

THE 2023 SUMMER SCHOOL

OVERVIEW

- Summer School:** A week-long, residential theatre summer school for actors, developers/directors, musical theatre singers and writers/devisers based around two main projects. Participants can select 1 of the 4 options offered in each project.
- Tutors:** Professional theatre practitioners who also teach at accredited drama schools
- Dates:** **Saturday 22nd to Sunday 30th July 2023** inclusive
- Venue:** The *Centre d'Accueil Clairefontaine* on the Luxembourg–Belgium border.
- Applications:** Detailed information and on-line applications at www.leadss.lu or email to admin@leadss.lu
- Workshop:** Due to logistical problems, there will not be a live workshop at Summer School this year.

SUMMER SCHOOL

The School

LEATSS is a collaborative, project-based summer school 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 and a high tutor-to-participant ratio (about 1:12). 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. LEATSS is, however, primarily an adult school.

The Work

Activity revolves entirely around **project or course work** designed to accommodate and integrate the different options offered. 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 course 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 work 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, to share the experience and rewind.

LEATSS also offers an **intensive workshop** which is separate from the main Summer School. As it runs simultaneously, students cannot do both. This course is detailed in a separate document.

The Courses

The banner theme for 2023 is **SCALING THE HEIGHTS**.

Students choose to follow an option from each of the following courses:

THEME: acting, devising, musical theatre singing. Four options are offered, each student takes one.

SKILLS: acting, directing, singing. Four options are offered, each student takes one.

There is also a third, student-led but tutor-mentored, 4-hour practical course for actors, devisers, leaders.

The Tutors

GRAEME DU FRESNE	Course Director; musical director, singing teacher, director, actor
JANICE DUNN	director, choreographer, writer, deviser, teacher
BRENDAN MURRAY	playwright, director, teacher, actor
CEZANNE TEGELBERG	director, deviser, performer

The tutors' biographies are posted on the LEATSS website.

The Course Options

THEME:

Graeme Du Fresne	Taking a Part (<i>singing/acting through song</i>) songs, mainly from musical theatre, with solo opportunities
Janice Dunn	Modern Parts (<i>acting</i>) a romp through some of the most exciting, dynamic, and challenging plays of the past 20 years
Brendan Murray	How to Succeed at Being a Failure (<i>acting</i>) discovering the living, breathing, fallible – all too human – people in Chekhov's plays
Cézanne Tegelberg	The Hairpin and the Wolf (<i>acting</i>) devising dramatic pieces using mind, body and other objects

SKILLS:

Graeme Du Fresne	A Century of Song (<i>singing</i>) 20 th century music through technique, harmonies and a <i>cappella</i>
Janice Dunn	Get on Your Feet, Get Up and Make it Happen (<i>directing</i>) how to really bring a play to life
Brendan Murray	Cracking the Character Code (<i>acting</i>) a practical approach to acting in contemporary plays through unwrapping the text
Cézanne Tegelberg	In Search of Magical Moments (<i>acting</i>) combining impulse with physical theatre

Details are below and also posted on the LEATSS website.

The Timetable

Summer School starts with lunch at 12:30 on Saturday 22nd followed by an introduction to the school, explanations and tasters of the courses, voting for course options and then a working session after supper. It ends at lunchtime on Sunday 30th. Students can stay at the venue on the night of Friday 21st by prior arrangement with the LEATSS administrator.

Cost

Student fees cover tuition, board and lodging, tea and coffee, and a picnic excursion on Thursday afternoon. Prices vary depending on the type of accommodation:

- 910 € (shared accommodation –multi-bed room)
- 930 € (shared accommodation – double room)
- 1 000 € (single – limited number)
- 1 000 € (shared in a double room with bathroom – only 2 available)
- 1 080 € (single room with bathroom – limited number)
- 710 € (day student, including all meals)

5 scholarships are available for people who could otherwise not afford to come to summer school at a fee of 370 € (multi-bed shared accommodation).

Course Details

COURSE 1: THEME – SCALING THE HEIGHTS

GRAEME DU FRESNE **TAKING A PART** (singing/acting through song)

Songs, mainly from musical theatre, with opportunities for solo work

Following a number of successful online solo singing courses over the past few years, there have been several requests to offer this at summer school. However, the work at summer school is designed and delivered in such a way that the entire group of participants are engaged in class work for most of the time. I am therefore offering a course comprising songs that have multiple characters, enabling the possibility of solos within of each song but crucially keeping the whole group working on the material most of the time. We will take apart each song, all learning the music together, followed by offering (voluntary) opportunities for participants to take a solo part.

