

# DRAMA 201B: Graduate Voice Winter 'xDatex

Instructor: Cynthia Bassham  
Contact Info: xPhonex/ xPhonex  
Office Hours: W 12:00-1:00 PM and by appointment  
Class Time: TTH 1:00- 1:50PM  
Room: Studio 5

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## **Course Description:**

This course addresses techniques for approaching and performing rich and challenging texts. This aspect of voice and acting work is often referred to as “vocal variety.” We will focus on the more technical aspect of Form, but always link it back to Character, Image, and Sense.

## **Objectives:**

- To develop skills in verbal performance which can make your execution of text clear, believable and interesting.
- To further develop, intellectually and kinesthetically, a sense of the connection between breath and communicative energy

## **Classroom Policies:**

- No gum chewing or eating allowed in the class.
- Any drinks must be in a non spill container.
- Remove all jewelry which may interfere with classwork. This includes any tongue or lip jewelry.
- Wear clothing that permits you to move freely and comfortably.

## **Grading:**

We will concentrate predominantly on one piece of text—a “Mayhem monologue.” Every week there will be a presentation of these monologues (or other provided text) incorporating the theme of the week. Every time you “present” you will be evaluated according to these three, equally weighted criteria:

- 1) **Is it clear?** Can the listener understand the words? Is the communication specific? Is your voice free of unnecessary tension?
- 2) **Is it believable?** Are you committed to the given circumstances, no matter how bizarre? This is often the hardest for people to achieve as we explore from the outside in. Keep it foremost in your mind.
- 3) **Is it interesting?** Are you committing to the heightened theatricality? This is your chance to do some wild and wacky physical and vocal work. Don’t hold back.

## **Attendance/Lateness:**

In this course, as in all of your core courses, there are no permissible absences except for verifiable illness, or for personal emergencies that are approved by the Head of Acting. Unexcused absences or habitual tardiness will result in the lowering of your grade.

## **Final Examination:**

The Final consists of your fully theatrical presentation of your “Mayhem Monologue” which will take place during the last week of the quarter.

## **Course Schedule**

*(Subject to change)*

### **Week One**

*Suprasegmentals: An Invitation to the Buffet*

Jan. 9            Syllabus. Overview of Suprasegmentals. Laban “Vocal Efforts”  
**Assignment 1** (*due 1/11*): Apply at least two “Vocal Efforts” to any monologue. Have your primary and secondary choices contrast each other. Feel free to play around with this at home, but ultimately make a conscious choice and stick with that choice when presenting.

Jan. 11            “Vocal Efforts” applications  
**Assignment 2** (*due ASAP!*): Choose up to 3 minutes of material for a “mayhem” monologue. I’m giving you two options as a jumping off point, but you might find something else you’d rather do. Just needs to be heightened language and potentially extreme circumstances. Needs to be memorized ASAP, but **bring in a hard copy to each class**. Eventually, you’ll incorporate all we’ve explored and create a fully realized, theatrical “presentation.”

### **Week Two**

*Pitch*

Jan. 16            Playing with “Tessitura,” “Heroics,” Prosody, and Inflection  
**Assignment 3** (*due 1/18*): Create a presentation using your Mayhem monologue that concentrates on some elements of changing pitch bands, “shoots & ladders,” as well as the musicality of a phrase and how you end a phrase. Be sure that you find a balance between technique and character need and circumstance.

Jan. 18            Pitch applications

### **Week Three**

*Rate*

Jan. 22            Phil and I are swapping Jan 22 and Jan 25.  
Introduction to Rate.

**Assignment 4** (*due Jan. 23*): His Girl Friday scenes. Listen to audio sample, read the script, and work with a scene partner and prepare to do the scene in class. Doesn’t need to be memorized, but be very familiar. Do have it up on its feet and commit to the given circumstances. Remember, this is more about Rate and Rhythm than it is about Quality or Pitch.

**Assignment 5** (*due Jan. 23*): Apply Rate investigation to Mayhem Monologue.

Jan. 23            His Girl Friday Presentations. Rate applications to Mayhem Monologue.

## **Week Four**

### *Rhythm*

Jan. 30          Rhythm Play.  
In class assignment: Apply Rhythm investigation to Mayhem Monologue.

Feb. 1          Class with Phil

## **Week Five**

### *Quality*

Feb. 6          Resonance/Phonation/Articulation play

**Assignment 6** (due Feb. 8): Apply Resonance/Phonation/Articulation investigation to Mayhem Monologue.

Feb. 8          Resonance/Phonation/Articulation applications

## **Week Six**

### *Vocalizing Emotions*

Feb. 13        Laughing/Crying/Wailing/Screaming/Shouting.

**Assignment 7** (due Feb. 15): Apply Vocalizing Emotions investigation to Mayhem Monologue.

Feb. 15        Vocalizing Emotions Applications

## **Week Seven**

### *Vocal Extremes*

Feb. 20        Monsters. Extended Characters. Wounded/Dying/Dead

**Assignment 8** (due Feb. 22): Apply Vocal Extremes investigation to Mayhem Monologue.

Feb. 22        Vocal Extremes Applications

## **Week Eight**

### *“Volume” and Integration*

Feb. 27        Quick restructuring warm-up incorporating volume. “Magic Orange”

Mar. 1        Hear all the pieces and time them. Begin to think of order. Begin to think how to involve others, if desired. Please send copies of text!

**Assignment 8** (due 3/6): Work with two different partners on two separate occasions and present a fully committed, fully memorized run through of your piece. Receive feedback about what's working and what could perhaps use a little work. Might only take you 15 minutes to present and have a quick chat; but if you have time, you might also decide to work together longer and focus on one or both of the pieces. There's also no necessity to incorporate your partner's feedback, but keep an open mind. This is mostly an opportunity to ramp up your commitment to your choices before creating a group final presentation starting week nine.

### **Week Nine**

#### *Gearing up for Performance*

Mar. 6            Create structure. Present just the first and last 30 seconds of your piece. Together we'll determine an order. Then we'll speed through the pieces in that order (and tweak, if necessary).

Mar. 8            "Tech" rehearsal.

### **Week Ten**

#### *Performance and Celebration*

Mar. 13          Dress rehearsal

Mar. 14          Public Performance during Dynamics

Mar. 15          Wrap-up Discussion