

University of Guelph in partnership with the Stratford Festival  
**THST 3340 – Voice and Text in Performance**  
School of English and Theatre Studies  
Summer 2026

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is a course focusing on acting the language of Shakespeare. It is practical in its philosophy and its application: wholly designed to give the aspiring actor a handful of tools with which to explore, personalize and perform Shakespeare's text. It is not, therefore, a theoretical course or a study of Shakespeare as dramatic literature.

The work takes the form of two major sections, both integral to each other. Firstly, the student will experiment with practical tools to decipher Shakespeare's language and make it their own. Meanwhile, exercises in Voice will encourage and enable the actor to develop those facets of their instrument that allow them to further access, experience and communicate Shakespeare's language.

Students come to the course from varying levels of acting training. Previous acting experience and/or experience with Shakespeare is not necessarily a path to success in the course. *Process, Progress*, and a corresponding commitment to the work are valued over *Perfection*.

**INSTRUCTORS**

Voice Work will be led by Martha Farrell, and Text Work will be led by Tim Welham.

**MARTHA FARRELL** is an actor, teacher, and voice coach. Under the mentorship of Janine Pearson, she spent four years furthering her craft of teaching and coaching voice through the Stratford Festival's Professional Development Program. Martha has taught acting and voice at the University of Waterloo, and worked as an accessibility designer specializing in voice. She has coached for the Birmingham Conservatory and taught with the Stratford Festival's Education Department. This is her sixth year as co-instructor for the Shakespeare in Performance: Voice and Text Course in connection with five participating Universities (Western, Guelph, Brock, Waterloo, and Windsor). Martha has performed in theatres across the country. Stratford highlights include *Coriolanus*, *Misanthrope*, *Camelot*, *Peter Pan*, *Don Juan*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard III*, and *The Winter's Tale*. She is a graduate of Sheridan College's Music Theatre Performance Program and the Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre.

**TIM WELHAM** is a current member of the coaching team at the Stratford Festival where he works primarily as the Text Coach on the Festival's Shakespeare productions. He is also an instructor at the National Theatre School of Canada, teaching Shakespeare to the acting students. Tim has taught for the Stratford Festival's Education Department, the Birmingham Conservatory, Western, Windsor, Waterloo, Guelph, Brock, and Toronto Metropolitan Universities, Centaur Theatre, and the NTS DramaFest. He has performed on stages in Canada, England and Europe, and coached and taught theatre throughout Ontario. Tim received his MA in Classical Acting from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, and is a graduate of the former Ryerson Theatre School (now Toronto Metropolitan University).

## VOICE WORK

Voice Work begins with breath and with the body – together, both form not only the foundation of a free and responsive voice, but that of an emotional and imaginative connection to the words the actor will speak. The Work will allow the actor to discover the possibilities of the vocal instrument as it relates to text and to performance. Each class will begin with a warmup, followed by classes focusing on such subjects as breath, breath and movement/the spine, vowels, consonants, metre and punctuation. This work is designed to give additional support to, and to complement the specific text exercises.

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of the two weeks, the student will demonstrate a stronger understanding of the connection between breath and sound, and how that breath is connected to impulse/thought and, therefore, to acting, immediate and "live." They will have learned techniques/exercises for doing a warm-up: one that prepares their body, breath and voice for the task of acting/ rehearsing; and they will be able to apply these exercises to their daily practice.

## TEXT WORK

The Text work will allow the actor to examine and apply the specific tools of language found in classical text, through a series of exercises exploring areas such as Argument, Rhetoric (and supporting structures), Syntax, Particulars of Language (modifiers, metre, rhyme, etc.), and Address. Throughout, the exercises – in close tandem with the Voice work – will look to help the actor ingest or embody the language so that, ultimately, it comes from the artist as their own words.

### Learning Outcomes

The student will gain practical tools to be able to better analyze, personalize, and act a piece of classical text by breaking it down into its component structures. Through this exploration, they will uncover clues to character, emotional situation, argument, and thought progression. They will begin to discover a personal specificity in locating and expressing imagery in thought, and to apply a practical methodology of finding and playing 'action' *through* language. The overall goal is to find spontaneity and power in embodying classical text and expressing themselves through it.

