

**Program of Studies 2025-2026**  
**CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Half-Day Program**

## **THEATER**

The mission of the Theater Department is to provide students with an understanding of theater as an art form, and to foster respect for its requirements and disciplines. The curriculum will educate students in artistic ways of thinking and viewing the world and enable them to use the medium of theater for expression, communication and change.

The goals of the Theater Department are:

To prepare students for their next step, whether that is further education, professional work, or further training in theater.

To take students, in their theatrical training, as far as they are able to go regardless of background or area of special interest.

To give students the means to approach and develop dramatic material independently.

To foster in students a greater understanding of the world and their peers, and to make them better citizens through cooperative and collaborative endeavors.

Each year builds on the year previous and includes studio classes in Acting, Performance Technique, Application & Analysis and Creation.

Class assignments are made by the department head and are based on the student's academic grade level and technical development. Advancement decisions will be made by the Theater Faculty based on a student's Year-End Jury Performance and an evaluation of their Performance in classes throughout the year.

*(This four year overview is on average. Individual students may differ.)*

**One Year:**

Students will take: Acting Technique, Movement for Actors, Voice & Diction, Introduction to Stage Management, Textual Analysis, Fools & Clowns and their choice of 2 electives per semester.

**Two Years:**

Students will take: Acting 2, Physical Theatre, Shakespeare, Mask, Introduction to Devised Theater, Vocal Production and 2 Elective Courses per semester.

**Three Years:** Students will take: Acting 3 (Audition Technique), Theater History, Commedia dell'Arte, Suzuki Technique, Classical & Contemporary Scene Study, and 2 Elective Courses per semester.

**Four Years:**

Students will take: Acting 4, Theater and Social Justice, Senior Project, Classical & Contemporary Scene Study, and 2-3 Elective Courses per semester.

**Department Electives (not offered every year):**

Solo Performance, Theater in Public Space, Puppetry, Improv: Don't Be Prepared, Comedy Writing, Stage Combat, Directing, Playwriting, Acting for the Camera, Comedic Characters, Docudrama, Theater NOW, Acting the Song, Big Story Lab, and Stage Management.

## **THEATER COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**ACTING TECHNIQUE**

Students will be introduced to the fundamental elements of the actor's craft through a combination of exercises, improvisation, and approaches to scripted material. Classes will begin with physical exercises and explorations to develop a strong sense of given and imagined circumstances, believable focus within the context of work on stage, and collaboration among an ensemble of peers. Students will learn to create plausible situations, make choices, justify those choices, and begin to identify a character's intention. Over the year, text will be added in improvisations, then in short, simple scripts, then in more fully realized scenes. The entire group will present work to the class, and offer each other constructive feedback, on a regular basis. Students in Acting Technique learn to tell stories with truthfulness, clarity, and intent while strengthening their focus, clarity and confidence onstage.

**ACTING II**

Students will continue their training as an actor by developing their personal understanding of how to use acting techniques to approach scenes. Awareness and control of the actor's

instrument: body, voice and imagination is developed through regular practice and instruction. Acting techniques, including warming up, given circumstances, objective/goals and tactics are reinforced and applied to scene work. Over the year, instruction focuses on the development of believable behavior through application of acting technique, developing moment-to-moment work with scene partners and learning rehearsal processes that support and sustain the actor.

### **ACTING III/AUDITION TECHNIQUE**

Students will prepare for their next steps in education and/or professional theater. This includes college preparation, business practices for actors and understanding how goal-setting skills and decision-making skills support wellness and can be key to an actor's craft and building a sustainable artistic practice. During this course students will prepare monologues for a mock audition and self-tape, learn about the audition process and professional expectations for actors and practice goal setting. Students will create a plan to support their well-being by evaluating behaviors and their impact, learning to discern and access valid information products and services, and analyzing influences on health behaviors.

