

Call for Applications

The 2014 Luxembourg European Annual Theatre Summer School will be held at the *Centre d'Accueil Clairefontaine*, our home on the Luxembourg–Belgium border, from **Saturday 26th July to Sunday 3rd August 2014** inclusive. This will be the 27th edition of a Summer School that continues to evolve, nourish, nurture and enrich.

Applications are called for the 2014 Summer School. Below is a brief summary of the School and details of the courses offered this year. Applications can be made on-line at www.leadss.lu or by contacting admin @ leadss.lu. Those of you not familiar with LEATSS can find full information on the website.

The School

LEATSS is a collaborative, project-based, week-long, residential summer school for actors, directors and music theatre singers as well as – less regularly – writers/devisors. It is particularly suited to amateur enthusiasts (and those who may be a little hesitant) who wish to develop and improve their practical skills, knowledge, understanding and capabilities.

We provide expert professional tuition within a friendly and fully supportive environment. All tutors are professional theatre practitioners and teachers and our tutor-to-participant ratio is high (about 1:12). LEATSS is primarily an adult school, but because the emphasis is on process and not product (how can we do it, not how well do we perform), we can encompass a wide range of age, experience and skill.

The Course

Our course follows the "Munsbach model" developed at our original home in Luxembourg whereby activity revolves entirely around project work designed to accommodate and integrate the different strands. Tutors work with students throughout the day and the various projects interweave from time to time : there are sessions where staff move across from one project to another ; particular explorations may be shared or pooled ; there may be developments that briefly pull in the entire student body. By the end of the week, everyone should have sampled something of the experience of everyone else.

We are active throughout each day, with time off on Thursday afternoon and evening. Although the course is intensive the atmosphere is relaxed, and we ensure that there is time – in breaks, around the grounds and winding down at the end of the day – to chat and share the experience.

The Tutors

GRAEME DU FRESNE	Course Director (teacher, musical and theatrical director and actor)
JANICE DUNN	(director, writer, deviser, and teacher)
PETA LILY	(actor, writer, director and teacher)
PHILIPPA STRANDBERG-LONG	(actor, director and actor trainer)

The tutors' biographies are posted on the LEATSS website.

The Projects

THEME course (*Taking Liberties*) : acting, singing. Each student takes one of the four options offered.

SKILLS course : acting, singing, directing. Each student takes one of the four options offered.

STUDENT Project (*World War 1*): This smaller project involves student director/leaders working with student actors over a number of working sessions. To mark the centenary of the start of the "Great War", all pieces worked on will have their inspiration in this war. Many – if not all – will be original writing.

Theme Project Work : TAKING LIBERTIES

A few years ago we tackled the theme of WAR at summer school and with this year marking the centenary of the start of the First World War – the ironically named “Great War” – we felt we needed to reflect in some way this momentous event without repeating what had done before. The outcome has been an attempt to retain some element of what is inherently threatened by war, namely freedom and liberty, but to look at these issues in a wider context.

Each tutor will confine their work to a particular aspect of freedom/liberty, based on plays and musicals that have freedom as an essential plot line such as the so-called holocaust plays: Arthur Miller’s *Playing For Time* and Sobol’s *Ghetto*, or that deal with the yearning for freedom as in the prison-located drama *Kiss Of The Spider Woman*. Another aspect of freedom/liberty is the master/servant or master/slave relationship dealt with in plays such as Goldoni’s *Servant of Two Masters*, Churchill’s *Cloud Nine* (masters, servants and Victorian values in 19th Century Africa) or Shakespeare’s *Comedy Of Errors*. Tony Kushner’s *Angels In America* deals with freedom to express one’s sexual orientation and what he sees as the ‘American Dream’ fallacy. (Kushner wrote “The white cracker who wrote the national anthem knew what he was doing. He set the word ‘free’ to a note so high nobody can reach it.”)

Other aspects of freedom will be explored in courses that range from work that develops physical, creative, emotional and performing freedom to acting processes designed to look at creating and building a character in new and freer ways.

You might have noticed that there is no reference to the 1st World War amongst the plays mentioned above. This is deliberate. We will focus on that war in The Student Project (Project 3). For those of you unfamiliar with summer school, please refer to the web site for details about this project.

