

Duke University Department of Theater Studies, Spring Semester 2021 (01-17)
145S Acting: Realism (Seminar)*
Professor Jeff Storer, Instructor. THEATRST 145S 01-SEM (7834) 10:15-11:30

Type of Course: all classes **ONLINE**
 Online classes will be held via ZOOM.

Office Hours:

Storer Office Hours: T TH 11:35-1:30, or by appointment.

Contact instructor at bear@duke.edu to schedule an appointment. (919-308-0057.)

***Please Note: This class will count for the Acting Requirement/Gateway Course should you decide to take a Department of Theater Studies Major or Minor.**

Course Description:

(AL)(CCI) Using the writings of Qui Nguyen, August Strindberg, Konstantin Stanislavsky, Suzan Lori-Parks, Anna Deavere Smith, Caryl Churchill, Anne Bogart and Jose Rivera students will explore the fundamentals of acting realism through assigned readings, writing prompts, performance exercises, scene study, and text analysis. A balance between weekly reading assignments, writing and performance comprise the work required in this course. Theory and text analysis will be studied in their historical context as well as to their contemporary relevance. Acting: Realism will cover the following topics: dramatic action, given circumstances, the actor's imagination, focus (centers of attention and targets,) the actor's warm-up, scoring a script: beat/unit/action breakdown, intentions, memory keys, believability and truth in performance.

Classes for the **Spring 2021 term** will begin on **Thursday, January 21** and end on **Thursday, April 22.**

Finals will be given for this class and will take place between **7:00-10:00 P.M. on Saturday, May 1.**

All travel plans should be made accordingly. There will be no excused absences for missing the final.

Requirements/Grade Breakdown

Participation:

Attendance, collegiality and the **willingness to engage in class activities and discussions will be key to your participation grade.** Note that there are no approved absences without prior consent of the instructor. If the instructor and student agree upon an approved absence (this includes all religious holidays, dean's and athletic excuses) all work must still be completed and submitted or shown in class. Failure to meet fellow students scheduled outside of class rehearsals, will affect this grade. Attendance Policy penalizes for being late to class and unexcused absences. (There is a loss of 1% point per lateness, 2% points per unexcused absence.) (Worth 30 points. Graded at midterm and at the conclusion of the course.)

When in doubt, ask. Email is preferred. In the event of an emergency you may leave a message on Professor Storer's voice mail (919-308-0057.) Attendance and lateness to class will figure prominently in Participation grade.

Written Work:

-During the course of the semester you will turn in 5 Journal Entries (the first 4 are graded and worth 5 points each. The 5th journal is your self-evaluation and letter grade and is not graded.)

-Each entry will consist of a written assignment that respond to specific prompts to be assigned by the instructors. All written assignments are submitted through the ASSIGNMENTS tab in Sakai. **Prompts and due dates articulated below.**

Each entry should be approximately 2-3 pages, double-spaced, and typed (turned in as a document or PDF.12 pt. font, Times New Roman and marked with assignment # and your last name (i.e. Assignment #1-Storer.)

PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO RESEARCH RESOURCES AND THEIR DOCUMENTATION FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT.

Any late papers will result in the loss 2 POINTS for that assignment, regardless the quality of the work. All journal entries and written assignments should be submitted under the ASSIGNMENTS tab on Sakai before the start of class on the day that it is due. Any written assignments turned in after the start of class will be considered late.

-You will also score a scene from *TopDog/UnderDog* that will be scanned and submitted via email. **(Due 03-2.)** (worth 5 points.)

Performance Assignments:

You will perform 4 times in class, sharing your work and receiving feedback from your fellow class members each time. Full participation in class exercises and completion of all assigned performance studies (articulated below) is required. Any late work will result in the loss of a letter grade for that assignment, regardless the quality of the work. (The first three performance assignments are each worth 10 points each. The final worth 15 points)

Grade Breakdown:

Grade based on seriousness of approach, ability, effort, growth, quality of participation, curiosity and passion. A grade will be given for each exercise and written assignment. If students are interested in the grades they are receiving for performance exercises and written work, they should make an appointment to discuss grades with the instructor. As suggested by the University, "A's" will be reserved for "Exceptional" work.

Participation	30%
Written Work	25%
Performance Assignments	30%
Final	15%

Zoom Protocol:

- 1) If you are using a virtual background please make sure you keep it simple and not distracting. No video backgrounds please.
- 2) Please refrain from using the group chat function for questions and comments. Physically raise your hand to ask questions or make comments in group discussions.
- 3) Since we will be doing physical exercises and exploring acting techniques in many of our classes, please make sure you have a quiet, private space from which to zoom, and room to move around comfortably.
- 4) Unless instructed otherwise, please keep your video and audio ON for the duration of the class.
- 5) Out of respect to Professor and your fellow students, don't message, text, shop or chat during class. We have a clear window into what you're doing during.
- 6) Sit upward in a chair with as much elbow room as possible. Do not lie down during class.
- 7) Dress comfortably, but NO HATS.
- 8) Because this is a performance class, how you appear on camera is important. Please make sure we can see your face clearly. Avoid strong backlight which puts your face in silhouette. Try to enhance the front light on your face. Experiment to enhance clarity. How you are seen is as important as how you heard.

I use the following type of desk lamp behind my computer screen for the most inexpensive variety of controlling the light.

