INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Central School of Speech and Drama, one of the oldest established actor training programmes in the country which now embraces innovative and exciting ways of creating work. Congratulations on being selected from many thousands of applicants to pursue this training.

The Acting (Collaborative and Devised Theatre) pathway is one of three pathways within the BA (Hons) Acting programme at Central School of Speech and Drama. The course aims and objectives are set out in the course handbook which you will receive when you arrive.

This pathway seeks to train actors to work professionally in a range of performance contexts, including classical and contemporary theatre, television and other recorded media. It also develops your own creative voice as a theatre maker in a variety of devising contexts.

A typical trainee actor starting this course will have a firm commitment to the notion of acting as a live art form. While many of the skills taught will be transferable to recorded media (with additional tuition in those media given in the second half of the course) the training is rooted in live theatre.

Acting is both a creative and a professional discipline. It is also usually a group activity, which means that, unlike painters and sculptors, actors can only work alone to a point before they need to integrate their skills with many
other kinds of professionals—directors, designers, playwrights—toward a common goal. Actors have to learn to work in a supportive and disciplined way - often with strict time constraints – as part of a group or company, ensuring that their own practices are not selfish or obstructive to others. They have to become excellent timekeepers, to work methodically and with precision, to be flexible and open to others, and to accept criticism and authority. Within all of this they have to maintain a sense of themselves as artists and independent creators. An actor whose creativity is random or undisciplined is not likely to be employed, but neither is an actor who is slavishly dependent on the director and can't make creative choices. This course seeks to teach trainees to maintain both their own creativity and an ongoing dialogue with the company, the director and the production.

The Craft of Acting

Much of what will eventually make you an actor is already with you when you arrive at drama school. There are certain natural qualities which we look for in our applicants, which we cannot teach you, and without which you could not hope to succeed in this art-form. These qualities include imagination, emotional intelligence, responsiveness, confidence and the desire to act.

You are entering a tradition of acting training that takes into account both past and contemporary culture, which together define how and what the actor communicates. Through your training we hope to broaden your horizons, reflect the world we live in and work on many ways to increase your creative expression

Professional Discipline

Actors may be open, creative and tolerant; they may loathe bureaucracy, pointless rules and closed thinking, but the acting profession is one of the most rigorous and disciplined environments you could ever imagine. Actors accept rigour without question, because they understand that it is a necessary part of their craft and essential for ensemble processes.

Similarly, actors understand that the voice, body and brain won’t train themselves. Much of actor training is body learning, and that takes time, as anyone who has ever trained for a marathon will know. Stamina, elimination of bad habits, building muscularity and mental/physical co-ordination, are all time-consuming and exhaustive processes, involving a lot of repetition and practice. If you’ve ever had piano lessons then you’ll know how much scale practice it takes, and how much willpower you need to stick at it. Acting is just the same.
THE FIRST YEAR OF THE COURSE

The shape of the Acting for Collaborative and Devised Theatre pathway is very simple. In the first year you work to discover the potential and nature of self and ensemble, while laying the foundations of your craft. Your course units are as follows:

Dramatic Technique 1 develops the fundamental skills required in movement and voice. (Approx 10 hours per week)

Dramatic Expression 1 allows you to explore aspects movement and voice in creative and imaginative contexts and to apply voice and movement to text and speech work (Approx 8 hours per week)

Acting Fundamentals helps you explore the actor’s craft and put in place the basic elements of your ‘actor’s process’. You will explore a range of text analysis techniques and actor processes. (Approx 8 hours per week)

Collaborative and Devised Theatre takes you through an intense exploration of Lecoq based training methods and gradually introduces you to improvisational and devising strategies. (Approx 4 hours per week)

Theatrical Interpretation 1 is the unit in which you undertake rehearsal and presentation of scripted plays. Here you both learn the disciplines of the rehearsal room and the relationship between the actor and the director, and have a chance to put into practice all the skills you are developing in the other units. (Approx 8-12 hours per week)

Performance Laboratory 1 is the place where you can reflect and connect by reading plays and placing them in historical, political and social contexts. (Approx 2 hours per week)

ASSESSMENT

All 1st year units are PASS/FAIL. Most of the time you will be continuously assessed, occasionally you will be summatively assessed, but much of your assessment will be diagnostic – in other words, no judgement will be made, but you will be offered help and advice to develop further. After the first term it is possible to fail an assignment, but you will always be offered a chance to retrieve. For many, the Fail-Retrieve system is the best learning experience of all.

