

THA 130A SUZUKI - Summer 2019
Spingold 206 - Rehearsal Room – 11am - 1:40pm

Alex Jacobs - 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 Postmodern Theatre 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'.** Performing dramatic text in challenging physical situations will result in a heightened level of vocal expressiveness. Focusing on the lower body in movement/stillness will allow students to strengthen the center of breath and engage it meaningfully.

3) **Awakening the actor consciousness.** Bringing the body to a complete awareness of performance-level energy and harnessing that energy for creative purposes is an important step for actors. 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.

4) **Developing a heightened awareness of ensemble.** It is important to think of your fellow classmates as castmates. Performance is inherently heroic. Heroism occurs when a person /group take a great risk in the face of failure to accomplish something bigger than themselves for the benefit those around them. This requires a unified focus 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.

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 Policy

This is a performance course and performance is presence. **NO unexcused absences are allowed.** Every unexcused absence will reduce the final letter grade by one-third (1/3) letter per absence (B to B-, etc). An absence should only occur in the event of an illness (Dr.'s note required), emergency, or obligation that supersedes your obligation to the class as determined by the teacher. **Any illness-related absence not validated by a Dr's note will result in a half-credit for attendance.**

Be on time. Two (2) late arrivals are the equivalent of one absence and will result in the student's grade being reduced by one-third letter. Please notify me if you have a distant class immediately prior to this class so that reasonable adjustments can be negotiated. If you will be 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: As defined by Brandeis University Bulletin:
A -High Distinction / B -Distinction / C -Satisfactory / D -Passing but Unsatisfactory / F -Failure

Grading Criteria:

50% Progress/Participation - Determined by the student's presence, engagement, effort, and progression towards mastery of the techniques being studied.

10% Midterm / 15% Final – Determined by the student's effort and mastery of the techniques & material.

25% Written Assignments - Reflections / Self-Evaluations / Reading responses / Scene & Monologue preparation (failure to complete prep work will result in lowered midterm and final grade) - Assignments will be given with adequate time for completion. Late assignments may not be accepted.

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 throughout the semester.

Student Expectations:

Be Present - You've signed up to be here, so be here. Body & Mind & Voice.

Try - Effort is graded. The audience can tell when you're not. I will call you on it. Don't be afraid to fail. Don't quit if you do.

Respect the Space - Theaters are sacred spaces. I try to sweep the floor before every class. Take your shoes off before entering to avoid tracking dirt/mud/water/etc. Also, use the cubbies. Do not leave belongings on the stairs/walkways/equipment outside of the classroom.

Respect the Ensemble - We're all in this together. When another group is performing, the audience should be attentive and encouraging. If you arrive late and we're engaged in performance or meditation, please wait to come in so as to not disrupt your classmates. Please wait until the end of class to explain your lateness. 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.

Attention - If someone is talking, listen. If you're talking while they're talking, you're not listening. If you have a question, please raise a hand.

Take Care of Yourself - The class is physically demanding. Recognize the difference between muscular fatigue (growth) and joint pain (stop and/or adjust). Bring water. Stretch/warm up to avoid injury. If

you're late, stretch outside.

Phone use is prohibited and will result in an absence - Phones should be set to airplane mode, do not disturb or off before entering the classroom. If you are seen on your phone, you will be counted absent. Use this time to disconnect. **Zero-Tolerance.**

Dress for a P.E. credit - Failure to dress for class will result in **half-credit**. No Jeans, Jeggings, Khakis, Slacks. **For Evaluations (Midterm, Final, Etc) : All black/blue/grey. No Billed Hats.**

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*

*There will be selections provided via LATTE.

Students are required to experience a current **professional** theatre production and write a reflection. Boston Theatre companies often offer discounts w/ Student ID.

Resources:

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

Broadway & Brandeis Department of Theatre Arts productions are also eligible.