TaoTronics LED Desk Lamp with USB Charging Port, 4 Lighting Modes with 5 Brightness Levels, 1h Timer, Touch Control, Memory Function, 14W, Official Member of Philips EnabLED Licensing Program, Black (TT-DL01) \$39.99 AMAZON
- 9) You should be ZOOMING into class from a quiet space, with a desktop. Do not use your phone to ZOOM into class.
- 10) STUDENTS NEED TO BE USING A "ZOOM CLIENT" IN ORDER TO ACCESS OUR CLASS MEETINGS THROUGH SAKAI.

ACTING CLASS CONTRACT

During the course of this class, we hold ourselves and each other accountable to the following contract:

1. I agree to **show up**.

- I will show up for myself by eating, sleeping, and doing the prep work.
- I will show up for my professor by coming to class on time and ready to work.
- If I have to miss class or am late on an assignment I will stay in contact so a solution can be reached.
- I will show up for my scene partner by staying in contact and attending agreed-upon rehearsals.
- I will show up for my classmates by giving their work my full attention in class. I will not be on my phone, computer or otherwise distracting or being distracted while they work.

2. I agree that this class is a laboratory to **practice consent**.

These practices include:

- Letting my professor know if there is any content I am not willing to perform (ex: cursing, romantic scenes, etc.)
- Tapping in and out with my scene partner at the beginning and end of each run through.*
- Negotiating physical touch within the context of each exercise and scene according to my own (and my partners') comfort levels.*
- The professor will always ask for permission before offering a hands-on adjustment. You will not be penalized for saying "no". *
- Consent can be specified and clarified at any time.*
- I may withdraw consent at any time without penalty. ("Yes" can become "no".) However, once a "no" has been given, it remains a "no" for the rest of that class, and can be reassessed at the next class.*

3. I agree that while it is deeply personal, **acting is not therapy**.

- I will strive to learn the difference between "uncomfortable" and "unsafe". If I ever feel unsafe, I will tell the professor(s) as soon as I am aware so that the issue can be addressed. If any issues come up for you, know your professor is not a therapist, but is happy to point you to resources on campus that will help support you and your mental health.

* This semester, because of COVID-19, there will be no physical contact of any kind. To create a safe environment for our University community, I agree to wear a mask, practice social distancing, and report any symptoms I may have to the University. Out of respect for my classmates and my professor, I will not take risks outside of class when it comes to spreading this virus. I will not attend any face to face classes if I have any COVID-19 symptoms or feel unwell.

Required Reading/Viewing:

THE PLAYS

She Kills Monsters by Qui Nguyen. Sakai. (Read and ready to discuss by 01-26.)

Top Dog/Underdog by Suzan-Lori Parks. (Read and ready to discuss by 02-18)
<https://find.library.duke.edu/catalog/DUKE008604907>

Love and Information by Caryl Churchill. (Read and ready to discuss by 03-04.)
<https://find.library.duke.edu/catalog/DUKE008932740>

Sonnets for An Old Century by Jose Rivera. Sakai. (Read and ready to discuss by 03-23.)

Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 by Anna Deavere Smith* (Read and ready to discuss by 03-23.)
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/duke/detail.action?docID=6040293> -1 person use.

***Everyone will need to purchase a copy of Twilight prior to March 1st. Amazon has new and used copies available.**

THE ESSAYS

August Strindberg. Preface to Miss Julie. (Read and ready to discuss by 01-26.)

Anna Deavere Smith. Excerpts from Letters to a Young Artist; “Presence” and “Being In It, and Out of It, at the Same Time.” (Read and ready to discuss by 01-28.)

Constantin Stanislavski. Excerpts from An Actor Prepares. “Concentration of Attention,” “Faith and A Sense of Truth,” and “Emotion Memory.” (Read and ready to discuss by 02-23.)

Anne Bogart. A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre. Excerpts. “Memory” and “Terror.” (Read and ready to discuss by 03-02.)

Sarah Ruhl, “Six Small Thoughts on Fornes, the Problem of Intention, and Willfulness.” (Read and ready to discuss by T.B.A.)

Love and Information Royal Court Guide. Read “About the Author,” “Intro to Love and Information,” and “Practical Scene Study, Items 1-5.” (Found at the end of your syllabus as well. Read and Ready to discuss by 03-04.)

A DOCUMENTARY

“Top Dog Diaries.” <https://find.library.duke.edu/catalog/DUKE007952512>

Theatrical Reality.

In this class we will be looking at Acting Realism from five perspectives:

- 1- The birth of realism in the 20th century and its basic principles and tools.
- 2- Realism and the Theater of Wonder.
- 3- Micro Realism.
- 4- Documentary Realism.
- 5- Poetic Realism.

“What is meant by “reality”? It would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable—now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech—and then there it is again in an omnibus in the uproar of Piccadilly. Sometimes, too, it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is. But whatever it touches, it fixes and makes permanent. That is what remains over when the skin of the day has been cast into the hedge; that is what is left of past time and of our loves and hates.”

-Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

“Everything you can imagine is real.”

-Pablo Picasso

“For the most part, nineteenth-century acting was bombastic and exterior, and actors, who performed a different play every night, depended on the prompter to remind them of their lines. Published acting manuals, which taught basic techniques of oratory and posing, were available, but it’s highly unlikely [Duse’s company] would have felt the need for such a manual. Italian actors with roots in the *commedia dell’arte* had a gift for natural speech quite different from the academy-trained actors of the French and Scandinavian theatre, who declaimed their lines and moved to set rules. Henrik Ibsen noted actresses in Norway ‘always swooned... on the left of the stage and always with a handkerchief in their left hand,’ while Italian actresses fainted naturally. Acting, at this time, however, was primarily a pictorial art, and actors routinely studied paintings and sculpture and practiced attitudes and poses in front of a mirror. In the first years of the twentieth century, when she played *Phèdre* in London, Sarah Bernhardt, who always remained rooted in the nineteenth century, stood and posed sometimes for as long as thirty seconds before changing position, moving from pose to pose in a rhythmic progression...

