

VOICE HOMEWORK

EAST 15 ACTING SCHOOL | SOUTHEND CAMPUS **SUMMER VOICE HOMEWORK FOR INCOMING STUDENTS** **YEAR 1, TERM 1**

- **BA (Hons) Physical Theatre**
- **BA (Hons) Acting & Community Theatre**
- **BA (Hons) Acting & Stage Combat**
- **BA (Hons) World Performance**

In Voice and Articulation classes during Term One, students explore their own voices. This term is about **you** and how your voice represents **you**. To help the Voice Team get to know you, we have created an assignment to better understand where you come from and the influences that make your voice unique to you.

Part of what makes your voice unique is the way in which you talk - your accent, word choice and how you structure sentences. Probably the way in which you speak has been influenced by your family, friends and other important people in your life.

In Articulation classes you will explore your “**home**” accent. This is the accent you feel most easy, or “at home with,” when you are speaking with close friends or family. By exploring your “home” accent you can discover more about your voice and how it represents you. As a training actor, you will use your “home” accent as a foundation for understanding other accents, which you will acquire later in your training.

Part of what makes your voice unique is not only what you say but also how you say it. We will explore this in your voice classes through a personal, autobiographical story, which you will complete over the summer and bring into the first day of voice class.

Voice and Articulation Homework Assignment:

Your assessment task for Term 1 will be an autobiographical story (i.e. a true story about yourself) which you will audio record, then write down verbatim (word for word) into a transcript of the recording and bring with you to your first day of Voice class. Your autobiographical story will help you

- explore the way sound communicates meaning in storytelling in relation to the meaning of the words,
- how a story engages the imagination, creates associations

- and how the storyteller’s voice can evoke an emotional response from the listener.

These learning strategies will then be applied in future terms to help you develop your actor’s process. Your autobiographical story can double as performance monologues later in your training.

Please record your story in English, even if English is not your first language.

You will use the same autobiographical recording and written transcript in your Articulation class. In Articulation classes, you will review your recording and listen closely to your own “home” accent, or “idiolect.” Through listening strategies, the class, with tutor guidance, will identify sound signifiers within your home accent, noting specifics about your accent and what makes your speech patterns unique to you.

What should your story be about?

The story you will record, transcribe and bring to both your Voice and Articulation classes on the first day should tell a story that you find interesting.

Some suggestions include:

- talk about the day you became best friends with someone,
- fell in love for the first time,
- describe your happiest memory,
- a birthday or other notable occasion.

Make sure the recording is of a good quality - we want to hear every word that is said. Also, make sure the story is one you would feel comfortable sharing in a classroom of your peers.

The recording should be no longer than 2 minutes.

Please **do not write down your story first and then read it into your recording device.**

We need the story to sound as much like “you” as possible - not a version of you reading a copy.

The recording should not be overly prepared - it is fine to have hesitation sounds like “um,” “er,” etc.

We want to hear your natural rhythms, vocal inflections, impulsive speech patterns, and a sense of spontaneous communication.

What is autobiographical performance?

Deidre Heddon in her book *Autobiography and Performance* (2008) defines “autobiographical performance” as “a broad term which encompasses examples of solo autobiographical work, community and applied drama, oral narrative and oral history performance, verbatim drama, documentary drama, testimonial performance, performance art and instances of site-specific and time-based practice (p.11).”

Autobiographical performance has a rich history and can take on many different forms

Examples from the U.S. include: Lisa Kron, Spalding Gray, Deb Margolin, Laurie Anderson, Rachel Rosenthal, Holly Hughes, Peggy Shaw, Lois Weaver, Annie Sprinkle, Kate Bornstein, Tim Miller or Marga Gomez.

In the U.K., examples include: Bobby Baker, Ursula Martinez, SuAndi, Mem Morrison, Donna Rutherford, Joey Hateley, Adrian Howells, Marisa Carnesky, Leslie Hill and Helen Paris.

What are the aims?

According to Lisa Kron, “The goal of autobiographical work should not be to tell stories about yourself but, instead, to use the details of your own life to illuminate or explore something more universal,” (quoted in Heddon, D. (2008). *Autobiography and Performance*. London: Palgrave. P. 5).

For the purposes of this class we are going to define it as performance that tells a story based on the performer’s personal experience.

One aim of assigning this task is, simply, we want to get to know you better. But another, more discipline specific aim emerges out of a tradition of voice training that assumes there is a close relationship between the “self” and the voice. How does your voice identify you - how does it shape who you think you are or who you want to be? The second assumption is that as you train your voice your perception of yourself changes. What you have to say and how you say it will change as well. As your voice teacher, I am interested in supporting that growth, developing your literal voice as you develop what you want to say as an artist.

Good luck! We look forward to meeting each of you during induction week.

Dr. Tara McAllister-Viel

Head of Voice

East 15 Acting School, Southend campus

University of Essex

Morag Stark

Voice Lecturer

East 15 Acting School, Southend campus

University of Essex