Students who do not apply themselves, who have a poor work ethic and lack the personal rigour and discipline required, will almost inevitably fail, and be asked to leave the course. Very occasionally a student has to confront the fact that they lack some essential quality which they need as an actor, and therefore need to reconsider their future, but for the vast majority the choice is in your hands. Do you want this enough to do the work and succeed?
KEY STAFF TEACHING ON THE PATHWAY

You will be taught by a mixture of full or part time permanent lecturers and freelance tutors. These vary from year to year, but the following is a list of the staff you may encounter. On this pathway we consider every lesson to be an acting lesson whatever the specific focus of the tutor. There are no easy divisions to be made: every element of your training is of equal importance.

Key Teaching Staff

Geoff Colman  Head of Acting,
Catherine Alexander  Pathway Leader – Acting / Devising
Daron Oram  Responsible for Voice and Speech
Deb Garvey  Voice specialist
Helen Heaslip  Movement specialist and personal tutor
Sinead Rushe  Movement / Acting
Yael Shavit  Text analysis / Acting
Dominic Rouse  Acting teacher / director
Pam Parry  Sung voice specialist

OTHER STAFF

Ekta Walia  Course Administrator
Tanya Zybutz  Dyslexia specialist / Disability Office

CONTACTING STAFF

The best way of contacting a member of staff is via email. All permanent staff and student emails are constructed in the same way firstname.surname@cssd.ac.uk - and emails can be accessed from home using web access. Visiting lecturers and directors will brief you on how to contact them. All students need to activate and check their emails daily throughout their time at Central because important information/ instructions are often issued via email.
SECOND AND THIRD YEARS

In the second year, students continue with the core training at a more advanced level, while undertaking increasingly challenging production projects, starting with the American Devised Project in the Autumn Term, moving on to Classic Comedy in the Spring Term, and finally Renaissance Tragedy in the Summer Term. The core classes support the production work by skilling you appropriately for the demands of the particular text.

Alongside these units you will also explore contemporary American scenes and plays, half mask, physical comedy and clown and learn a variety of accents for the stage, character voices and sung voice forms. You will also have the optional opportunity to study stage combat.

Currently all second year units are PASS/FAIL except the main production unit Theatrical Interpretation 2 which is graded and contributes a total of 25% towards the degree. This may change during the year but you will be briefed appropriately for each project.

The third year consists mainly of Public Productions, although some time is spent on Industry Skills including acting for camera, radio and the preparation and delivery of an industry showcase. There are only two units in the third year, Public Production and Industries of Performance, both of which contribute towards the degree.

The final degree award is made up as follows:

Theatrical Interpretation (Level 2) 25%
Public Production 50%
Industries of Performance 25%

Directors of final year productions are industry professionals, either in-house or freelance.
**GENERIC READING LIST**

This is a list of books which it would be particularly useful to have read by the end of the year.

This course does not prescribe a particular approach to acting and you are encouraged to explore as many ideas and approaches as possible. The unit descriptors in your main course handbook and specific briefing papers will suggest many further books. Many of these are available in the library or to borrow from local borough libraries.

The books with asterisks next to them are key texts.


Merlin, Bella. *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit* Nick Hern


**THINGS YOU SHOULD DO BEFORE THE START OF THE COURSE**

Go and see as much live theatre and dance as possible (Complicite, Robert Lepage, Bob Wilson, Katie Mitchell, National Theatre, Royal Court, Battersea Arts Centre, Edinburgh Fringe, Barbican BITE festival – anything!), dance (DV8, Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre, Frantic Assembly, Punch Drunk, etc).