On the broadest level, Duse’s rejection of the prevailing acting style was a rebellion of youth against age, of innovation against tradition, of the individual against the group, and the future against the past. She sensed there was more to acting than beauty frozen into a pose. She sought to evoke the quivering wordless emotions of the body and to express the quickening agitation of thought with no separation between the two, her goal being not to please or capture the audience, but to connect and create with them.”

-Helen Sheehy, *Eleonora Duse: a Biography*

Journal Prompts:

Journal Topics:

1. Before and After Story in written form FOLLOWING your performance. This story may take a variety of forms, i.e. short story, poetry, screenplay, theater script, song lyrics, etc. **(Due 02-04.)** (worth 5 points.)

2. *She Kills Monsters* 1st person character analysis. Use as your inspiration the Characterization/Given Circumstances questionnaire (Additional Materials “A”). This should be written in first person. **(Due 02-18.) This entry will require at least one (1) Research Resource appropriately notated at the end of the writing.**

You will be required to use at least 1 research resource that will need to be documented. This need to be significant resource that has informed your creation of the character. Wikipedia entries will not be accepted.

DOCUMENTATION OF RESEARCH RESOURCES WILL BE REQUIRED. The MLA Handbook is the preferred system, and is available on Sakai. (worth 5 points.)

3. Personal Process Narrative. This entry will be a reflection on your process rehearsing your scene for Love & Information. Detailed prompts in Assignments tab for this entry. **(Due 03-23.)** (worth 5 points.)

4. Final Character 1st person character analysis. Use as your inspiration the Characterization/Given Circumstances questionnaire (Additional Materials “A”). This should be written in first person. **(Due 04-15.) This entry will require at least three (3) Research Resources appropriately notated at the end of the writing.**

You will be required to use at least 3 research resources that will need to be documented. These need to be significant resources. Wikipedia entries will not be accepted. Resources will be plentiful for Twilight, Los Angeles. You will need to be creative with sources that relate to your first-person characterizations with Sonnets. I’m happy to answer any questions about searching for resources for Sonnets, once you’ve chosen your monologue.

DOCUMENTATION OF RESEARCH RESOURCES WILL BE REQUIRED. The MLA Handbook is the preferred system, and is available on Sakai. (worth 5 points.)

5. Self-evaluation and self-assigned letter grade for the semester, based on the criteria articulated above and due on the last day of classes. **(Due 04-22.)**

Performance Assignments:

ASSIGNMENT #1

Before and After Exercises

“There are experiences you have in your life: the before and after things, when you are not quite the same after as you were before. Something is included, or something is taken away, or something is added: but it is definitely before and after.” Joseph Chaikin, *The Presence of the Actor*.

Share a moment of your life with the class. This should be a moment after which you were “not quite the same as you were before.” Only share what you feel willing to share with us while attempting to make your choice as pivotal a moment in your life as possible. This does not mean the story has to be a “dramatic” moment. Humorous moments can be just as important and pivotal. Edit the telling of your moment so that you are using only the amount of language you need to communicate what occurred and what you may have felt in that moment. Be specific about the moment. Be aware of choices you are making with your body and your voice.

Suggestions: Be aware of the sensory responses that were present in the moment that you are telling us about. What differentiates this moment for you physically and vocally? Be clear about the beginning-middle-end of your story. Beware of rambling. (worth 10 points)

You will **TELL** this story in class. Even though there should be thoughtful preparations that go into your telling **you should not read, use notes or memorize the story**. It is helpful to consider the organization of the story and it may be helpful to free associate in writing about your moment in your personal journal or, at the very least, outline it before telling it in class. But then, look up at the camera and tell us a truthful story.

Given Circumstances: The actor sitting in a chair. Articulation of your ZOOM space. This performance should last no longer than 5 minutes. Analysis will follow (worth 10 points.) **(Begins in Class on 01-26.)**

ASSIGNMENT #2

***She Kills Monsters* by Qui Nguyen.** Read ***She Kills Monsters* by Qui Nguyen.** You and two scene partners will work together on preparing a scene approved by the instructor. Scenes must be memorized. (worth 10 points.) **(Begins in class on 02-09.)**

Your scene work will focus on the following focus questions:

ACTOR'S FOCUS QUESTIONS

A. SITUATION (Given Circumstances)

What is the "World of the Play" and how do the rules of this world work based on the Playwright's Intent? From whose Point of View is the story being told?

B. The "moment before."

What just happened? Before the play began? Before your character enters the stage?

C. PREPARATION

How does what just happened make your character feel?

D. OBJECTIVE

What does your character need/or want? (based on how they feel about this situation.)

E. ACTION (The How; Tactics)

How is your character going to get what they want?

F. URGENCY (Literally and Emotionally)

What will happen to your character if your character doesn't get what they want?

G. OBSTACLE

What is in the way of your character getting what they want.

H. RELATIONSHIP

In what ways do your character know this other person? (family, lovers, acquaintances, business, brought together by a crisis, first meeting.) How does this affect your character's TACTICS and URGENCY?

ASSIGNMENT # 3

Text Analysis on *Top Dog/Underdog* by Susan-Lori Parks. (Scored scene, scanned and submitted via email. **Tuesday, March 2nd**) (worth 5 points.)

ASSIGNMENT # 4

Love and Information by Caryl Churchill. Scene Study (worth 10 points.) This scene will be recorded for your final showing. **Due 03-09.**

ASSIGNMENT #5

Love and Information Scene Study. Recorded. **Due 03-25.**

ASSIGNMENT #6

Monologue/Final.

