

Sam Houston State University School of Music
Course Syllabus - SHSU Opera Theater
1 Credit Hour
Fall 2017

Room: MUS 202

Time: 3:30 to 5pm TuWThF

Phone: 936 294 2314

Professor: Dr. Rebecca Grimes

Office: PAC 220D

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Music Director: Olena Blagulyak/TBD

Course Description:

This course examines the technical and practical applications of participating and performing in an opera production. The course includes rehearsals and a public performance of an opera production, scenes, and master classes. *Opera Theater* (MUEN 3119) is a curricular experience designed as the premiere performance group of the SHSU Opera program, and is tailored specifically for older, more experienced singers.

Performance Techniques (MUEN 1119) is a curricular experience tailored toward younger or less experienced singers and is considered a training ground for SHSU Opera Theater.

SHSU Opera is an elite performing ensemble with a national reputation, and is designed to lay the ground work for the professional world. Participants in both of these curricular tracts are selected by audition, and all casting decisions are made at the discretion of the directors.

Members of Opera Theater will sing the principal roles in the fall production of *Hansel and Gretel*. Members of the *Performance Techniques* class will sing in the chorus of the mainstage operas. All casting decisions are to be made at the discretion of the directors with substantial input from the SHSU Voice Faculty.

Course Objectives:

- To provide singers with the opportunity to participate in a full opera production, including the technical aspects of a production.
- To train singers in musical and dramatic interpretation of classical vocal works, both audition style and staged.
- To help singers gain skills in performing and the audition process. Includes, but is not limited to presentation, choosing appropriate material, basic acting techniques and characterization, and movement.
- To prepare advanced singers for professional auditions and competitive graduate programs.

Assigned materials:

Students will be responsible for their own rehearsal scores. Students are responsible for their own rehearsal and performance shoes. Performers may also be asked to provide their own costumes for performances.

Attendance Policy:

- Students are expected to attend all classes, rehearsals and technical work days unless otherwise specified. Students are expected to comport themselves in a professional, respectful manner while in rehearsal.
- Any absence not previously approved by Dr. Grimes will be considered unexcused. *Each unexcused absence will result in your grade being lowered one (1) letter grade.*
- Absences or tardies that are a result of another class that has not been approved by the School of Music will not be excused.
- **Illness does not qualify as an excuse to miss class** – we have a finite number of rehearsals to coach and block each performance. One person missing a rehearsal can cause the entire rehearsal schedule to be compromised. If you are ill, you must still obtain permission ahead of time to miss class.
- **Tardiness to class, rehearsal, or scheduled technical work days will not be tolerated.** Tardiness is considered an unexcused absence and will held to the same grading policy (*one (1) lowered letter grade for each egregious tardy*). If you cannot make it to class on time, please discuss it ahead of time with Dr. Grimes.
- **Tech week rehearsals and dress rehearsals for outreach events are non-negotiable.** Grueling rehearsal times are part of the theatrical experience, and are necessary to have a polished final product. Opera takes time and a commitment to excellence. If you are interested in being a “star” on stage, it comes with the sacrifice of your free time and willingness to be a team player for the good of the entire group.
- **Attendance for all performances are mandatory and non-negotiable.** If you are double cast for a performance, you are still expected to attend the performance and help backstage on your “off” night. You never know if you will be needed to perform at the last minute. Again, this is part of the expectation in return for getting stage time in SHSU Opera.

Grades:

Final grades will be weighted according to the formula listed below. Daily performance sheets will be kept, which will record each student’s preparedness, attendance, willingness to participate and be supportive of the group process, demonstration of respectful collegiate behavior, and progress on personal performance issues. **I reserve the right to adjust your final grade if there are issues that arise with the above performance expectations at any time during the semester that result in disruption of the class or production. I reserve the right to remove a student from a production if there are issues that arise from the above rehearsal or performance expectations.** Grades are calculated according to the following ratio:

- 30% Opera Production(s) (November 2-5 for *Hansel and Gretel*)
- 70% Daily Performance Sheets (Measures preparedness, attendance and professional behavior)

Cell Phone Use in Class

Use of cellphones in class is strictly prohibited. If a student is found using a cellphone during class time, they will be asked to leave the class and will be marked with an unexcused absence for the day. Use of cellphone includes having the cellphone in the person's immediate possession (in their lap, for example) during the class period.

Other things to keep in mind for this class:

- **All music should be learned prior to the first musical coaching**, with all texts translated word-for-word and the IPA written in the score. Opera coaches are not be responsible for chasing notes or words during coaching times. Failure to respect this process will affect your final grade and future standing in SHSU Opera.
- **All music must be memorized prior to the first staging rehearsal**. It is a waste of time to block you if your music isn't prepared. Failure to respect this process will affect your final grade and future standing in SHSU Opera.
- **Dress appropriately for all classes and rehearsals**. We will be incorporating movement into the class, so wear something that you can comfortably move and rehearse in.
- **Appropriate shoes are required for all rehearsals and performances**. Women should invest in a sturdy character shoe; men should invest in an appropriate stage shoe. **NO FLIP-FLOPS OR CLOGS** will be permitted in rehearsal.
- **Be supportive and respectful of your colleagues**. It takes a lot of guts to get up and perform in front of people. Ridicule and criticism of others will not be tolerated. Your attitude towards others and effort towards being a good colleague will be taken into consideration when assessing your final grade or your standing in this ensemble.
- **Be a team player!** Opera does not create itself, and SHSU Opera has a small staff and even smaller budget. All students will be expected to pitch in with the technical "backstage" aspects of this class. Help with stage management, props, costumes and scenery work is considered part of the class curriculum. Failure to comply with these requirements will affect your final grade and future standing in the class.
- All public performances are a reflection of a student's integrity as a musician, and are considered the product of their voice teacher and the SHSU Voice Area as a whole. **Students will not be allowed to perform unless I have confirmation that your music has been approved and coached with your voice teacher**. Confirmation sheets will be provided with the scene and/or character assignments; these are due to me prior to blocking rehearsals. Please do yourself AND your teacher a favor and coach with your teacher early in the process. Taking your music to your teacher the day before your memory test does not serve your vocal development in a productive way.

Suggested readings:

Robert Caldwell, *The Performer Prepares*

Barry Green and W. Timothy Gallwey, *The Inner Game of Music*

Lotte Lehmann, *More than Singing: The Interpretation of Songs*

Eloise Ristad, *A Soprano on her Head: Right-Side-Up Reflections of Life and Other Performances*

Martial Singher, *An Interpretive Guide to Operatic Arias*

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Regarding Academic Honesty: All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

Regarding Proper Classroom Demeanor and Rules of Conduct: Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally, a directive to leave class or being reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with University policy.

Visitors in the Classroom: Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

Americans with Disabilities Act: SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center.

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy: Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending class or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and the instructor. A student desiring to absent him/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). This request must be made in the first fifteen days of the semester or the first seven days of a summer session in which the absence(s) will occur. The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable time frame in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed.