



## **TH380 ACTING: THEN AND NOW**

IES Abroad London

### **DESCRIPTION:**

The course explores key historical theatre cultures in two complementary ways: firstly, in the main teaching block, in respect of their original historical, material and imaginative performance styles, processes, structures and reception. This element is delivered by Mountview Academy. Then in the second part of the semester, IES tutors support students' understanding and integration of these historic aspects for contemporary critical and practical application by means of an individual research project.

Through this combination of Mountview and IES components, students will complete the course with an experiential and reflective understanding of acting stylistics in general and of the contemporary relevance and applicability of historic theatre practices and cultures as realized for example in acting modes and play texts. Students will as a result be better equipped to meet the challenges of acting in the contemporary rehearsal room and/or of the production practice that is most relevant to their chosen performance-related discipline, such as for example acting, dramaturgy, directing, design, producing, stage management

**CREDITS:** 3 credits

**CONTACT HOURS:** 45 hours

**LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION:** English

**PREREQUISITES:** This course is designed for theater majors or minors. Space permitting, it is also open to non-theater students with an active interest in performance and who are adjudged on application to be familiar and confident with the process of investigative rehearsal and of working with others to present their findings as performed pieces.

**ADDITIONAL COST:** None

### **METHOD OF PRESENTATION:**

Mountview Component

- Rehearsals
- Performances
- Discussions

The Mountview component encourages students to explore - in a refreshingly engaging manner – the drama and social background of six key stages of English drama. Each day's session will be supervised by one of the academy's tutors/directors, and include a warm-up/skills class, tailored to the subject in hand; exposition and practical work on the societal context; rehearsal sessions on text; and an informal sharing of work. The course will run from 10:30 a.m. to 6:00p.m., with a one-hour lunch break at 1:30 p.m. The pattern of each day remains the same: in the morning, a subject appropriate warm up (voice movement or dance) followed by an introduction to the period and to the text, then in the afternoon, rehearsals finishing with a sharing of the work.

IES Abroad Component

- Seminars
- Student presentations
- Individual tutorials
- Mixed methods of delivery in the IES Abroad component with the application of Moodle

In this second part of the semester students will work with IES tutors to select, develop and deliver a research project (as a written paper or as a practice-as-research project involving both written and practical elements) requiring them to reflect on, contextualize and integrate material introduced in the Mountview component in relation to contemporary- theory and practice.

In addition to an introductory IES-led session prior to the Mountview component (front-loading historical context, intro to relevant theory and methods of analysis), each student will contribute to a post-Mountview seminar/plenary session (collating Mountview learning, drawing links to theory, in-depth assessment briefing) after which individual tutorials will help them finalise their research

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project and its form/modality. Subsequent individual tutorials will be scheduled to follow the formal submission of their proposal and be available subsequently throughout the duration of the project. This will include an 'ideas/preliminary presentation' to the cohort and IES tutors (wk 10) and a final presentation/plenary session that will include the presentation of the practical and written elements of those students who have chosen the 'practice as research' option

#### **REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:**

- Mountview - 50% (continuous assessment)
- IES Abroad - 50% composed of the following:
  - Participation - 10%
  - Interim Presentation of Research - 10%
  - Research Paper (2,500 words) OR Practice-as-research presentation AND paper- 30%

#### **LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of key aspects of historical theater performance cultures, especially in their relation to the evolution of current performance practice
- Show an understanding of how to integrate historic performance techniques and approaches into a contemporary performance practice
- Articulate the central role and contribution of the performer in both historic and contemporary theater settings, and understand the ways in which this role has changed over time and in different cultures
- Identify and articulate the importance of specific cultural 'worlds' in the enactment of dramatic action both historical and contemporary
- Demonstrate critical thinking and independent thought in integrating performance practice with research, and in the subsequent presentation of findings
- Show an understanding of the effective application of contemporary techniques and theories to historical material in the development of individual performances

#### **ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Regular class attendance is mandatory. Irregular attendance may result in a lower grade in the course, and/or disciplinary action. The IES Abroad London class attendance policy does not allow for unexcused absences, and grades will be docked one-half letter grade for each such absence. Rare exceptions will be made for the following reasons:

- The student is too sick to attend class. In this instance, the student must call the IES Abroad Centre before class to notify any of the IES Abroad staff. It is not sufficient either to email, send a message with a friend or call the Centre after the class has started.
- A serious illness or death in the immediate family requiring a student to travel home. This requires written approval from the Centre Director before departure.