THEME PROJECTS

Graeme Du Fresne : Singing and acting – *Tunes of Tyranny*

The withdrawal or denial of freedom and liberty is central to the subject matter of this year’s singing course. We will be working on songs from various sources but mainly from musical theatre. A few of the possibilities that we will be working on are : *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, Stephen Sondheim’s early comedy about slaves and masters; *Pacific Overtures* (imperialism and invasion of a sovereign country); *Parade* (anti-Semitism and wrongful conviction of a prisoner); *Cabaret* (set against the background of the Nazi rise to power); *Ragtime* (racism and the American dream); *Blitz* (the 2nd world war as it affected the bombed communities of London’s east end); and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (torture and imprisonment).

I shall be using techniques and processes I have developed over the past year combining the influences of Laban and Stanislavski whilst maintaining a daily routine of singing warm ups and techniques. The structure of the course will allow for solo singing, small groups and ensemble work.

Janice Dunn : Acting – *Play to Play the PLayer*

This course will examine both personal and creative freedom via play texts and performance styles. We will begin the course with an investigation of the "secret" play, *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit*, written by Nassim Soleimanpour, an Iranian writer trapped in his own country. The play is only ever performed by any actor once. They are handed an envelope containing the script onstage, open it and perform there and then, as instructed. The play is Nassim's gift to other artists, and the world. It was smuggled out of Iran and has since been performed worldwide.

Other texts may include *Manifesto* (concerning the Norwegian murderer/political activist Anders Breivik), *Pallach* (about the Czech self-immolator Jan Pallach), *The Laramie Project* (a verbatim play about the gay-hate murder of a young student in Colorado), *Three Sisters* love (dealing with life, longing and suffocation), *Singer* (about persecution and redemption), and possibly some Arthur Miller.

We will use elements of solo and ensemble work to examine the texts, some of which will include environmental approaches, performance art techniques (such as interventions), montage, stand-up, cabaret, and possibly multi-media (steady on chaps.) It will be playful yet also thoughtful, with an emphasis on experience and experiment; held within a safe and supportive environment. There will be new discoveries and acting challenges for both the experienced and newer performer.

It sounds terribly worthy doesn't it? It will actually be challenging and lots of fun, and will allow participants the space to examine the more potent, anarchic, and fundamental elements of their inner performer.

Peta Lily : Acting/ Performing – Three Colours Freedom

This course aims to be a confidence-building spring-clean (or summer school clean) of the relationship between your own voice, physicality, emotions, imagination and the performing space.

I will be sharing exercises that have been fuelling my theatre performing and theatre making career for many years, including approaches drawn from eclectic fields such as Keith Johnstone, Augusto Boal, the Sedona Method, the work of multi-discipline master Arnold Mindell and Five Rhythms dance practice, yet always in an atmosphere of play and with the right balance of support and challenge. Plus practical exercises like Dealing with the Inner Critic.

Freedom to feel : Tap into a wider range of emotions with greater ease and specificity as we use safe and non-threatening ways to grow our ability to express a full emotional spectrum and portray emotion more visibly and believably. Performance becomes more compelling and authentic.

Freedom to be different : Students are invited to bring a piece of text (approx 2 mins) to be used in a number of different ways. Choose a speech for a character you might not normally expect to play, or something that would stretch your physicality or emotional range such as Medea, Falstaff, Kafka's Gregor, Hedda Gabler or Hamlet. Feel free to make a bold choice.

Freedom to create : If we were inventing a show about Freedom, what would it include? Using key ingredients of Freedom (curiosity and follow-through) we will also turn for inspiration to scenes from the film trilogy *Three Colours* by Polish film-maker Kieślowski.

Philippa Strandberg-Long : Acting – Freedom in Action

Having found that a lot of students struggle with the concept of Actioning* (or Verbing) a text while still keeping performance spontaneous, I decided to find a way for students to understand and use Actions in a freer way.

The notion of 6 Basic Actions was used by The Group Theatre in New York in the 1930's but was never formalised within actor training, just passed down by a handful of acting teachers. They believed that these six basic actions incorporated the human response to all situations, to a greater or lesser extent.

Through experimentation and my own research I have come up with a series of exercises using these actions, which keeps the actor still plotting their actions but instead of feeling confined to the word they have chosen, it now gives them a huge freedom within the text to make personal choices and create a purely spontaneous performance over and over again.