A final monologue should be prepared for the scheduled final period **Saturday, May 1st 7:00-10:00.** The monologue will be selected from either Jose Rivera's *Sonnets For An Old Century* or Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*. All students should read both plays in order to make their selection and to facilitate feedback and discussion with your fellow students. Instructor should approve the monologue. When performed, the monologue should be between 1 1/2 - 2 minutes in length. You must read the play, complete written character and play analysis. This monologue should be performed as if for a professional audition. Instructor will lecture on audition protocol in the later half of the semester **(see the semester calendar. Worth 20 points.)**

145S Spring 2021 Semester Calendar
Entirely Online: 10:15-11:30.
Scheduled ZOOM class links on Sakai.

Week 1

Thursday, January 21. **Intro/Syllabus.**

Assign Before and After Exercise.

Assign Reading of “Preface to Miss Julie” and *She Kills Monsters*.

Week 2

Tuesday, January 26 **Before and After Exercises performed. (1-6)**

Begin discussion of “Preface” and “She Kills Monsters.”
Assign Readings of Anna Deavere Smith.

Thursday, January 28 **Before and After Exercises performed. (7-12).**

Discuss Anna Devere Smith essays.

Discuss and begin assigning scenes for *She Kills Monsters* and
Assign Before and After writing assignment (due on February 4th.)

Week 3

Tuesday, February 2 **Before and After Exercises and Discussion Catch-Up.**

Prep for She Kills Monsters Scene Study. All scenes assigned.

February 2. Drop/Add Ends.

Thursday, February 4

Discussion of She Kills Monsters. Continued In class Prep for She
Kills Monsters Scene Study. Before and After Writing Due

Week 4

Tuesday, February 9 **She Kills Monsters Performs. (Scenes 1-4)**

Assign She Kills Monsters Writing Assignment.

Thursday, February 11 **She Kills Monsters Performs. (Scenes 5-8)**

Assign Stanislavsky and Top Dog/Under Dog to read and “Top Dog
Diaries” to view.

February 15. Registration for Summer Begins.

Week 5

Tuesday, February 16 **Perform *She Kills Monsters* Scenes for 2nd showing.**

Thursday, February 18 ***Top Dog/Underdog*. Discuss play.**

***She Kills Monsters* writing assignment due. Assign Anne Bogart essays.**

Week 6

Tuesday, February 23 **In class Script Analysis - *Top Dog/Underdog*.**

Discuss Stanislavsky.

Assign *Love and Information* to read.

Thursday, February 25 **In class Script Analysis - *Top Dog/Underdog*.**

Discuss Stanislavsky.

Assign *Love and Information* to read.

Week 7

Tuesday, March 2 **In class Script Analysis - *Top Dog/Underdog*.**

Discuss Bogart essays.

Topdog/Underdog Scene Scoring Due.

Assign *Love and Information* to read. Begin to select scenes and partners. Assign *Love and Information Royal Court Guide*. Read “About the Author,” “Intro to *Love and Information*,” and “Practical Scene Study, Items 1-5.”

Thursday, March 4

Scene Study. Discuss *Love and Information*. And *Royal Court Study Guide*. Choose Scenes.

March 5. Last Day Midterm grades.

Week 8

Tuesday, March 9

Scene Study. *Love and Information*. Work in Class.

Thursday, March 11

Scene Study. Love and Information. Work in Class.

Week 9

Tuesday, March 16

Scene Study. Love and Information. Pre-recording showing.

Thursday, March 18

Scene Study. Love and Information. Pre-recording showing.

Assign Reading of *Twilight: Los Angeles and Sonnets for an Old Century*.

Week 10

Tuesday, March 23

**Scene Study Recordings and feedback. Shown and discussed in class.
Begin to discuss *Twilight* and *Sonnets*.**

Personal Process Narrative Due.

Thursday, March 25

Scene Study Recordings and feedback. Shown and discussed in class.

Begin to discuss *Twilight* and *Sonnets*.

Casting, Monologue Preparation and Selection for Final.

Week 11

Tuesday, March 30 **Catch-Up on Everything and preparation for guest artist visits.**

Thursday, April 1 **Guest Artist Shaun Heard. Guest artist.**

Week 12

Tuesday, April 6 **Guest Artist Mike Wiley. Guest artist.**

Thursday, April 8 **Monologue Preparation and Selection continued.**

April 10. Snow Day.

Week 13

Tuesday, April 13

Catch-Up.

Thursday, April 15

1st showing of monologue. (1-4) 1st person characterization Writing Assignment Due

April 17. Snow Day.

Week 14

Tuesday, April 20

1st showing of monologue. (5-8)

Thursday, April 22

1st showing of monologue. (9-12) Self Evaluation and letter grade due.

April 23. Classes End.

April 27-May 1st Final Exams:

145 Final: May 1st 7:00-10:00

May 9th. Graduation.

A. Additional Material. Our collaborators this semester.

The Professor

Jeff Storer is co-founder and Artistic Director of Manbites Dog Theater, a professional company founded in 1986 dedicated to world and regional premieres of contemporary work. He is co-author of *Indecent Materials*, which opened the 1990 season at Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival, and has co-authored *Tune for Tommy*, *Hotline*, and an adaptation of Allan Gurganus' *Plays Well With Others*. He has directed over 150 full length works since 1975 in New York City, Los Angeles, Portland, (Oregon,) Boston, Winter Park, (Florida,) and Dallas. He received his M.F.A. while an actor and director in residence at The Dallas Theater Center and has been Professor of the Practice of Theater, teaching, chairing (former) and directing at Duke University since 1982.