We will also be working on finding and developing the characters in each piece. The songs will be drawn from Musical Theatre and Pop and may include: *Piano Man* by Billy Joel, *Play* from Gary Barlow's *Finding Neverland*, *Someone In A Tree* from Sondheim's *Pacific Overtures*, *Cell Block Tango* (Chicago), *Hello* (The Book Of Mormon), *Who Will Buy* (Oliver) and *Somewhere In The Middle Of Nowhere* (Come From Away).

JANICE DUNN **MODERN PARTS** (acting)

A romp through some of the most exciting, dynamic and challenging plays of the past 20 years

An opportunity, as an actor, to try out scenes and characters from some well-known, and lesser known, contemporary dramas.

We will examine character, performance style and trends in recent dramatic writing, exploring both practically and dynamically. We will work together as one group as well as in laboratory style, and in smaller groups, whilst utilising the many spaces and opportunities that Clairefontaine affords us.

Participants will have the option to focus on developing scenes/ character from one or two pieces, or trying out a wider variety of roles and works, throughout the course. We will work with impulse, units, and beats, and utilise a variety of explosive rehearsal processes to get under the skin of the play. These exercises will be both on and off text.

We will be looking at sections / snippets from a wide range of pieces, rather than whole actual plays; and all of them will, in one way or another, concern identity, choice, responsibility and meaning.

Some of the works may include:

Martin McDonagh (*Trilogies, The Hangman, A very, very, very dark matter*)
 Sophie Waller-Bridge (*Fleabag, Killing Eve*)
 Conor McPherson (*Shining City, The Weir*)
 Laura Wade (*Posh, Breathing Corpses*)

Some of these may change, and may also include other diverse writers/ new works.

It will be a lot of fun, and a useful experience for all performers, irrespective of age or experience. It will also serve as a good introduction to text work generally, and the world of contemporary drama writing in particular.

(If you have any form of dyslexia, or worries with reading aloud, or talking about 'clever' plays in front of others, please be reassured that there will be no pressure placed on you at all. You will be bringing a huge amount to the process, you will be well looked after by everyone, and you are very, very welcome in the room. We will be acting, having fun, discovering stuff, and learning from each other.)

BRENDAN MURRAY **HOW TO SUCCEED AT BEING A FAILURE (acting)**

Discovering the all-too-real people in Anton Chekhov's character-based plays

The trouble with being one of the most famous dramatists in history is that you come with a lot of baggage. Most of it, other people's. It's certainly true of Chekhov. We either tremble before him (intimidated by his genius, past productions and famous interpretations), or dismiss his work as gloomy, boring and devoid of action.

If this is your idea of Chekhov and his plays, let me invite you to look again. And if you're *not* familiar with his work, allow me to introduce you to the dramatist I love beyond all others: the most humane chronicler of human failings: heart-breaking, hilarious and painfully true.

Like no-one before him (and possibly no-one since) Chekhov creates not characters in a *play* but people – living, breathing people – dealing with love, loss and longing, and discovering that they (like us!) are neither heroes nor villains but fallible human beings – destined to fail, perhaps, but never giving in. They are survivors and offer us, as actors, an exciting range of unforgettable opportunities.

Working from new, idiomatic English translations, discover how Chekhov finally lost the plot (literally!) and became the world's greatest character-based playwright.

If you love acting, I think I can promise you'll love this.

CEZANNE TEGELBERG **THE HAIRPIN AND THE WOLF (devised performance)**

Using multiple techniques and sources to create miniature pieces of work

Devising can be defined as the collective teasing out of material through exercises and play. Diving in at the deep end and creating spontaneous work, without having a script or story to lean on, is a bit like starting with a blank piece of paper. This can be daunting, but with guidance and sharing of individual responses, everyone can thrive in creating devised work.

We will play around and experiment, follow little obsessions – can I get this hairpin to speak and then create a wolf with it – and come up with material freely, whilst receiving help (from me, but also from your fellow group members) to make it into something brilliant. By the end of the process, no one will remember who came up with what, but everyone's creativity will have been vital to the process. Unique work follows, without exception.

During this course we will be working with our own creativity, our bodies and object manipulation. A range of exercises will help you to find magical images and build entire worlds using very little more than your own bodies, a few objects and the audience's imagination. We will then use these images

to create fairy tales of our own, using story-building techniques, narration, live sound effects and whatever else our imaginations might come up with.

Expect shadow play, large pieces of paper, chairs, water bottles and hair pins. Throughout the week, the work will lead to miniature pieces of work created (or 'found') entirely by the participants themselves, from scratch. A highly creative submersion into the art of devised theatre.

COURSE 2: SKILLS

GRAEME DU FRESNE **A CENTURY OF SONG (singing techniques)**

A delight of 20th century music through technique, harmonies and a cappella

The 20th century was a time of vast change in music. Classical music underwent a massive shift to new musical languages, whilst Musical Theatre and Jazz were born. In the second half of the century Rock & Roll, Pop and Rock emerged. An amazing 100 years of creative endeavour and invention.