Arriving more than 10 minutes late to class may count as an unexcused absence. Immigration laws in the UK are extremely strict, and we jeopardize our legal status in hosting students who do not regularly attend class. Students who do not attend class regularly will be reported to the appropriate officials and risk dismissal from the program and deportation from the UK. If a student incurs absences representing 25% of the total class hours, they will be contacted by the Academic Programme Manager (APM) and Centre Director (CD). If these absences are made up exclusively of unexcused non-attendance, this will trigger a disciplinary review. If these absences are made up of excused non-attendance, a meeting will be held to discuss the underlying reasons for lack of attendance, and to discuss ways it can be maintained for the duration of the term. If the 25% threshold is reached due to a mixture of excused and unexcused absences, students will also be asked to attend a meeting to discuss.

#### **CONTENT:**

Students will participate in six full-day classes at Mountview, in their rehearsal space, and with their tutors, studying a cross section of acting styles through time, up to the present day. These will be followed by the undertaking of complementary individual-student research projects supported by IES Faculty. This will include individual tutorials, seminars, and student presentations. These will lead

to either a research paper (2500 words) OR a practice-as-research project on methods of integrating historical material into contemporary creative practice. The latter will culminate in a short historical character-monologue performance/presentation (5 mins) accompanied by short supporting paper (1000 words)

#### IES OBJECTIVES:

- To Integrate Mountview-based historical approaches and material with contemporary theory and practice
- To refine communication skills in the presentation of the research paper and/or performance skills as a research tool in the performance-as-research model, and the ability to integrate and negotiate feedback from peer group
- Research paper/project will measure the development from presentation to academic findings

Week	Content	Assignments
Week 0	<b>IES ABROAD</b> <b>90-min Course introduction will take place prior to Week 1; to explain context, to introduce ideology and ethos, to define the research assignment and what forms it could take</b>	
Week 1	<b>Mountview 1</b>  <b>PAGEANTS &amp; WAGONS THE MEDIEVAL MYSTERY PLAY</b> Exploring the mystery and morality plays of the Medieval Period (5th to 15th century), and their place in the foundations of British theatre. Areas covered may include the role of amateurs and the community in the theatrical form, the connection to religion as a dominant social factor at the time and the conventions related to the demands of the performance contexts.  Please note, for Week 1 you will have an orientation session from 10.30am	<b>Students will experience different tutors in the Mountview workshops but the pattern of each Mountview day will be the same: in the morning (10:30 – 11:30), a subject appropriate warm up (voice movement or dance) followed by an introduction to the period and to the text (11:45 – 1:00 approx), then in the afternoon, rehearsals (2:00 – 4:45) finishing with a sharing of the work (5:00 – 6:00).</b> Read full texts and/or scene excerpts representative of the era

Week	Content	Assignments
Week 2	<b>Mountview 2</b>  THE WOODEN 'O' SHAKESPEARE'S THEATRE Examining the evolution of the written theatrical form, specifically through the work of William Shakespeare. Areas covered may include the influence of contemporaneous events on the topics that the playwright tackled, the application of rhetorical and poetic devices, the differing contexts of specific theatrical spaces and the stylistic demands on the actor in Elizabethan theatre.	Read all script material to be explored
Week 3	<b>Mountview 3</b>  Palaces of Pleasure - British Music Hall  PALACES OF PLEASURE – BRITISH MUSIC HALL Exploring styles and conventions in Victorian music hall, both as a new form of entertainment for the masses and as a rebellion against early Victorian sensibilities. Areas covered may include links to later equivalents (pantomime, musical theatre, drag culture), the changing role of humour and music in British theatre and the relationship to entrenched class systems at the time of its popularity.	Read all script material to be explored
Week 4	<b>Mountview 4</b>  <b>LATE VICTORIAN</b> Exploring the evolution of the Comedy Of Manners and the conventions that became the staples of popular British theatre, specifically in the work of Oscar Wilde. Areas covered may include the development of the genre from Restoration Comedy to Noel Coward and beyond, the application of irony and wit as devices, the political and satirical underpinnings of the material and the playwright's constructed representation of society.	Read all script material to be explored

