as Hamlet advises the Players
10. Balance between the formal demands of verse structure and creative/artistic choices
11. Knowledge of verse structures and literary devices and how to deploy them in practice
12. Render verse (and heightened prose) as clear, comprehensible, and intentional communication.

\*\*\* You will have 4 projects throughout the semester, with each resulting in a final presentation that will cumulatively determine your overall assessment for this component.

### CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

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#### **WEEKS 1-4 (Project #1): Shakespeare (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*)**

##### Week 1

Activity: Introduction to Shakespeare; literal and connotative "glossing of text/language"  
Read: *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice (FSV)* chap. 4

##### Week 2

Activity: Review glossing of Lysander/Helena; sculpting the text; endowing imagery  
Read: *FSV* chap. 1-3; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

##### Week 3

Activity: Work Lysander/Hermia; endowing imagery; scansion  
Read: *FSV* chap. 6

Week 4

Activity: Present Lysander/Hermia

Due: Glossing and scansion of Lysander/Hermia

**WEEKS 5-7 (Project #2): Kālidāsa (*Shakuntala*)**

Week 5

Activity: Introduction to Kālidāsa and Sanskrit drama; Workshop

Read: *Shakuntala*; “Classical Indian Theatre” (*Norton Anthology of Drama*); “A Portrayal of Classical Love against Imprecation in Kālidāsa’s *Shakuntala*,” in *Contemporary Discourse* 7.1 (2016): 37-39;

Week 6

Activity: Work *Shakuntala*

Due: Scan Matali speech

Week 7

Activity: Work/Present Matali speech

**WEEKS 8-12 (Projects 3 & 4): Ibsen and Lucas Hnath (*A Doll’s House/A Doll’s House Part 2*)**

Week 8

Activity: Overview of Ibsen and introduction to *A Doll’s House (ADH)*; Workshop scenes *ADH*

Read: Ibsen “Overview”; *A Doll’s House*

Week 9

Activity: Workshop *ADH* scenes

Week 10

Activity: Workshop and present *ADH* scenes

Weeks 11-12

Activity: Introduction to Lucas Hnath; Workshop *A Doll’s House Part 2*

Week 13

Activity: Present *A Doll’s House Part 2*