

Course: Movement for the Actor  
PEIMS Code: N1170118  
Abbreviation: SCOMTNOV  
Grade Level(s): 9-12  
Number of Credits: 1.0

*Course description:*

Students acquire the knowledge and skills for movement and apply these skills effectively to stage acting and performing. The course is designed to employ stage movement to express thoughts, feelings, and actions, and to analyze and describe the interdependence of all physical elements used on the stage.

*Essential knowledge and skills:*

- a) General requirements. Students are eligible for state elective credit only.
- (b) Introduction.
  - (1) Theatre offers unique experiences and empowers students to explore realities, relationships, and ideas. These disciplines engage and motivate all students through active learning, critical thinking, and innovative problem solving. In order to prepare to physically meet the challenges faced by actors, a physical regimen must be established. Students of the arts must recognize their bodies as tools for the creation of character, enabling competent ensemble movement and conveyance of emotion through physicality. Combining a regimen of physical activity with the higher-level thinking skills already available through the arts will add another facet to students wishing to pursue theatre and/or acting performance in the future through college or conservatories. Students develop aesthetic and cultural awareness through exploration and acceptance of their own and others' body images, leading to a healthier mind/body entity.
  - (2) Four basic strands--foundations: inquiry and understanding; creative expression; historical and cultural relevance; and critical evaluation and response--provide broad, unifying structures for organizing knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire. Through the foundations: inquiry and understanding strand, students develop a perception of self as a physical entity, how people relate through physical means, and the place of mankind in a physical world. Through the creative expression strand, students learn to communicate dramatically through their physical selves, delving into body language, which is important to understand in any career path. Through the historical and cultural relevance strand, students increase their understanding of theatre history from a physical education point of view. Period literature will be studied and portrayed as physical art forms. Through the critical evaluation and response strand, students engage in inquiry and dialogue, accept constructive criticism, revise personal views to promote creative and critical thinking, and develop the ability to appreciate and evaluate live theatre.

- (3) Through Jacques Lecoq's ideas on form-first performance, students will develop physical creativity, intellectual curiosity, and ensemble skills. They will participate in these functions at school and be afforded opportunities to see professional productions, which they will judge based on the same tools they use to build themselves as physical actors.

(c) Knowledge and skills.

(1) Foundations: inquiry and understanding. The student develops concepts about self, human relationships, and the environment using elements of theatre, dance, and physical education. The student is expected to:

- (A) understand the value and purpose of using listening, observation, concentration, cooperation, and emotional and sensory recall as exhibited through physical movement, facial expression, and gesture;
- (B) practice muscular relaxation and warm-up techniques;
- (C) practice stage movement techniques such as mime, pantomime, stage combat, Laban, Lecoq, or viewpoints consistently to express thoughts, feelings, and actions non-verbally;
- (D) use neutral masks to remove facial expression from beginning actors, allowing actors to explore movement that begins in the physical manipulation of the body;
- (E) practice effective movement to express thoughts and feelings;
- (F) analyze characters by investigating why people move in certain ways based on social status, intelligence, economic status, education, as students read through and analyze published and original plays;
- (G) identify and practice memorization skills for dance and choreography;
- (H) explore different styles of used in both theatre and musical theatre, including jazz, hip-hop, and tap;
- (I) identify the parts of the sabre, knife, and quarterstaff;
- (J) practice safe and appropriate combat footwork for sabre, knife, and quarterstaff;
- (K) demonstrate safe practices of stage falls, tumbling, carrying, punching, kicking, and other hand-to-hand fighting techniques as used on stage;
- (L) demonstrate safe practices for prop firearms on stage;
- (M) describe the interdependence of diet and physical fitness in relationship to acting; and
- (N) practice aerobics as a means to actor fitness.