Take advantage of all free theatre and dance events taking place in London in the summer (Southbank, Barbican, etc) and find out about free tickets / pay what you can nights at London venues.

See cinema (both classics and new releases) and quality TV drama. As well as nature documentaries.

Go and visit art galleries.

Listen to the radio, music from all corners of the world, international news (BBC World Service programmes), BBC Radio 4 drama and comedy, digital channels etc.

Read novels, newspapers, engage with current affairs and debates.

Observe nature, watch people, and listen and talk to strangers—get a story and/or listen to accents.
DRESS CODE

(see details on the list of things to buy at the end of this handbook)

- You are expected to dress sensibly and appropriately for all sessions.

- Unless otherwise instructed by individual teachers, you should for all classes wear loose black clothing, preferably of stretchy material. All students should own a black tracksuit, an additional warm black top. More than one black fitted T-shirt or leotard, and several pairs of black socks.

- Jeans or combats should not be worn

- Clothing should not display distracting logos, images or captions

- Simple black trainers are the basic footwear, but you may at different times be expected to wear character shoes, jazz shoes or go barefoot

- No makeup or jewellery should be worn at any time, including rings and watches

- Long hair / fringes should be tied / clipped back at all times

- Clothing which sits too low on the hips, low cut tops or tops which exposes the midriff, should be avoided

- No headgear should be worn at any time

- If you wear glasses you are encouraged to investigate getting contact lenses.

- Much of the work is high energy and may involve physical contact. Attention should be paid at all times to personal hygiene and general cleanliness.

- Staff have the right to exclude from activities or classes any student who breaches the dress code.

- Male students should also own footless black tights (2 pairs), dance belt, white collared shirt, black formal trousers and formal black shoes (see kit list at end of booklet)

- Female students should also own a black leotard, black footless tights, sport bra, black full-length rehearsal skirt and black character shoes (see kit list at the end of the booklet)

- Repeated breaches of the dress code will result in disciplinary process
THE WORKING DAY

For first year students formal classes normally begin at 9 am and continue until 6 pm with an hour for lunch. There are short breaks at strategic points in the day. Students are expected to be in the building by 8.30am at the latest, warming up and preparing for the day ahead. Most practical spaces are unoccupied between 8.30 and 9.00, so it is rarely difficult to find a working space.

Any student arriving late for the first session of the day is automatically red-lighted, that is, excluded from all classes and rehearsals for that day, although such students may still use the library and other on site facilities.

To avoid ‘red-lighting’, students should aim to arrive each day well before the start of classes. You are also advised to explore alternative travel routes, including cycling, in case your normal route is disrupted.

The only exceptions to this rule are pre-arranged medical or other urgent appointments for which leave of absence has been granted in advance using the correct form (available on the intranet). Please note that such leave is always at the discretion of the Pathway or Course Leader.

However, in very extreme circumstances, such as freak weather conditions or terrorist attack, where large numbers of students have been affected, the ‘red-light’ rule may exceptionally be waived at the discretion of the Pathway or Course Leader.

Students who are late for a class or rehearsal during the course of the working day will be excluded from that session. Even if a student is admitted to preserve the smooth running of a rehearsal process, the lateness will be reported to the pathway leader.

Where a student is unable to attend on a particular day due to illness or other very urgent personal circumstances which could not reasonably have been foreseen, he or she should call the Acting Course Administrator in the Course Support Office or email the course team no later than 8.30am on the morning of each day of absence. On the first day of return an online Record of Absence form should be completed and submitted to the Undergraduate Administrator and copied to the Pathway Leader. If this form is not received by the end of the first day of return, an absence will be counted as unexplained.

