

THA 130a-1 SUZUKI - Summer 2017 - Rehearsal Room - Spingold 206
Brandon Green - bggreen@brandeis.edu - Office Hours by appointment

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 will be asked to examine their own physical presence through a series of exercises developed by Suzuki and members of his acting company.

There are four goals in examining and performing these exercises:

1) **Developing 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) **Developing the 'total-body voice' through the engagement of language on deep-breath.** Applying language in challenging physical situations will result in a heightened level of vocal expressiveness. 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) **Awakening the actor consciousness.** Bringing the body to a complete awareness of performance-level energy and learning to harness that energy for creative purposes is a step that the actor must take. Suzuki avoids the discussion of psychological and emotional issues and instead places the emphasis on the body, which will lead the actor to an internal awareness and provides a different approach to the "truth" that is the goal of all theatre artists. . Students are 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.

4) **Developing a heightened awareness of ensemble.** It is important to think of your fellow classmates as cast mates. Acting out a play is inherently heroic. Heroism occurs when a

person or group take a great risk in the face of imminent failure in order to accomplish something bigger than themselves and to benefit those around them. This requires a unified focus on and commitment to the task at hand. Suzuki's method causes everyone in the event to experience a great deal of difficulty and unites them in their struggle to survive from moment to moment. How generous and present you are with your fellow class/cast mates will ultimately determine the level of success we achieve over the course of the semester.

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.

Attendance/Lateness Policy

This is a performance course and performance is presence. The student's presence is required to get any value out of this course. Students will begin the semester with an A. One **(1)** unexcused absence is allowed without penalty. Every additional unexcused absence will reduce the final letter grade by one half letter per absence (ie B to B-, etc). An absence should only occur in the event of an illness, emergency, or obligation that supersedes your obligation to the class as determined by the teacher.

Be on time. It is wise to come a bit early to stretch. This class is physically demanding and proper warming/loosening up of the muscles/joints is important to avoid injury. If you come late and we are already engaged in an exercise, quietly wait outside until that exercise is done. Please be ready to jump in on the next exercise. Please wait until the end of class to explain your lateness. Do not interrupt the instructor or distract your classmates. **Two (2)** late arrivals are the equivalent of one absence and will result in the student's grade being reduced by one half letter. **Please notify me if you have a distant class immediately prior to this class so that reasonable adjustments can be negotiated. If you are chronically late or absent, please reconsider your enrollment in this course.**

This is an experiential learning course. Learning in this course is accomplished by: Group Participation / Individual Preparation / Active Observation / Feedback / Reflection
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class.

Grading: Definition as prescribed by the Brandeis University Bulletin:

A-High Distinction / B-Distinction / C-Satisfactory / D-Passing but Unsatisfactory / F-Failure
With the use of plus or minus where appropriate.

Grading Criteria:

80% Progress/Participation - Determined by the student's engagement and presence in class and the ability to demonstrate an increased mastery of the techniques being studied.

20% Written Assignments - Personal Speeches / Responses / Reflections / Self Evaluations

Instructor-given and self evaluations will keep students updated on their progress.

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>)

Disabilities: - If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University please see me immediately to discuss possible accommodations.

If you have any vocal or physical injuries such as back or knee conditions that may make this work more challenging for you, please let me know and keep me informed on this

topic throughout the semester. Feel free to share with me any other personal information as it relates to your ability to participate in the class Personal information will be kept in strictest confidence.

Classroom Decorum/ Dress Code

1. Respect the Ensemble - We're all in this together. When another group is performing, the audience should be attentive and encouraging. No excessive talking. Or phone use, because -

2. Phone use is prohibited and will result in an absence. Phones should be set to airplane mode or off before entering the classroom. Use this time to disconnect.

3. Movement/gym attire and socks required. Failure to dress for class will result in half-credit. No Jeggings, Jeans, Khakis, Slacks, Loose Jewelry.

4. Take care of yourself. Recognize the difference between muscular fatigue and joint pain.

5. Take Care of the Space. The floor is swept everyday before class. Please leave your outside shoes in the hallway to avoid tracking in dirt/mud/water/etc. Bags and belongings should be placed in the cubbies and along the wall.

6. Bring water to class. No other food/drink allowed.

7. EFFORT IS REQUIRED. - Try.

Recommended (not required) texts:

The Way of Acting by Tadashi Suzuki

Culture Is The Body by Tadashi Suzuki

The Art of Stillness by Paul Allain

Students are required to experience one professional theatre production and write a response.

Boston Theatre companies often offer discounts w/ Student ID: bostontheatrescene.com /

boston-theater.com / artsemerson.org / lyricstage.com / americanrepertorytheater.org

Brandeis Department of Theatre Arts productions are also eligible.