TH234 Acting and Directing: Realism

Seminar Leader: David Levine
Course Times: Monday, 17:00-20:00
Email: d.levine@bard.berlin.edu

Course Description
This is a studio performance class. Students will examine techniques of acting and directing in the psychological realist mode, as well as the transformations, uses, and assumptions these techniques have incorporated since their codification by Stanislavski. What does it mean to be "in character?" What does it take for a performance to be "realistic," and does this realism resemble, at all, the world as we experience it? The course engages with a single play: Chekhov’s *Cherry Orchard*, augmenting our study of the play with movie screenings, presentations, and visits to Berlin theaters.

Requirements
Participants will, until the final project, alternate between working as actors and working as directors. In both capacities, participants are expected to work constructively with their collaborators, and to commit themselves fully to their assigned task or role.

Performed assignments must be ready to present at the start of class. NO EXCEPTIONS. Assignments that begin late will be factored into your final participation grade.

Attendance
Attendance at ALL classes is expected (lateness counts as an absence). Because this course meets once weekly for three hours, you will be allowed two separate ninety-minute absences (or one absence from an entire class). Every additional absence will result in the demotion of one-half of a letter grade [e.g. from A- to B+] for the term.

Assessment:
Class participation: 40%
(preparation; co-operation; involvement in discussions)

Performed assignments: 40%

Final performance 20%
Scheduling:
As theaters only post their schedules one month in advance, and as enrollment and student scheduling is not yet clear, certain assignments in the syllabus may be subject to change depending on opportunities to attend shows.

WEEK 1:
In Class: Go over the syllabus. Reading and discussion of realism and *The Cherry Orchard*.

WEEK 2:
Assignment: Prepare “nighttime” exercise.
In class: Present exercise.

WEEK 3:
Assignment: Do “nighttime” in character. Prepare a character analysis.
In class: Present nighttime exercises. Re-read: *The Cherry Orchard*.

WEEK 4:
Assignment: Do a new “nighttime” exercise with a different character.
In class: Present new “nighttime” exercises. Discuss directing.

WEEK 5:
Assignment: Direct a one-page scene.
In class: Present and discuss one-page scenes.

WEEK 6:
Assignment: Improve the direction of the one-page scene.
In class: Present improved one-page scenes.

WEEK 7:
Assignment: Read “Uncle Vanya”.
In class: Watch and discuss “Vanya on 42nd Street”.
WEEK 8:
Assignment: Write a scene analysis from an actor’s or director’s point of view (scene TBD).

In class: Discuss and attempt to stage these scene analyses, from both the actors’ and directors’ points of view.

WEEK 9:
Assignment: Read Weiss, Marat/Sade

In class: Joint screening/discussion of Marat/Sade with Ewa Anastassow’s Revolution class.

WEEK 10:
Assignment: Prepare a two-page scene as actors or directors.

In class: Present and discuss two-page scenes. Discuss final project assignments.

WEEK 11:
Assignment: Decide on whether you want to be an actor or director for your final project. Prepare an etude from the point of view of a new character.

In class: Present and discuss etudes. Watch film version of “The Cherry Orchard.”

WEEK 12:
Assignment: Prepare initial sketches for final projects (TBD)

In class: Present and discuss initial sketches.

WEEK 13:
Assignment: Prepare refined versions of final project assignments.

In class: Present and discuss refined versions.

WEEK 14:
Assignment: Prepare still-more virtuosic and detailed versions of final project assignments.

In class: Present and discuss refined versions.
COMPLETION WEEK:
Public presentation of final project(s).

Course reading:
Anton Chekhov: *The Cherry Orchard*, in translations by Senelick, Dunnigan, and Schmidt.

Background reading (on reserve)
Artaud, *The Theater and it’s Double*
Brecht, *Brecht on Theater*
Grotowski: *Towards a Poor Theater*
Stanislavski, *Building a Character*  
*Creating a Role*  
*An Actor Prepares*
Cole & Chinoy, *Directors on Directing*
Cole & Chinoy, *Actors on Acting*
Bartow, *The Director’s Voice*