### **ACTING IV**

This course is designed as a laboratory for advanced students to experiment with their current understanding of Theater and expand their conceptual limits. Students will work with a variety of contemporary and traditional approaches to theater creation and experiment with adaptation and storytelling to create a series of original works for the stage. The course's structure is designed to support students in developing their own processes and practices to approach theatrical work as independent and collaborative artists.

### **CLASSICAL SCENE STUDY**

This class focuses on exploring texts of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Students will rehearse and present a variety of sonnets, soliloquies, and scenes from the Elizabethan/Jacobean repertoire. Using abstract vocal and physical techniques, students will learn to bring elevated text to life, while incorporating character, beats and intention. In the final portion of the course, students may have the opportunity to explore other aspects of the Classical Repertoire from Renaissance Europe, Classical Greece and Rome, or other areas of the world.

### **COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE**

Commedia dell' Arte is a form of Italian street theatre and improvisational comedy, which dates back to the sixteenth century. As a living theatre form Commedia dell' Arte no longer exists, however - - it is the *arte* that is the essential part of the work, the spirit discovered

through the style. Students will study mime, physical comedy, and the development of a clown character, slapstick and circus skills such as juggling, balancing, and acrobatics on the road to becoming complete Commedia performers. The study of masks, improvisational technique, lazzi, and scenario provide the performer with a challenging container to explore the art of comedy and the craft of acting. Students will develop their own stock characters, complete with masks, and use them to create original Commedia pieces.

### **CONTEMPORARY SCENE STUDY**

Students will analyze, rehearse and perform a variety of material from both American and international repertoires. They will learn to justify their interpretive choices through textual clues and historical, social and aesthetic research. Through engagement with contemporary theatrical writing students will learn how considerations of gender/cultural equity, representative diversity, and conscious vs. blind casting practices are shaping the theater landscape.

### **FOOLS AND CLOWNS**

In this physical, high energy acting class students will take a journey into the world of physical comedic acting and clowning. They will learn the rules of clowning and various clowning techniques to create scenes featuring original clown characters. Students will learn to communicate stories and ideas using movement, gesture, facial expressions and other clowning skills. They will demonstrate acting skills by developing, communicating and sustaining characters individually and within a group. They will apply research from silent film sources to script writing and acting choices. They will develop inter and intrapersonal skills through use of ensemble based activities, and learn to connect the importance of physical warm-ups to the work actors create.

### **INTRODUCTION TO DEvised THEATER**

Throughout the semester, students will be creating original theater pieces using the process of devising. Students will be introduced to Viewpoints, a physical technique for theatrical creation developed by Anne Bogart, Mary Overlie, and Tina Landau. The devising process eliminates the traditional hierarchical structure of theater and is instead collaborative in nature—allowing all members of the ensemble to contribute as writer, director, actor and technician.

### **INTRODUCTION TO STAGE MANAGEMENT**

This survey course, taught in conjunction with the Theater Design & Production faculty, is designed to introduce students to the basic areas of theater production and principles of Stage Management (or the backstage art of making theater happen). Instruction will emphasize terminology, roles and responsibilities, basic concepts and safety. Students will

obtain the knowledge of the behind the scenes collaboration that takes a production from an initial script selection through design and implementation to the final curtain.

## **MASK**

An introduction to one of the oldest traditions in theater. Every human, all those living and all who have passed, wore masks. Some masks were figurative, some were emotional, some were Maybelline, some were Snapchat filters. All of these masks contributed to the development of a shared cultural and emotional model that defined what was cool, expected and "it". In this class we will use neutral masks to interrogate these cultural assumptions about our own minds and bodies and explore the physical and emotional habits that these symbolic masks contain. Using literal masks, we will discover the figurative masks which drain our true creativity. This class will help you find your own physical center, develop a truer sense of who you are, and help you listen and respond more fully, all of which leads to being a better actor.

## **MOVEMENT FOR ACTORS**

This course will introduce students to their own body mechanics and capabilities, as well as expand their ability to perform different types of movements and shapes. Solo and as an ensemble, they will learn the fundamentals of using improvisational movement to create character and story through basic dance, movement, yoga, physical theatre, and Viewpoints principles.