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

- 1) Complete Works of William Shakespeare – Each participant should have access to a Complete Works of Shakespeare. It can be any edition, including an electronic or website-accessed version should the student prefer. (Recommended print editions are the Riverside, Arden, Folger or RSC; free online versions can be found at [folgerdigitaltexts.org](http://folgerdigitaltexts.org).)
- 2) Shakespeare Monologue – a paper copy of which should be brought on the first day. A list of appropriate Shakespeare Monologues will be provided several weeks in advance of the course. The student will select one monologue from that list to work on during (and outside of) class, and eventually to present. The student is required to read the play of their monologue before beginning the course, and to be familiar with the meanings of words in the monologue. **The student is strongly discouraged from memorizing the speech before the course, and from developing a performance or "way to do it."** (It is our experience that this can only interfere with any exploration and experience the student may have.)

- 3) Yoga Mat and Water Bottle – it is strongly encouraged students bring and use their own yoga mat for floor exercises, and have a personal water-bottle.

### **SUGGESTED RESOURCES**

There are no required textbooks. However, we recommend several books and websites for reference:

- *Oxford English Dictionary*
- *Shakespeare's Words* by David & Ben Crystal (online at [shakespeareswords.com](http://shakespeareswords.com))
- *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary* by Alexander Schmidt, Vols 1 & 2 (online at <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.03.0079>)
- *Text in Action* by Cicely Berry
- *The Actor Speaks* by Patsy Rodenburg
- *Speaking Shakespeare* by Patsy Rodenburg

### **DRESS**

Students should dress in clothing appropriate to a movement class (i.e. warm-up pants or other stretch clothing that will provide comfort and flexibility). Clothing should be "neutral"; logo-embossed clothing should be avoided. Students are encouraged to work in bare feet to make full use of contact with the floor. (Any footwear deemed to impede the work is discouraged.) Earrings, jewelry, and piercings should be removed for class for the students' safety.

### **TIMETABLE**

Hours: 9:00am to 12noon

Dates: Monday June 1<sup>st</sup> to Saturday June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
(No classes on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup>)

### **LOCATIONS**

1) from Monday June 1<sup>st</sup> to Thursday June 11<sup>th</sup> :

University of Waterloo's Stratford School of Interaction Design and Business (SSID)  
125 St Patrick Street  
Stratford ON  
(Doors to the SSID building will be unlocked at 8:30am)

2) on Friday June 12<sup>th</sup> and Saturday June 13<sup>th</sup> :

Dinner Rooney Workshop in the Tom Patterson Theatre  
111 Lakeside Drive,  
Stratford ON

– Free parking at William Allman Memorial Arena (15 Morenz Drive) or on side streets

## **COURSE EVALUATION**

### 25% – Personal Conduct

- Punctuality and readiness to work, appropriate dress, openness to process, focus and concentration

### 50% – Class Work

- Exploration and application of the work, risk in exercises, participation in exercises and discussions

### 25% – Presentation of Monologue

- The monologue is due to be presented on **Saturday June 13th**
- Students must have memorized their monologues, and present them as a performance – as “a piece of acting” – having incorporated the voice and text work on their monologue both in and *outside* class
- The final class is concluded with a post-mortem discussion
- Further details of the Monologue Presentation will be explained on the first day

NOTE: Curriculum will vary according to progress of the group. Certain sections of both the Voice and Text components may be concentrated on, others may be omitted.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Students must be *ready to start* each morning at 9:00am. This is strongly maintained. Therefore, students are encouraged to arrive several minutes before the actual start-time, to get settled, do their own warmups, etc.

Students will be marked down for absenteeism, lateness or lack of readiness to begin. A 0.5% will be deducted for any lateness, a full 1% for being absent without a supported/validated reason.

The Work in this course will take place through individual exercises and discussions. The student's ability to verbalize changes and results of the various exercises is key to developing a relationship between oneself and one's work. The instructors encourage participation in feedback of the exercises because it's important for the actor to develop a language for talking about their work objectively. Participation in these discussions during and after the exercises is not a measure of how much one talks but rather how receptive and perceptive the student is, a measure of their focus in their own work and in that of the group.

The student is encouraged to risk: to commit fully to the work, to note changes, make adjustments and go further or deeper in each exercise, often (and by necessity) in their own time outside the class.

Above all, the course requires the actor to be "present": to be ready to work promptly, to commit themselves to the exercises, to ask questions, to focus on and share in the observations that take place around the exercises.

Please refer to your University's specific Accessibility, Academic Integrity, Accommodations, and Student Code of Conduct policies for further information and resources.