Students who are late, or absent without explanation, or absent without sufficient cause, will be subject to the disciplinary processes set out in the course handbook. In extreme cases these can lead to a student being required to withdraw from the course.
ROOM ETIQUETTE

Five minutes before start of 9am and 2pm sessions:

- Bags must be packed away neatly
- Curtains should be shut hiding the mirror
- Water bottles, yoga mats, journals, pen, voice recorder or any other required equipment should be out of bags and ready to use at side of room
- Telephones must be off (not on vibrate).
- You should be wearing correct clothes (as course rules dictate)
- You must have done an appropriate individual vocal and physical warm-up
- You should be doing either: directed work, a group focusing exercise or game or quietly preparing individually
- When the tutor / director enters please be immediately silent and prepared to begin
- If you don’t have the required equipment or you haven’t done the necessary preparation for the session you will be asked to leave the class.

PERSONAL TUTOR

If you have a genuine problem to do with physical, mental or emotional health, or other circumstances within your personal life, it is essential that you discuss these as early as possible with your Personal Tutor. This will normally be a member of staff other than your Pathway or Course Leader, to whom you can talk about issues relating to your personal wellbeing. You will find your Personal Tutor very sympathetic and helpful, because despite the strict discipline of the course, there is a profound understanding among staff of the genuine problems which students can and do encounter. If you communicate and ask for help, you will not be admitting weakness, but actively supporting your learning.

WRITTEN WORK

Students are required to submit a small amount of written work as part of their learning. The deadlines for this are published well in advance, and will normally include a specific ‘handing-in’ time, which must be observed.

All written work must be handed in to the Course Support Office and a receipt obtained. Work should never be left in pigeonholes or slid under doors. All work should be submitted in person, in hard copy, although you should be careful to keep a copy in case of mishap.

Written work must be word-processed and must conform to the guidelines (see separate booklet). Your name and pathway, and the date, should be clearly visible on each page.
Work submitted late without a pre-negotiated extension will be subject to an automatic fail mark.
LIFESTYLE AND PERSONAL HEALTH

You need to keep reminding yourself that this is a rigorous programme of training, for which you will need to maintain maximum fitness. While none of us can always avoid occasionally getting common bugs which may lay us up for a day or two, there are steps we can all take to minimise the level of illness we suffer, including:

- maintaining a healthy diet, with plenty of fruit and veg, and not too many takeaways or fatty foods
- not smoking
- restricting alcoholic intake to recommended levels, preferably at weekends only, and avoiding all illegal drugs
- getting plenty of sleep
- maintaining sexual health by taking all reasonable precautions
- engaging in activities such as Yoga, Pilates or Feldenkrais which help to maintain balance and harmony in the body and mind
- warming up the body effectively before all strenuous activities to avoid injury
- minimising stress by having order and structure within your working day

And finally, you are here to develop as a creative artist. There is hardship, but also joy, liberation and growth on a programme of this kind. Stay in touch with yourself and with your own personal sense of artistry, however painful this may feel at times, and revel in the experience of being an actor.

Catherine Alexander
BA (Hons) Acting for Collaborative and Devised Theatre
Pathway Leader
July 2012

LIST OF THINGS TO BUY

- Yoga mat from yogamatters or similar (medium thickness, sticky yoga mat): Yoga Matters is located 32 Clarendon Road, London N8 0DJ, nearest tube: turnpike Lane.
- Journals (at least A5 size), pencils, pencil sharpeners, pens, erasers, highlighters etc
- You must be prepared to buy play texts, pens, paper, photocopy cards
- You will be expected to source costumes and props that will be briefed along the way

CDT Clothing:
- White blouse and black trousers or skirt for ushering duties
- Knee pads (skin colour or black)
- Black movement trousers (tracksuit bottoms/leggings)
- Footless tights
- Black fitted T-shirt, not low cut (at least 2 to wash and wear) or black leotard
- Simple black trainers are the basic footwear, but you may at different times be expected to wear character shoes or go barefoot
- Warm black sweater, fitted, no hood (something you are happy to roll on the ground in)

**Women:**
- Sports’ bra for women (skin colour)
- Character shoes, no higher than 2 inches
- Black Practice skirt, ankle length, pleated

**Men**
- Jock straps/dance belt for men (skin colour)
- Good pair of black dress shoes, hard heel.
- Black tie (regular tie or bow tie)