The purpose of this course is to examine the training techniques of Japanese theater director Tadashi Suzuki. A major figure of the post-modern theater revolution in Japan in the decades following World War II, Suzuki has created a unique, multi-faceted method for training actors that has been acclaimed by theater directors worldwide and has been adopted by training programs and theater companies across the United States.

Following Suzuki's premise that "culture is the body", students in this course will be asked to examine their own physical presence in the theater through a series of exercises developed by Suzuki and members of his acting company. There are three goals in examining and performing these exercises:

1) To develop breathing techniques for control and ease. Through the control of breath and focus on the internal physical experience students will be able to develop control of the body in space and time and release the power of physical expressiveness in movement and, ultimately, stillness.

2) To develop the 'total-body voice' through the engagement of language on deep-breath. The application of language in challenging physical situations with focus on deep-breath control will allow students to experience a heightened level of expressiveness in the voice. Focusing on the lower body in movement and stillness will allow students to strengthen the center of breath and engage it meaningfully in the performance of extended pieces of dramatic language.

3) To awaken the actor consciousness. To be awake to yourself in a way that is uncommon to daily-life awareness is a step that the actor must take. This means responding to the challenge of bringing the body to a complete awareness of performance-level energy and learning to harness that energy for creative purposes. Unlike other actor training methods, Suzuki avoids the discussion of complicated psychological and emotional issues in actor training and places the emphasis on the body which will lead the actor to an inner awareness and a different angle on approaching the "truth" that is the goal of all theater artists. Students will be asked to approach the internal experience from a long-term rather than immediate-result point of view and to commit to the physical experience as a gateway to the complete human experience.

Discussions on the philosophy behind Suzuki's methods, how to translate this work to the stage and the long-term effects of Suzuki on the actor will form the core of in-class question-and-answer periods with the instructor. Students are encouraged outside class to seek a deeper understanding of the Japanese cultural context in which these exercises have been developed. To concentrate on the body and what it means to be present with it
is the overall goal of the course. Too many questions detract from time spent concentrating on the body that ultimately holds the answers to questions of primary concern to the actor.

Since this is a performance course and performance is presence, students' presence is required for students to find any value in this class. Students will begin the semester with an A. One unexcused absence will be allowed before the student's grade will be reduced, and the accumulation of too many absences could lead to serious grade reduction. Excused absences are at the discretion of the instructor. If students feel that they cannot meet the attendance requirement or cannot perform challenging physical activities, they should consult with the instructor. Ultimately the grade will be determined by the quality of each student's ongoing effort in attending to the issues of the body and its immediate presence in time and space and the ability to demonstrate an increased mastery of the techniques being studied through disciplined repetition.

Please dress appropriately for class. Movement/gym attire is required. Socks are required. Failure to dress for class will result in an absence.

Recommended (but not required) texts:

*The Way of Acting* by Tadashi Suzuki
*The Art of Stillness* by Paul Allain

**Contact Details and Office Hours:** Office: Spingold Center for the Performing Arts. Office Hours by appointment. Email – jesse14@brandeis.edu.

**Disabilities:** “If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.”

**Academic Integrity:** “You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity (see [http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai](http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai)).