Our Resources

Anne Bogart is a director and writer that lives in New York City. She attended Bard College (BA) and New York University (MA). She is the co-artistic director of [SITI Company](#). Founded in 1992, SITI is an ensemble-based theater company whose three ongoing goals are the creation of new work, the training of young theater artists, and a commitment to international collaboration. She is a professor at Columbia University. She has also written four books: *A Director Prepares*, *The Viewpoints Book*, *And Then, You Act* and *Conversations with Anne*.

Joseph Chaikin, (born 1935, Brooklyn, N.Y., U.S.—died 2003, [New York](#), N.Y.), is an American stage director, actor, and writer. He was a member of the [Living Theatre](#) before founding the Open Theatre (1963), which became an influential force in experimental theatre. His celebrated productions, the results of intense collaboration between writer, director, and actors, included *The Serpent* (1969), *Terminal* (1970), *The Mutation Show* (1971), *America Hurrah* (1966), and *Nightwalk* (1973). He published his ideas about theatre in *The Presence of the Actor* (1972).

Caryl Churchill, (born 1938) is a British playwright known for dramatising the abuses of power, for her use of non-[naturalistic](#) techniques, and for her exploration of sexual politics and [feminist](#) themes. Celebrated for works such as *Cloud 9*, *Top Girls*, *Far Away*, *Love and Information* and *A Number*. She has been described as "one of Britain's greatest poets of and innovators for the contemporary stage".

María Irene Fornés (1930–2018) was a Cuban-American avant-garde playwright and director, who was a leading figure of the [off-off-Broadway](#) movement in the 1960s. Always an iconoclast, each of Fornés's plays was its own world, all vastly different from each other. She won her first Distinguished Plays [Obie Award](#) for *Promenade* and *The Successful Life of 3*. She was also a finalist for the [Pulitzer Prize](#) with her play *And What of the Night?* Other notable works include *Fefu and Her Friends*, *Mud*, *Sarita*, and *Letters from Cuba*. Fornés won a total of nine [Obie Awards](#).

Shaun Heard (guest artist) Shaun Heard was born in Pasadena, California, USA. He is an actor, screenwriter and producer, with an MFA in Acting from the top-ranked USC School of Dramatic Arts.

Liz Lerman. Liz Lerman is a choreographer, performer, writer, teacher, and speaker. She has spent the past four decades making her artistic research personal, funny, intellectually vivid, and up to the minute. A key aspect of her artistry is opening her process to everyone from shipbuilders to physicists, construction workers to ballerinas, resulting in both research and experiences that are participatory, relevant, urgent, and usable by others.

Qui Nguyen is a Vietnamese American, Brooklyn-based playwright, TV writer, stage combat director, and Co-Founder of the OBIE Award-winning Vampire Cowboys Theatre Company of NYC. His work, known for its innovative use of stage violence, puppetry, and multimedia has been called “Wildly Inventive”, “Infectious Fun”, and “Tour De Force Theatre” by The New York Times, Variety, and Time Out New York. The Chicago Tribune praised Qui as a “refreshing, break-the-rules writer,” and Time Out Chicago named his play *She Kills Monsters* one of the 10 Best Plays of 2013.

Suzan-Lori Parks is an American playwright who was the first African American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for drama for her play *Topdog/Underdog*. She was named among *Time* magazine’s “100 Innovators for the Next Wave,” Suzan-Lori Parks is one of the most acclaimed playwrights in American drama today. She is a MacArthur “Genius” Award recipient, and in 2015 was awarded the prestigious Gish Prize for Excellence in the Arts. Parks’ project *365 Days/365 Plays* (where she wrote a play a day for an entire year) was produced in over 700 theaters worldwide, creating one of the largest grassroots collaborations in theater history.

José Rivera is an award-winning screenwriter and playwright. Mr. Rivera has won two Obie Awards for playwriting for *Marisol* and *References To Salvador Dali Make Me Hot*, both produced at The Public Theater in New York. *Celestina*, based on his play *Cloud Tectonics*, will mark his debut as a feature film director. Mr. Rivera has received awards from the Fulbright Arts Fellowship, the McKnight Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. Mr. Rivera’s screenplay for *The Motorcycle Diaries* was nominated for a Best Adapted Screenplay Oscar in 2005 making him the first Puerto Rican born writer to be nominated for an Academy Award.

Sarah Ruhl is a Brooklyn based playwright whose work includes *Stage Kiss*, *In the Next Room, or the vibrator play* (Pulitzer Prize finalist, Tony Award nominee for best new play), *The Clean House* (Pulitzer Prize Finalist, 2005; The Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, 2004.) Her play have been produced on Broadway, Off Broadway and regionally all over the country. She received her M.F.A. from Brown University where she studies with Paula Vogel. She won a MacArthur Fellowship in 2006 and most recently, the [Steinberg Distinguished Playwright Award](#). She is currently on the faculty at Yale School of Drama.

Anna Deavere Smith is an actress, playwright, teacher, and author. Her most recent play and film, *Notes from the Field*, look at the vulnerability of youth, inequality, the criminal justice system, and contemporary activism. The New York Times named the stage version of *Notes from the Field* among The Best Theater of 2016 and *Time* magazine named it one of the Top 10 Plays of the year. HBO premiered the film version in February 2018. Looking at current events from multiple points of view, Smith’s theater combines the journalistic technique of interviewing her subjects with the art of interpreting their words through performance. Plays include *Fires In the Mirror*, *Twilight: Los Angeles* which was nominated for two Tony Awards. *Fires in the Mirror* was runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize.