## **PHYSICAL THEATER**

This course will continue to expand the skills, kinesthetic awareness, and collaboration developed in Movement. Solo and as an ensemble, students will learn a variety of movement techniques to create character and story through movement, physical theatre, Viewpoints, Pilobus, and Laban/Bartiniieff principles. Students will create many short movement pieces throughout the semester and share reflections with classmates.

## **SHAKESPEARE**

This course will introduce students to why, and how, artists approach classical material, specifically Shakespeare, with an eye toward contemporary themes. Through examination of various styles of poetry and heightened language, students will build ability and confidence as they analyze text for deeper meanings and prepare to perform material that features heightened language.

## **SOLO PERFORMANCE**

This course will introduce students to a variety of techniques and activities (including improvisation and theatre games) for writing and generating performance through the lenses of personal and public material. Students will memorize and perform self-generated

works. This class will focus on the ensemble of a community as well as individual artistic expression.

### **SUZUKI TECHNIQUE**

This course is based on the physical training and creative energy of renowned Japanese theater artist, Tadashi Suzuki. The students participate in rigorous physical exercises geared towards heightening their strength, focus, intensity and stamina. They all perform as an ensemble in an actor generated piece of theater of which they write, create, and direct.

### **TEXTUAL ANALYSIS**

In this class, the students will learn how to read a play as a performance piece rather than as a literary work. Texts are analyzed for dramatic structure and character clues. Contemporary and classical texts are read aloud. In addition, the students are introduced to various “isms” in theater – those styles that we most commonly recognize in Western theater. We look at plays from the vantage point of actors, directors, and designers. Multi-media projects explore the material in each quarter.

### **THEATER & SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Students will explore how theater can function as a mode of social action and discourse. Students will conduct research to learn the history of activists who used theatrical means for social change and then incorporate these techniques to create their own original work designed to address, analyze and inspire the audience to change systemic problems at the school, regional, national and/or global level.

### **THEATER HISTORY**

This course will provide an overview of the history of theater from the present day back to the Greeks. A non-Eurocentric approach will be taken to include Asian and African theater in the curriculum. Students are required to do research and make presentations in class and to pool their knowledge and resources. Cultural eras will be brought to life in the classroom as students explore text, performance styles, and costume/scenic design.

### **VOICE & DICTION**

This course will introduce students to the means of developing articulation, breath control and projection skills by learning how the voice works and how to use it efficiently. Through daily technical exercises and projects, students will begin to develop the skills to be easily heard and understood whenever they are on stage.

### **VOCAL PRODUCTION 2**

This course will develop and specify the skills introduced in Voice & Diction. Through a series of technical exercises and projects, students will pay specific attention to developing

resonance and increasing their vocal range and expressiveness. Students will develop personal, pre-performance regimens to warm-up their voices and to continue to improve their diction and projection.

## **ELECTIVE THEATER COURSES**

### **ACTING FOR NON-MAJORS**

This course gives students a basic first experience in acting. They learn how to interact creatively and collaboratively with each other; to do simple solo and partner mimes and exercises; to create context, given circumstances, relationships and objectives in simple one page scripts; to do realistic and believable improvisations; and to act a character in a full short play. Acting experience is not necessary.

### **ACTING THE SONG**

Students will deepen their approach to musical numbers in plays and more, by applying the same principles, techniques, tools, and character exploration that are used in the spoken dialogue of the play. This class will explore the importance of objective, given circumstances, character and how they are augmented and translated in the music. We will explore how to support the emotional journey of the song with truth.

### **BIG STORY LAB**

This class delves into what it takes to create exciting memorable theatrical stories. Students will develop experimental theater by exploring myths and legends from cultures around the world. The class will also explore the styles of Immersive and Geek (Sci-Fi) Theater, and approach everything with modern perspectives. This is an interdisciplinary class where students will explore telling mythic stories through writing, directing, designing, acting, creating theme music, digital creation or other avenues.

