

Syllabus

Professional Voice and Speech Training for the Actor

By BW Gonzalez

Introduction:

Professional Voice and Speech Training is an advanced course for actors, designed for those who already have a working theatre vocabulary and a basic understanding of acting and improvisational concepts. Training is very physical. It is advised that interested participants be in fairly good physical condition.

We will be exploring body mechanics as it refers to voice production. Participants will gain awareness of the kinesiology necessary for successful production of professional vocal quality. Whether screaming, singing, shouting, or simply speaking on stage, participants will learn what is required to produce natural quality sound without fatigue or blocks.

This course will also introduce participants to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), and serve as a primer for the accurate production of a regionalism or accent required to play a specific character. We will also be working on Standardized American Language for the stage.

A light background in the following is helpful but not necessary: Alexander Technique, Yoga, Pilates, any dance, gymnastics, or light aerobic training (including walking, jogging, swimming or cycling) of any kind.

Each class will begin with a series of vocal and physical warm-ups specifically designed to free the natural voice.

Required Text:

Freeing The Natural Voice by Kristin Linklater (free PDF provided online)

Expectations:

All participants are expected to read required text as well as create two pieces by the end of the course using the tools and techniques learned in the class.

All participants will learn professional tools and techniques of the trade to create character voices, accents, and high quality vocal sound that is uniquely their own.

This eight-week course will culminate with an individual performance of an assigned work: a monologue and/or song using all the techniques learned in the class.

Due to the nature of the course, classes will be broken down into two concepts 1) Introduce, 2) Expand

Course Breakdown:

Week #1:

Introduction to Voice Production.

How the voice works, what stops quality vocal production, physical and vocal vocabulary and basic grounding exercises including: "The Drop Down," "Random Walking Through Space," and "Neutral Standing Balance." Basic intro to vocal exercises, how to do them properly and what each one is for. We will be working with the group as a whole.

Week #2:

Expand.

Continue to explore voice production using exercises introduced in week #1. We add "Touch of Sound" improv exercise and visual/emotional cues to create relaxed tonal qualities, giving the participant a kinesthetic awareness of their own unique high quality sound. More work with accuracy on Neutral Standing Balance, along with the introduction of Neutral Sitting Balance and new vocal exercises for consonants. Some Alexander work as well. We will be working with the group as a whole.

Week #3:

Working With Text.

Approaches to basic text will be from a vocal, emotional and physical point of view. We will be breaking a piece of text down to its essential components and reconstructing the piece through several different techniques. We will also evaluate utilizing the tools learned by analyzing the following:

Breath Awareness

Voice on Breath

Accuracy of both vowel and consonant articulation

Teacher will give specifics on the type of text we will be using with handouts in class.

We will be doing individualized and group breakout sessions for this class.

Week #4:

Expand

Continue work with text using improvisational exercises to free the natural voice. Working on communication in a natural setting, using text only and compare this to communicating on stage vocally. We will be doing individualized as well as group breakout sessions in this class

Week #5:

Introduction to IPA, Regionalisms, Accents and Classical Theatre Vocal Styles

In this class we introduce the International Phonetic Alphabet and provide handouts for participants. We will be working with abstract improvisational games and exercises to help guide participants through the sounds and symbols of the IPA. We will be working with the group as a whole for this session.

***Homework Assignment:** Please choose a piece of text (all ready familiar to you) you would like to work on of no more than ninety seconds in length. This could be a piece of a song, or spoken word, or poem as well as a piece of text from a play or a novel. There needs to be some kind of emotional arch to your piece.

Week #6:

Expand

Continue work with IPA, as well as Classical and Contemporary Vocal Styles working with individualized homework text instruction. We will do a series of warm-ups specifically designed to aid in Voice and Speech production, an abstract improvisation for clear communication, and then small group, breakout sessions before specific individualized work on specific text.

Week #7:

Text Analysis, & Putting It All Together

In this class we will be working with text analysis for the following:

Breath Control/Awareness(supporting tones)

Emotional Arch (Volume, pitch and breath support)

Articulation Clarity Supported Tones both vowel and consonant

We will be working with participant's chosen text and will assist and analyze individual participants as they work in class with Instructor/class feedback.

Week #8:

Expand

A specifically designed Linklater warm-up series for freeing the natural voice

Final Class: Individual Class Presentations of Text or song (acapella) or both with extensive feedback for each participant.

Q & A and snacks!!!!