Konstantin Stanislavsky (born 1863, Moscow, Russia—died 1938, Moscow) was an actor, director, and producer and founder of the [Moscow Art Theatre](#) (opened 1898). He is best known for developing the system or theory of [acting](#) called the Stanislavsky system, or [Stanislavsky method](#). His book *An Actor Prepares* is considered a seminal text on behavior as well as actor's training.

August Strindberg (1849–1912) was a Swedish writer, playwright, and painter. He is ranked among Sweden's most important authors. Strindberg is known as one of the fathers of modern theater. His chief works include *The Father*, *Miss Julie*, *Creditors*, *A Dream Play*, and *The Ghost Sonata*.

Mike Wiley (guest artist) Acclaimed actor and playwright Mike Wiley has spent the last decade fulfilling his mission to bring educational theatre to young audiences and communities across the country. In the early days of his career, Wiley found few theatrical resources to shine a light on key events and figures in African-American history. To bring these stories to life, he started his own production company. Through his performances, Wiley has introduced countless students and communities to the legacies of Emmett Till, Henry “Box” Brown and more. His recent works include a one-man play based on Tim Tyson’s memoir *Blood Done Sign My Name* and *The Parchman Hour*, an ensemble production celebrating the bravery and determination of the Freedom Riders who risked their lives to desegregate Southern interstate bus travel in 1961.

Mike Wiley has a Masters of Fine Arts from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is the 2010 and 2014 Lehman Brady Visiting Joint Chair Professor in Documentary Studies and American Studies at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In addition to his numerous school and community performances, he has also appeared on Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel and National Geographic Channel and has been featured in *Our State* magazine and on PBS’ North Carolina Now and WUNC’s *The State of Things*.

B. Additional Material. Scenes for Assignment 2. *She Kills Monsters*.

Scene One. Chuck and Agnes. **Duet.**

Scene Two. Agnes, Chuck and Miles. (Scene ends CHUCK: "...dark forest to your right and the endless sea to your left.... And then-") **Trio.**

Scene Four. Vera and Agnes. (Cut Steve. Scene ends AGNES: "Oh Crap...") **Duet.**

Scene Seven. Miles, Chuck and Agnes. (Scene ends CHUCK: "Ooooh, nice gloves!" NOTE: In your script this line is noted as "MILES." That is a typo it should be "CHUCK.") **Trio.**

Scene Eight. Agnes and Tilly. (Scene begins on page 41 with AGNES: "...why is everyone here gay?" and ends with TILLY: "No we run! GO!!! NOTE: Cut Kaliopé line.) **Duet.**

Scene Nine. Lilith and Agnes. Scene ends before Vera enters. **Duet.**

Scene Eleven. Vera, Steve and Miles. **Trio.**

Scene Fourteen. Agnes, Chuck and Miles. (Scene ends with AGNES: Roll him up a character sheet.) **Trio.**

Scene Fifteen. Vera and Agnes. Scene ends before Chuck enters. **Duet.**

Scene Fifteen, Agnes, Tilly and Lillith. (Scene starts AGNES: "I'm gretting to know your friends." And Ends at the end of Scene 15. **Trio.**

**C. Additional Material. Characterization/Given Circumstances -Storer-2020
(based on Marcel Proust.)**

You may use this to stimulate creation of your characters and your writing of 1st person characterizations in journal entries.

The following are questions you may ask your character. Things you discover during this exploration may help you to better understand your character within the world of a given exercise or play. These answers do not complete an actor's characterization. They are the very beginning of a journey you take with your character. This is your initial "homework."

Answer the questions in the first person (as the character) as often as possible.

A. Who are you?

1-What is your occupation? (If your character does not work, how does s/he occupy time.)

2-How do you feel about your occupation?

3-How old are you? Chronologically? Mentally?

4-How is your health?

5-How do you respond to animals? Nature?

6-Are you religious?

7-Do you believe in God?

8-What kind of clothes do you wear? At work? At leisure?

9-How would you describe your economic class?

10-Do you read often? What?

11-What is the last novel you read?

12-Describe your sense of humor. Give an example.

B. Where are you? Where did you come from?

1-Who were your parents?

2-What do you remember about them? Be specific.

3-If living; what influence do they have on you? Be specific.

4-What was your childhood like?

5-What year does the play/exercise take place?

6-What city, state, country?

7-Do you have any brothers/sisters? Where are they now? How did they affect you? Do they have influence on you now?

C. Where are you going?

1-What are your goals in life?

2-What are your dreams?

D. Relationships.

1-Who is your best friend?

2-Who are you most uncomfortable around?

3-Have you ever been in love? How often? With whom?

4-What does love mean to you?

5-What happens to you physically when you are in love?

6-What happens to you mentally when you are in love?

E. Atmospheres.

1-Describe the atmosphere you live in. Work in. (concentration of attention.)

2-What kind of lodging do you stay in?

3-Describe your morning ritual?

F. Physical Characteristics.

1-Describe your physique?

2-Where are you centered?

3-What part of your body do you lead with?

4-How tall are you? Actor? Character?

5-How much do you weigh? Actor? Character?

6-Do you have any distinguishing physical mannerisms?

7-Do you have any distinguishing vocal mannerisms?

8-How do your feet touch the ground? Walking? Standing?

9-Where in your body do you carry tension? Actor? Character?

10-Where in your body do you carry weight? Actor? Character?

11-Describe your internal rhythm?

12-What characteristics do you (actor) share with this character.