### **COMEDIC CHARACTERS**

This course will cover intermediate acting and improvisational skills. Students will learn how to create interesting comedic characters with specific physicalities, voices, and points of view. Applying basic improv principles, such as *yes and*, truthful reactions, and making strong choices to the creation and performance of comedic will extend students' tool-box and inspire further comedic investigation.

## **COMEDY WRITING**

In this elective students will create their own sketch comedy pieces for film and/or live performance. Students will investigate contemporary comedy, develop their own comedic voices and work collaboratively to explore the question of what is funny and why?

## **DIRECTING**

A hands-on, fast-paced introduction to the basics of directing for the stage. Using a series of progressive exercises, students will practice and perfect the techniques of visual storytelling. By creating an artistic laboratory setting, the curriculum challenges the students to make strong, clear choices and effectively communicate to actors and designers on a daily basis, developing practical applications of the theories behind directing. This class is for advanced Theater and Musical Theater majors only.

## **DOCUDRAMA**

In this elective course, students will create original theater pieces from real-life stories and interviews. Students will work together to examine contemporary issues and develop their own plays by sharing and performing the stories of the interviewees. Students will also examine the works and work processes of noted docudrama makers.

## **IMPROV: DON'T BE PREPARED**

In this class, students will learn the basics behind improvisational performance, a theater style where the only motto is, "Don't Be Prepared." A serious approach to comedy will be practiced and something brand new will be created at every class meeting. By using short, long and competitive forms, we will develop an active approach to improvisation and hone our skills to become comedy confident.

## **PLAYWRITING**

This course is designed to introduce students to the craft of dramatic writing. Students engage in short writing exercises which focus upon specific elements of play writing and which develop their own ideas for dramatic material. They also read and discuss selections from the contemporary repertoire. In the final portion of the course, students are responsible for developing and drafting a ten-minute play.

## **PUPPETRY**

Students will discover acting from the perspective of performing by speaking and acting through another with at least two styles of puppets. Styles of puppet performance covered in the class may include but not be limited to: Object Theatre, Hand Puppetry, Rod Puppetry, and Marionettes. Students will construct their own simple puppets in order to perform a final scene.

## **STAGE COMBAT**

The aim of the course is to have students learn the basics of stage combat, both hand to hand, and using weapons. To create the illusion of fighting, the course will cover trust falls, Tibetan and Maori exercises regarding physical and spatial awareness, hand to hand combat skills, tumbling and stunt work. It culminates in weapons work, including rapier and dagger techniques, fencing, Broadsword and shield techniques.

## **VOICE ACTING**

In this class we will explore the kinds of voice-over work used today. We will work with source material that includes animation in tv and film, video games, commercial work, and audio books. We will develop distinct character voices, look into the business practices of voice over work and talk with people actively working in the field.

## **STAGE MANAGEMENT**

This course teaches the basics of stage management. You'll learn best practices to prepare you to run productions at GHAA and beyond. The course takes you through what a stage manager does prior to rehearsal and throughout the rehearsal and performance process to have a smooth-running backstage. It includes learning about the paperwork required, including prompt scripts, rehearsal preparations, notating blocking, and a stage manager's kit and checklist to wrap it all together.

## **THEATER IN PUBLIC SPACE**

In the first month of this course, students will create a short ensemble performance that will be a part of Night Fall Hartford- a free puppet and movement performance in Bushnell Park (October 4th). After Night Fall, the class will explore different kinds of theatrical work that happen outside the four walls of a theater, including street performance, busking, guerilla and invisible theater, flash mobs, and protest performance.

## **THEATER NOW**

Want to challenge your idea of what Theater can be? Want to challenge everyone else's idea? This course will explore the possibilities of contemporary performance that cutting edge artist are rolling out NOW. Can a play be produced entirely with non-actors? Can it be performed in a bathroom? Can the audience impact and even alter the action? What if we put the scenes in a different order at every performance? We will look into some ways that artists can mess with the theatrical form, and mess with it ourselves.

*(Some electives in Design & Theater Production are open to Theater Majors)*

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