In this course we will work on singing technique, sing around the piano, venture outside for some a cappella work, sing some harmonies, discover, and delight in a wide range of 20th century music from Bacharach to Barber; the Beatles to Bernstein, Goodhall to Gershwin and Sondheim to Schwartz.

JANICE DUNN **GET ON YOUR FEET, GET UP AND MAKE IT HAPPEN * (directing)**

** Song by Gloria Estefan*

A directing course for anyone who wants to really bring a play to life

This is a course aimed at both experienced and new directors. It tries to attack the age-old question of how we get a dynamic, connected and meaningful production out of a random group of 'weird' people (including ourselves), who all want different things, via different methods.

How do we bring a diverse group, with diverse life and creative experiences together, and use those things to our advantage?

How do we make a space/ rehearsal room that allows for creativity to spark, exist, grow and deliver?

How do we keep on track with the play, and drive it forward, so the meaning opens up to us all, and so to the audience?

How do we bring the characters and text ALIVE!!!

Two of our biggest challenges as directors are 'unlocking' plays and actors, and 'building up' the work during the process. This is what we will base our work on throughout the week.

The 'building' work is the basis of how we grow a play, realise a vision, or make the production our own. The work is continuous: from first day of rehearsal to the run of the show. We will practically examine a range of options that 'build' the play. These include:

- 'Forum' and 'group work' exercises for developing a company or ensemble effort;
- Status, 'states of tension', and Laban work for the growing of character, and the character relationships in the play;
- Visualised and dynamic methods for helping a cast to positively use the shape and flow of the text and narrative.

The course also cherry picks some of the most useful techniques, exercises and interventions for 'unlocking' the potential of a cast or play. These include:

- 'explosive' exercises, for climactic or cathartic scenes;
- 'dream' techniques' for getting actors or scenes out of a rut; carefully prepped 'guided or extended roleplay' for back story and sub-text;

- as well as a further range of individual and group exercises that bring new light to under-powered roles and stifled moments, which can then feed back into the play.

The course will be fast paced, hands on, and offer many practical opportunities to the participants, with many tools to take away and use on your next project.

BRENDAN MURRAY **CRACKING THE CHARACTER CODE (AND DARING TO PLAY) (acting)**

Practical approaches to bringing contemporary characters to life

How do we create the characters we play? Where do we start? When can we be sure we've really brought them to life?

Working with contemporary dramatic texts, these interactive sessions will seek to answer these questions and explore a practical approach to creating character.

A play, after all, is just a series of imagined moments encoded in text. Every word, every punctuation mark, every silence is a thought, a choice, a colour, a revelation, a *gift*. Text is a gift. Our job as actors is to unwrap that gift; explore and exploit its clues and treasures, bringing these encrypted moments to life.

We'll be detectives, subjecting the text to forensic analysis to reveal not just what our characters say but what they don't; if they're sure of themselves or full of doubts; how their hearts beat; how they *breathe*.

And once we've done our detective work, we'll dare to forget it and trust our instincts, follow our impulses. We'll dare to listen, react and respond (line by line; look by look; moment by moment) allowing ourselves to *play*, and our characters to reveal themselves in all their complex humanity.

So, that's the plan: to crack the code then dare to play - excavating the text, exposing the subtext and bringing our characters to *life*.

CEZANNE TEGELBERG **IN SEARCH OF MAGICAL MOMENTS (acting)**

Exploring physical methods to create ensemble work

Sometimes, in theatre, we encounter 'moments'. An unplanned, unexpected instant where two or more performers seem to connect with one another and move at exactly the same time and in the same way, like birds in flight do. Like magic.

However, it's not magic, at least no more than we are. We humans are perfectly capable of sensing shared impulses and acting upon them, if we don't let our thinking get in the way. And here lies an enormous challenge.

This course will focus on ensemble work. Through exercises, we will increase our awareness to allow our bodies to move as one, to recognize individual as well as shared impulse and to respond to them. We will work to increase our sense-awareness, and to eliminate conscious thought from the process.

As the week progresses and our skills increase, we will add to the challenge by experimenting creatively with physical characters, forming crowds, and adding bamboo sticks or chairs to our flock of 'birds'. We will also explore the addition of voice, sound and rhythm into the mix.

The aim is to really learn how to become attuned to a group, neither leading nor following and allowing creativity, impulse and **magic** to happen without our thoughts interfering.

Please note: this course is quite physical, in that we work through our bodies, more than our minds, through movement rather than thought. The course is not physically demanding in the sense of headstands being required, but we will be moving around a lot. A playful and mindful course to increase spontaneity and sensitivity in performance.