G. Secrets.

1-What do you like about yourself?

2-What do you dislike about yourself?

3-When are you the happiest?

4-When are you the most depressed?

5-What is your favorite color?

6-What secrets do you keep from your family and friends? From your significant others?

7-What vices do you have? Which is your favorite?

F. Motivation.

1-How do you go about getting what you want?

2-What stops you from achieving your goals?

If one of these questions makes you think of something else, jot it down.

Write your answers in your journal.

Use these questions as a starting point for exploring all your characters.

D. Additional Materials. Basic Warm-Up.

All acting warm-ups should include the following:

- A. Physical and Vocal Stretch
- B. Relaxation
- C. Breathing
- D. Resonation
- E. Articulation

E. Additional Materials. Feedback (based on Liz Lehrman's approach.)

On Giving Feedback:

Some suggestions on "how to give"

- Be specific.
- Focus on what is changeable.
- Speak directly to the receiver of the feedback.
- Speak for yourself (I.)

Some suggestions on "how to receive"

- Listen, be open.
- Ask for examples.
- "understanding" does not equal "agreement"

For Acting classes:

- What did you see?
- How did you feel about what you saw?
- Ask questions directly to the actor about choices s/he made.
- Ask questions directly to 1st person "character" in order to clarify character choices.

F. Additional Materials. Sample Rehearsal log.

Sample Rehearsal Log:

Date:

What was the total time spent rehearsing?:

Who was present?:

Playwright's Intent?

Your character:

Focus of rehearsal:

What was accomplished during the rehearsal?:

Focus of the next rehearsal:

G. Additional Materials. Some Definitions:

Action: is all human activity. Drama is structured action. Dramatic action indicates that something is changing. Action occurs when something happens that makes or permits something else to happen.

Blocking: is where the people are in space; it is action motivated by character and story; it is the three-dimensional shape of the play, the sculpture of the play.

Character: is the actor's interpretation of the human condition as revealed through the story; the tools to create this interpretation are the actor's voice, movement and inner resources. An actor discovers the skeleton of character through dramatic action.

Climax: is a high point of interest for the characters, a single moment following a crisis. It is the instant when conflict is settled.

Conflict: is the essence of drama. What someone wants (motivation) VS. what stands in the way of them getting what they want (obstacle.) The conflict of the play is identified between two battling forces; (see play analysis) most often embodied by characters.

Crisis: is the point at which the audience knows there is no turning back. The two opposing forces are headed for a final confrontation.

Exposition: is the revelation of information needed by the audience to understand the play's action. There are two types of exposition: (1) information known to everyone on stage or (2) information known by only some or one of the characters.

Forward (or plant): is anything that arouses an audience's interest in things yet to come. It is a form of preparation that justifies and enhances the emotional effect of later important action. Often creates anticipation for what will follow.

Given Circumstances: are everything that you have with which to work; the story: its facts, its events, time and place of action, conditions of life; the actor, director and designer's interpretation; all of the collaborative artists involved with the project; the resources: the physical theatre space, lights, costumes, properties, and sound. Always start by directing all your attention to the given circumstances. They are always within reach.

Intention (see motivation, objective): is the character's real reason for performing an action.

a. It begins with "I want to....." or "I must..."

b. It is followed by an active verb. (i.e. sleep or speak or remember; not "to be drunk" or "to be angry")

Intrusion: is a pushing, thrusting, or forcing in. It is the thing that comes along and happens, setting free the irresistible forces that run a play from that point on.

Motivation (see intention, objective): is what drives a character to get what they want.

Obstacle: is any resistance to a character getting what they want.

Plot: the structured action. Plot is the conscious arrangement, or organization, of the events in a story. Something happens, which leads to something else happening, which leads to something else.

Stasis: a condition of balance among various forces; motionlessness; a standing still; an unchanging stability; a state in which all forces balance each other, resulting in no movement.

Story: is the telling of a happening or connected series of happenings. The story is a sequence of certain kinds of events, standing in special relationship to one another.

Tactics: How a character goes about getting what they want; the how; action.

Theme: an abstract concept which part or all of that play is exploring.

Urgency: What is at stake. What will happen if s/he does not get what they want? You must solve the problem in an effort to win. Preserve the happy ending.

H. Additional Materials. Scoring Your Script.

TEXT ANALYSIS AND SCORING YOUR SCRIPT

The first duty of the theatre is toward the playwright.

“Imagine that (the play) is a turkey. You cannot make a single mouthful of a whole turkey. Therefore you must carve it first; cutting off the legs and the wings. There you have the first big divisions. But you cannot swallow even such chunks. So you must carve it into smaller pieces. If the pieces are still too large to swallow, cut your pieces finer and finer still, if necessary. If the meat is tough and dry, give it taste by adding an invention of the imagination or a sauce made of magic ifs. Add more spice from the lives of the director and actors, themselves. That’s what you must do with bits of your part; soak them more and more in the sauce of given circumstances.” Stanislavsky

- A. List *given circumstance* s we know about the play before it begins.

Given Circumstances include the plot of the play, the epoch (particular period of history), the time and place of the action, the conditions of life, the director’s and actor’s interpretations, the setting, the properties, lighting, sound effects—all that an actor encounters while he creates a role. These elements create the environment of the play. The actor must become so involved with the environment that he/she becomes a part of it.

- B. Break the play into *units*.

Each *unit* designates an event. These events must strongly relate to the central idea of the play. An event indicates a portion of the play which encompasses a complete stage in the relationship between the characters and develops the plot. Each event begins with the start of a conflict with the leading character and ends when the leading character ends the action.

