

# Classical and Shakespearean Performance in London

Spring 2022-Regan Borucke

Currently, I am studying abroad in London at NYU Tisch's Shakespeare in Performance program at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, England. It has been the most phenomenal experience. The courses are exciting, comprehensive, and intense and the instructors are all fantastic. The course is divided into several modules (some, not all of which I have described in detail below) with almost all of them culminating in graded presentations about once every two weeks. There were only 16 people selected for this program and I am the only one who does not hail from an acting conservatory, which I believe is a testament to UVA's dedication to the arts. I am incredibly grateful and honored that I get to represent my school at two of the finest acting institutions in the world.

## Clown:

Course Instructor: Jeremy Stockwell

In clown, we each grouped off and chose clown scenes from Shakespeare's text. A "clown" in Shakespeare typically refers to one of two figures; either a rural individual whose ignorance is the butt of the joke, the comic relief, or the court jester who pairs satire and pointed commentary with rude and crass humor. We learned that there are four important things to establish in each clown scene; where are you, what is your status, what is your objective and what is your obstacle. The idea of "status p" was particularly interesting to me because it does not necessarily correlate to class status. In the scene, I performed I played Feste (Twelfth Night Act 2 Scene 3). Although Feste is a jester and the other characters, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, are knights, we decided that Feste is of higher status because he is more intelligent and is making fun of the knights with them being too drunk and stupid to notice. As an Actress, physical comedy has always been one of my weaknesses, but I feel a lot more comfortable with that now that I took these courses.

## Speech into Speeches:

Course Instructor: Adrienne Thomas

For this speech class, we each had to pick a monologue and use it for an in-depth process of exploring language through the body and senses. The goal is to aid us in the development of our monologues and our preparation process as we develop a portfolio of pieces. We are asked to challenge ourselves by working on material distinct from our "casting type" (gender, age, etc.) and to not pick speeches with the idea of "oh I could use this for an audition". I decided to pick Romeo's "Soft, what light through yonder window breaks" speech because I wanted the challenge of a well-known monologue that I would have to make my own.

## Stage Combat:

Instructor: Zhenya Leverett

My favorite class I have had so far is stage combat, where we worked on broadsword fight scenes. We learned about the different parts of the broadsword (the forte, the foible, the crossguard, the true edge, etc.) , the footwork, and the different parries. We also learned about telling a story through fighting, why characters fight and how to set our intentions while remaining safe. All of our work culminated in a British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat fight test, where we were evaluated by an official BSSC adjudicator. I did a scene from Henry IV part one. My friend Annie was Prince Hal and I was Hotspur. Annie had to kill me by cutting open my guts, which was fun but challenging to execute. One of the greatest lessons I learned from my instructors was thinking of each swing as expressions of the character's motivations rather than pieces of choreography. I am very proud of the work we all did, and I am happy to say that all 16 members of the NYU Tisch RADA program passed and have now earned our 3-year certifications from BSSC!

## 15 Minute Shakespeare:

Course Instructor: Gary Langden

Another favorite module of mine is the "15 Minute Shakespeare" presentation. Our group of 16 divided into two and rehearsed a 15-minute digest of a Shakespeare play. We only have two hours to prepare before we present it to the other half of our group. The idea is to test our ability to swing confidently into the performance of Shakespeare with skill and flair and to encourage the construction of an ensemble. My group did *Macbeth* and the other *Hamlet*. I enjoyed working with Gary Langden, our director for this project, as well as my peers. Almost all of us were able to memorize the lines for the show within two hours and I was shocked how well we performed under the pressure of the time constraints.

## Masque:

Instructors: Faye Maughan, Vivian Munn, Andrew Charity

Over the course of three weeks, we worked with a period dance specialist, a musical director, and a director on the production of a masque; a form of amateur dramatic entertainment popular among the nobility in 16th and 17th century England. It consisted of text, several songs, and several period-accurate dances. The goals of this class were to promote our awareness of the lyricism and grace embodied in the people

who were performing these works and to gain an insight into the manners and etiquette of the Shakespearean era.

### Shakespeare Our Contemporary:

Instructor: Suzanne West

For three weeks we work with a director to examine themes within a Shakespeare play and explore our discoveries with a performance. The project is designed to link aspects of Shakespeare with present-day ideas, and the final script we create is about 50% Shakespeare and 50% outside material. We have to either research modern material, or we could write our own. The goals of this project are to explore the contemporary significance of Shakespeare's theme, to deepen our understanding of the social issues in the characters and plot, and to examine how Shakespeare's work informs contemporary material. We are currently working on this project and we have been assigned *Romeo and Juliet* with the theme of body autonomy. I am currently working on collecting pieces about AI, robots, and sexual consent.

**Budget Note: All of the money I received from Miller Arts Scholars was used to offset NYU Tuition.**