Week	Content	Assignments
Week 5	<b>Mountview 5</b>  MID-LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY Examining the development of social realism in British theatre and the rejection of the escapism of earlier forms. Areas covered may include the representation of the working-class on stage, the tackling of socio-political issues in both style and content, the evolution of the writing of female characters, the influence of and on the emerging cinematic form and the application of naturalistic styles of acting and language.	Read all script material to be explored
Week 6	<b>Mountview 6</b> <b>CONTEMPORARY UK MUSICAL THEATRE</b> Exploring the trajectory of musical theatre across the 20th century as a dominant commercial art form. Areas covered may include the influence of transatlantic developments on the British approach, the stylistic demands on the actor within the heightened style, the integration of music into dramatic action and the influence of commercial aims on the artistic pursuit.	Read all script material to be explored
<b>MIDTERM EXAM/BREAK WEEK</b>		
Week 7	<b>IES</b> Mountview review Seminar/Plenary session, followed throughout the week by individual tutorials helping students choose their research assignment topic and its form/modality	PLEASE NOTE CLASSES RUN FROM 1.30 TIL 4.00 FROM WEEK 7
Week 8	<b>IES</b> <b>Research assignment submission deadline Monday, followed by individual tutorials during the week to finalise research questions and advise on approach etc</b>	
Week 9	Independent study week	

Week	Content	Assignments
Week 10	<b>IES</b> Individual presentations/seminar on interim research findings	<b>N/A</b>
Week 11	Independent study week	<b>N/A</b>
Week 12	<b>IES</b> Final presentation of practice-as-research projects and findings and plenary Submission deadline for papers (Monday)	<b>N/A</b>

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

The titles of the plays to be explored at Mountview will be announced weekly through Moodle. It is vital that you familiarise yourself with these texts before each respective class.

#### RECOMMENDED READINGS:

##### Medieval

- Wickham, Glynn, *The Medieval Theatre* (Cambridge University Press 1987)

##### Early Modern

- Gurr, Andrew *The Shakespearean Stage 1574–1642* (Cambridge University Press 2009)
- Thomson, Peter, *Shakespeare's Theatre* (Theatre Production Studies) (Routledge 1992)

##### Victorian

- Anthony Baker, Richard *British Musical Hall: An Illustrated History* (Pen & Sword Books Ltd 2005)
- Kift, Dagmar *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict* (Cambridge University Press 1996)

##### C20th

- Innes, Christopher. *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century* 2nd edition (Cambridge University Press 2009)
- Lacey, Stephen, *British Realist Theatre* (Routledge 1995)
- Little, Ruth & Emily McLaughlin, *The Royal Court Theatre Inside Out* (Oberon 2007)
- Middeke, Martin; Schneirer, Peter Paul & Sierz, Aleks eds. *The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary British Playwrights*. (Methuen, 2011)



- Rebellato, Dan, 1956 And All That: The Making of Modern British Drama (Routledge 1999)
- Shepherd Simon, The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Theatre (Cambridge University Press 2008)

### **Contemporary**

- Lane, David, Contemporary British Drama (Edinburgh University Press 2010)
- Seirz, Aleks, Rewriting The Nation: British Theatre Today. Methuen 2010

### **Music Theatre**

- Harvard, Paul, Acting Through Song Techniques and Exercises for Musical-Theatre Actors (Nick Hern Books 2013)

### **General**

- Benedetti, Jean. The Art Of The Actor: The Essential History Of Acting From Classical Times To The Present Day. (Routledge, 2007).
- Brown, John Russell. The Oxford Illustrated History Of Theatre. (Oxford University Press, 2001).
- McConachie, Bruce , Tobin Nellhaus, Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, Tamara Underiner, Theatre Histories: An Introduction (Routledge 2006)
- Nagler, Alois M. A Source Book In Theatrical History (Dover 1959)
- Wickham, Glynne. A History Of The Theatre. (Phaidon 1985)