An event ends one of two ways: 1) either the leading character achieves the objective or 2) new given circumstances appear forcing interruption of the action.

- C. Name each *unit*.

Give the unit a name that will tell you what happens in that unit.

- D. For each *unit* determine the following things:

Leading character: is the active character, the striving party. It is the character who sustains the conflict, which would immediately die without this effort.

Conflict: is the essence of drama. What someone wants (motivation) V.S. what stands in the way of them getting what they want (obstacle.) The conflict of the play is identified between two battling forces; most often embodied by characters.

Plants (or forwards): are anything that arouses an audience's interest in things yet to come. A form of preparation that justifies and enhances the emotional effect of later important action. Often creates anticipation for what will follow.

Discoveries: new information revealed to the characters. Discoveries can change the course of action. They are very important to an actor. They contribute to the immediacy of the action.

Exposition: is the revelation of information needed by the audience to understand the play's action. There are two types of exposition: (1) information known to everyone on stage or (2) information known by only some or one of the characters.

ANSWER THE FOCUS QUESTIONS! (See page 9.)

E. Working during the rehearsals with the director and other actors you must then break the *units* into finer details:

BEATS: are often established by sensory observations: things you see, hear, smell, touch, taste or feelings that you have.....thoughts, memories.

For each of these *beats* you are searching for a *KEY* and a *CLEAR OBJECTIVE*. An image that will help you find that moment again and again, never to be repeated, but to be rediscovered each time for the first time.

The mistake most actors make is thinking about the result instead of the action that must prepare it.

Looking for the *KEY* which crystallizes the essence of a unit, and discovers the fundamental objective.

NAMING OBJECTIVES/INTENTIONS/MOTIVATION: Objectives must always be a verb. Every objective must carry with it a germ of action. "to be" is too static.

I wish; I want; I need.

It is important that an objective have the power to attract and to excite the actor and their partner.

Motivation/Intention/Objectives should be:

-personal and yet analogous to those of the character you are portraying.

-they must be creative and artistic because their function should be to fulfill the main purpose of our art: to create the life of the human soul and render it in an artistic form.

-they should be truthful so that you yourself, the actors, playing with you and your audience can believe in them.

-they should have the quality of attracting and moving you. In other words, they should be *interesting*.

-they should be clear cut and belong in the world of the play.

-they should have value and content, to correspond to the inner life of your character. They must not be shallow, or skim along the surface.

-they should be active to push your role ahead and not let it stagnate.

F. Identify the **SUPEROBJECTIVE** for the play and for your character.

Superobjective: must relate to the main idea of the play; the essence of the play. The *superobjective* of the character is how he/she wants to be perceived by all other characters of the play. If it is human and directed towards accomplishment of the basic purpose of the play it will be like a main artery, providing nourishment and life to it and the actors.

SCORING YOUR SCRIPT: A WORKSHEET

A. Given Circumstances

B. Break play into Units.

C. Name each Unit.

D. For each Unit determine the following things:

-Situation	(GC)	(MB)	(Moment Before/Given Circumstances)
-Leading Character	(LC)	-Conflict	(C)
-Plants	(P)	-Discoveries	(D)
-Exposition	(E)	-Preparation	(P)
-Objective (Motivation)	(M)	-Action (Tactics)	(T)
-Urgency (Stakes)	(U)	-Obstacle	(OO)
-Relationship	(R)	-Keys	(K)

Additional Material:**“On Your Feet” – A Practical Scene Study for Love and Information**

These exercises allow you to try out the approach the director James Macdonald and the actors used to rehearse the individual scenes in *Love and Information*.

In pairs, read the two short scenes below from *Love and Information*. Once you've finished, select the scene you'd like to work on:

1. Discuss who these two people could be. Make a list of all the possibilities. Remember to consider age, gender and relationship to one another as well as possibly thinking about each character's class, what they do and where they might live.
2. Discuss where they might be in the scene. Are there any clues in the text? Again, list all the places they could be and what activities they might each be doing in those locations.
3. What event might they be discussing in the scene?
4. Try to discover what role information plays in the scene and how love informs the scene.
5. Choose three possible combinations of location and relationship. Read the scene taking in consideration the given circumstance aligned with all three combinations. Choose 1 and begin your text analysis and rehearsal.

Additional Material:

Excerpts from Jose Rivera's 36 assumptions about Playwriting.

4. Write plays in order to organize despair and chaos. To live vicariously. To play God. To project an idealized version of the world. To destroy things you hate in the world and in yourself. To remember and to forget. To lie to yourself. To play. To dance with language. To beautify the landscape. To fight loneliness. To inspire others. To imitate your heroes. To bring back the past and raise the dead. To achieve transcendence of yourself. To fight the powers that be. To sound alarms. To provoke conversation. To engage in the conversation started by great writers in the past. To further evolve the artform. To lose yourself in your fictive world. To make money.

12. Action doesn't have to be overt. It can be the steady deepening of the dramatic situation or your character's steady emotional movements from one emotional/psychological condition to another: ignorance to enlightenment, weakness to strength, illness to wholeness.

14. If realism is as artificial as any genre, strive to create your own realism. If theatre is a handicraft in which you make one of a kind pieces, then you're in complete control of your fictive universe. What are its physical laws? What's gravity like? What does time do? What are the rules of cause and effect? How do your characters behave in this altered universe?

23. Theatre is the explanation of life to the living. Try to tease apart the conflicting noises of living, and make some kind of pattern and order. It's not so much an explanation of life as much as it is a recipe for understanding, a blueprint for navigation, a confidante with some answers, enough to guide you and encourage you, but not to dictate to you.