By using plays like *A Doll's House* where the text, genre and given circumstance limit the actors' choices, I aim to show that by exploring these six basic actions within the subtext of each scene, we can unlock truly connected and surprising performances. Other texts we will be working on during the week include *Angels In America* by Tony Kushner.

* For those of you unfamiliar with the term; ACTIONING is a process developed by Konstanin Stanislavski. You will find a brief outline of the main points of the process under the 2014 Theme course on the LEATSS website.

SKILLS PROJECTS

Graeme du Fresne : Singing – **Site Singing**

We shall be singing on location around the buildings and grounds of Clairefontaine. Outside, we'll be around the fountain, along by the stream, in the gardens and woods, whilst inside, we'll explore some of the spaces that offer interesting acoustics such as stairwells. We could also use the chapel to give us some lovely possibilities for liturgical material. The music room itself will be used for a more conventional setting. We'll 'knit' all this together with some travelling music we can sing en route to each location (never a moment wasted!).

I'll be introducing some new singing techniques this year which I have been developing as a result of the experience I had attending a teacher's training summer school in 2013, a couple of weeks after ours finished (now I know what it feels like to be a participant!).

Janice Dunn : Directing – **Getting Intimate With Acting**

This directing course will examine the area of "intimacy", and how to help your actors achieve it. Whether we require physical or emotional intimacy and revelation it can be a tricky course for a director to steer. How to offer support and help to your actors so they can release the potential of performer and play is at the crux of this course.

We will look at audition techniques suitable for a variety of requirements, and how they can be best utilised.

We will develop skills for creating a "safe space", and how to maintain it.

We will examine how best to use improvisation and exercises so that they can actually be useful when back on text, and not a waste of rehearsal time.

We will practically experience the tools for positive character development.

We will explore techniques for "release", and look at how to help actors achieve intimate work, that can work for both cast and production.

We will do this by using examples of texts with "difficult" moments / themes. (Participants may also have text suggestions to offer.).

Peta Lily : Clown and Dark Clown – **Should I Really be Laughing at This?**

What is Dark Clown? A chance to play with a darker kind of humour....an experiment with the edges of laughter.....a way to make a more exciting rapport with audiences.

I have been developing a fairly unique body of Dark Clown work since the 1980's. People report the work liberating, cathartic and useful. The Clown Doctors of Europe say the work gives them more scope to create rapport and laughter with people. Actors say it gives them a wider understanding of what it is to be human.

While the Red Nose Clown performs out of sheer exuberance, Dark Clown performs under a harsher compulsion. The Red Nose Clown has no past and a cartoon-like ability to bounce back from pratfalls, slaps and accidents. The Dark Clown has seen it all, feels it all and has no choice but to 'sell' his own pain for our entertainment. One experiences wonder, the other gazes at the abyss. The audience laughs, but while asking themselves: 'Should I really be laughing at this?'

Dark Clown work:

- develops emotional range and liberates energy for the performer
- takes regular clown and comedy skills to a new level
- provides a way to implicate as well as entertain audiences
- provides a way to deal with the dark absurdities of the world, when drama and sentiment may fall short of touching us

The course starts with an introduction (or review) of joyful Red Nose Clown work. We look at the principles of audience engagement and learn handy techniques for creating, building and managing laughter which then get applied to the Dark Clown work, which is approached step by step, through a series of exercises.

Philippa Strandberg-Long : Acting – The Reality of Doing

Created by the late Sanford Meisner, a theatre practitioner and actor, the Meisner technique is widely recognised, especially in the United States, as being one of the most important techniques for an actor to master. Having in recent years had more and more exposure in Europe, the demand and interest in the process has never been higher.

The technique hones in on Stanislavsky's concept of COMMUNICATION, and highlights the importance of listening and reacting to the other actors. Through a series of exercises, carefully selected to follow on one from another, they train the actor's observation and communication skills, ultimately teaching us how to read the behaviour of others.

One of Meisner's most recognised exercises is The Repetition, where emotional and physical changes in the other actor are observed and repeated between the actors, in turn creating new behaviour and stronger listening and reacting.

Repetition is followed by The Activity exercise where the actors are encouraged to pursue an activity with a strong imaginary reason, while at the same time having to interact with another actor, thereby creating real emotions out of imaginary circumstances.

The training is incredibly beneficial to actors and not only helps them stay in the moment and communicate truthfully, but also curbs self-consciousness on stage.