

# A Physical Work

THEATRE 441-801  
**LAB 2010**

## [Rebecca Holderness

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### Studio 1- Semester 2

#### Authentic Impulse: Physical Theater Training

##### **Introduction:**

Theater communicates through the physical actions, choices of characters in an environment chosen to support that character narrative and action. Live theater's three-dimensionality and physical presence being keys to its unique audience experience. Physical Theater training brings to the actor tools and experiences that enrich and deepen their understanding of how to create the physical aspect of theater with equal authenticity and attention to character action and truthful embodied performance.

##### **Course Objective:**

The objective of this course is to provide the student with an in depth experience of physical theater training. This training provides the actor with the tools and skills to make and sustain bold and original physical and emotive choices when performing.

##### **Course Format:**

The course of class work will follow several classic progression of physical training exercises (Forms,) character work and analysis as organized through The Viewpoints and Anne Bogart, Holderness Theater Company, Jerzy Grotowski, Michael Chekhov, and Stephen Wangh. These Forms consist of movement exercises and improvisations, with and without text, building directly on the Viewpoints work but moving further toward building physical character and use of text. In the final weeks, we will create an in class-performance project which combines composition techniques from the fall movement study with physical theater techniques pursued in the winter/spring semester.

The course's concepts and exercises are supported with the reading of "Acrobat of the Heart" by Stephen Wangh.

##### Learning Outcomes

Intentions for the development of the student actor are as follows:

The student actor will be able to:

- Demonstrate the use of embodied sensation, emotions and physical gesture by utilizing a range of tools to access these techniques
- Create and present a character that demonstrates the interplay between improvisation and use of formal idea
- Build and present compelling imaginative characters
- Demonstrate the use of deep listening and observation skills.
- Create an individual acting practice or "space of investigation."

This will become the diving platform or laboratory (though personal practice) for the research and development of a unique, bold, physical and truthful canon of acting roles and performances.

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Physical theater training is demanding physically and emotionally requiring patience for the self and others. The techniques taught serve as provocations for creativity as well as training for the body.

#### **Course Description:**

Experimental theater, as Steve Wangh suggests in An Acrobat of the Heart, is not an experimental product but a method of making theater through experimentation. The dictionary defines experiment in the following way:

Experiment

N 1: the act of conducting a controlled test or investigation [syn: [experimentation](#)] 2: the testing of an idea; "it was an experiment in living"; "not all experimentation is done in laboratories" [syn: [experimentation](#)] 3: a venture at something new or different; "as an experiment he decided to grow a beard" v 1: to conduct a test or investigation; "We are experimenting with the new drug in order to fight this disease" 2: try something new, as in order to gain experience; "The composer experimented with a new style" [syn: [try out](#)]

[Source](#): Word Net ® 2.0, © 2003 Princeton University

Each of these meanings applies to the work of an actor. And this course is designed to explore each of these kinds of "experimentation." It provides each student a method with which to develop the skills, resources and experiences necessary to begin to answer the question "what is my unique process of creation in the theater."

#### **READING AND MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS: (SHORTER IN CLASS EXERCISES WILL BE ASSIGNED PER NEED.)**

The physical class work is supported by the student's reading of An Acrobat of the Heart- Stephen Wangh (Reading report due at the end of each assigned section as noted below.)

#### **Assignments for the Final Project**

Read Assigned Short Play:

Research, locate copy and collate a picture of each of the characters in the play

Costume and hand prop your character

Create a score for the character.

The Final Project will be evaluated on these criteria

1. Over all quality of presentation:

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Quality in the presentation can be defined as:

- a. Apparent depth of research
- b. Thoughtful consideration of character
- c. Thoughtful consideration of story
- d. Thoughtful consideration of style and action as seen through visual elements,
- e. Clarity in use of character-expression and presentation

Reading:

Stephen Wangh, An Acrobat of the Heart, Vintage Original, New York 2000.

Due As Assigned.

Reading is assigned in a specific order- please read it in that order, responding to each reading with a hundred word response via shared email.

#### **CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PERFORMANCE:**

The goal of this course is to work on performance excellence and mastery of the fundamental elements of performance research as defined in class work and readings:

To meet these goals students will:

- Attend every class (absence may result in automatic lowering of overall grade). In the event of illness, you must contact me prior to the class meeting time.
- Consistently extend past identified boundaries and limitations
- Complete assigned reading and projects
- Work with emotional openness and courage
- Demonstrate respect for themselves and others.

In this class you will be evaluated on your ability to expand your skills **BOLDLY**--past what you are already successful at. To do this, you must challenge yourself by working on increasing your expertise and facing things that might seem intimidating or overwhelming. For example, The student who cannot do a forward roll and attempts the form, and masters it, is deemed more successful than the student who can, at the outset, walk across the room on his/her hands and never attempts to do anything more

In order to frame progress in the course, each student will write a self evaluation early in the semester employing guidelines established for that purpose. This self-evaluation will be used to set goals for the semester. Both the evaluation and goals will be reviewed and confirmed by the instructor. Individual assessment is available to each student throughout the semester upon request.

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An outline used to evaluate students of acting is attached at the end of this document. Your own self-evaluation and mindful attention to this syllabus and class work will help ensure success.

### **SCHEDULE OF EXERCISES:**

#### **Section 1: imagination and flow**

WEEK 1: Warm up and image-play

WEEK 2: Image play- red square

WEEK 3: Frames and Archetypes: Still Image

Reading: Saroyan and Pictures due

Wangh, pages 9-36

#### **Section 2: Boldness, courage and the Corporals**

WEEK 4: The Run By, The Roll, Falling in a group,

WEEK 5: Corporals: the cat and the rope

WEEK 6: Corporals: Headstands and shoulder stands

WEEK 7: Corporals: Tiger Leaps, Heightened Experience through Action

Write and present a character description

Wangh, Pages 60-78

#### **Section 3: the River of impulse**

WEEK 8: Corporals – with Image -Inside out. Physical Forms with performance text.

WEEK 9: Plastique Warm Ups And The River Of Plastiques

WEEK 10: The Container, The Kiss. Isolations- with three body parts in context.

WEEK 11: Plastiques, Physiological Gesture and the objects

WEEK 12: Scoring an improvisation: River and Rocks (set and free elements)

Plan your score using research, duration, floor pattern and ideas of the River

(Consider crisis and preoccupation)

Wangh, Pages 79-124

#### **Section 4: The Final Project: The play's Body**

**A short full staging of the scenes and Moments from your short play project.**

WEEK 13, WEEK 14,

Wangh, Pages 124-135

WEEK 15, - Evaluations

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**CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF STUDENT ACTORS ENGAGED IN PHYSICAL ACTING TRAINING:**

(8/26/10)

EACH QUESTION CAN BE CONSIDERED IN LEVELS OF FAIR, GOOD OR EXCELLENT:

How present with sensation and impulse is the student?

Is the student able to maintain an imaginative physical state in improvisation? In performance?

Can the student create and maintain a physical character that clearly expresses both circumstance and dramatic action?

Is the student physically courageous?

Can the student conduct a period of character research that results in strong physical choices?

## Policies and Procedures

### Participation by Students with Disabilities:

If you need special accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course, please contact me as soon as possible. Provisions of accommodation will be made for students with disabilities. Early information on text titles and syllabus information with a schedule of readings will be made available so that materials can be converted to other forms in a timely manner if necessary. Special provisions will be made for exam and quiz taking and in-class exercises. Contact the Student Accessibility Center at x5822 if you need assistance or have questions on this matter.

### Academic Misconduct

The university has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. If the instructor believes that a student has cheated or plagiarized, he will follow the Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures which are specified in Chapter UWS 14 and Faculty Document No. 1686 and can be found at

[http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Acad\\_Aff/policy/academicmisconduct.html](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Acad_Aff/policy/academicmisconduct.html)

Comment [k1]:

### Complaint Procedures

Students may direct complaints to the head of the academic unit or department in which the complaint occurs. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the head of the department or academic unit in which the complaint occurred or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy.

### Final Examinations

The final examination will be given at the time specified in the final exam scheduled published as part of the Schedule of Classes.

### Grade Appeal Procedures

A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides. These procedures are available in writing from the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College/School.

A more detailed description of the grade Appeal Policy may be found in UWM Selected Academic and Administrative Policies, Policy #S-28 and UWM Faculty

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Document #1243 or on-line at

[http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin\\_policies/S28.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S28.htm)

### **Incomplete Grades**

An incomplete may be given to a student who has carried a subject successfully until near the end of the semester but, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond that student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. An incomplete is not given unless the student proves to the instructor that s/he was prevented from completing course requirements for just cause as indicated above. For additional information see UWM Faculty Document #1558 [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin\\_policies/S31.pdf](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S31.pdf)

### **Military Service**

Accommodation will be made for students who must temporarily interrupt their studies when called to active duty military service according to university policies and procedures. Go to <http://www3.uwm.edu/des/web/registration/militarycallup.cfm> for more detailed information.

### **Religious Observances**

Students will be allowed to complete examinations or other requirements that are missed because of a religious observance. The instructor will make every effort to accommodate students who face conflicts between their academic responsibilities and religious commitments. A copy of the university policy is located on the web at [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad+admin\\_policies/S1.5.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad+admin_policies/S1.5.htm). In addition, links to the current religious calendar can be found at [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Acad\\_Aff/policy/](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Acad_Aff/policy/).

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is reprehensible and will not be tolerated by the University. It is damaging to the academic community as a whole, and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well being of students, faculty, and staff. When, through fear of reprisal, a student, student-employee, staff member, or faculty member submits or is pressured to submit to unwanted sexual attention, the University's ability to carry out its mission is undermined.

Sexual harassment, as defined in s. 111.32(13) and by UWM's sexual harassment policy, includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature where the two parties are of unequal power. Harassment between equals is also possible. Conduct which



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unreasonably interferes with an individual's work or educational performance or which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for work or learning also constitutes sexual harassment. UWM policy prohibits all sexual harassment including consenting amorous or sexual relationships between an instructor and student or an employee and supervisor.

If you may have suffered from sexual harassment or have first-hand knowledge of such treatment, report it to someone in authority at the University or to the Office of Equity/Diversity Services, Mitchell 359. For information, counseling, or to file a complaint, contact the Office of Equity/Diversity Services or call 229-5923.

[http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Grad\\_Sch/Publications/HandBook/Administrative/index.html#Discriminatory](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Grad_Sch/Publications/HandBook/Administrative/index.html#Discriminatory)

### **Student Conduct**

Certain UW System rules passed by the Board of Regents address academic and non-academic misconduct by students, defining violations and establishing disciplinary guidelines. Penalties for violating these rules include fines, suspensions, expulsions, or even imprisonment. Complete UWM and UW System student discipline policies are available on the Web at <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/DOS/conduct.html> and in the Office of Student Life, Mellencamp 118.