(2) Creative expression: performance. The student interprets characters using the body expressively and creates dramatizations. The student is expected to:

- (A) demonstrate safe use of the body, including the building blocks of relaxation, stretching, and warmup;
  - (B) define creativity as it relates to physical expression;
  - (C) recognize the four centers of all physical action and demonstrate how each can be used to build characterizations on stage;
  - (D) use physical, intellectual, emotional, and social awareness to portray believable characters and convey a story when applying acting concepts, skills, and techniques;
  - (E) employ physical techniques consistently to express thoughts, feelings, and actions non-verbally;
  - (F) create, write, and refine original monologues that portray a variety of different movement styles to create a number of different characters;
  - (G) translate observations of animals and various metaphors such as flora, architecture, or weather into physical expression and movement pieces; and
  - (H) demonstrate beginning skills for modern, tap, jazz, and classical couple formats of dance.
- (3) Historical and cultural relevance. The student relates theatre and dance to history, society, and culture. The student is expected to:
- (A) relate historical and cultural influences to theatre and dance;
  - (B) identify and discuss the innovators of theatrical movement theory, including Constantine Stanislavski, Uta Hagen, Vsevolod Meyerholdt, and Jacque Lecoq; and
  - (C) appreciate and dissect how cultural differences throughout world drama affect actor preparation and movement styles.
- (4) Critical evaluation and response. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances. The student is expected to:
- (A) analyze and apply appropriate behavior at various types of live performances;
  - (B) evaluate movement styles as well as personal performances through the use of recorded media;
  - (C) offer and receive constructive criticism of peer performances; and
  - (D) use technology such as presentation software, research projects, and online journals to document and present information in a clear and coherent manner.

*Description of specific student needs this course is designed to meet:*

Most acting courses begin with lessons in relaxation and improvisation, areas of study to work on physicalizing character on the stage. However, no theatre course has the time to examine how the body works, why some movements represent anger and others love. Developing a “physical” actor has been the first step in actor study since the late 1800s, and this course sets the goal of building this actor—a physically fit actor, physically aware, trained in dance, movement, and stage combat with an emphasis of both individual and group safety. The constant presence of social media has pulled the theatre out of a building and opened it to anyone with a device. 21st century actors have to be both mentally and physically prepared to act at a moment’s notice, and this course is a step in that direction.

*Major resources and materials:*

For proper movement training, it is necessary to have a large, empty space in which to work. An empty, proscenium-style stage would be good, or a black box. Even a gym or gymnasium could work. It would also be excellent to have an alternative space with mirrors so that they actors could get immediate visual feedback about their physical work. Materials would include fencing foils and safety equipment, quarterstaves, daggers, gymnastic mats, and miscellaneous dance materials, including tap shoes. Students would be required to purchase their dance shoes (except for tap). Texts used for the course may include “Swashbuckling, a step by step guide to the art of stage combat and theatrical swordplay,” by Richard Lane, “Movement for Actors,” edited by Nicole Potter, “Acting Through Exercises,” by John L. Gronbeck-Tedesco “The Physical Comedy Handbook,” by Davis Rider Robinson, and others. Video equipment, projectors, and classroom laptops for research and self-evaluation should also be available.

*Suggested course activities:*

Instruction includes physical safety: relaxation, muscular stretching and warm-up, stage movement, ensemble work; combat weaponry: foils, the broadsword, the quarterstaff, daggers, and safe handling of all theatrical weapons; hand-to-hand combat: self-defense (karate), kinesthetic awareness, safety in falling, throwing and tumbling, punching, kicking, and wrestling; physical fitness awareness and self-evaluation: diet, body fat percentage, and calisthenics; aerobic exercise: aerobic dance and safety in aerobics; jazz, hip-hop, and tap dance: perform memorized sequences in rhythmic accuracy in all styles, incorporate appropriate movement vocabulary, and demonstrate proper skeletal alignment, and comprehend bodily awareness in terms of balance. Optional activities, for those students who wish to pursue theatre but have physical challenges, include study through online resources and presentations of papers and/or slide show presentations to indicate learning.

*Suggested methods for evaluating student outcomes:*

Performance-based evaluations, vocabulary and concept quizzes and exams, and daily instructor feedback during training. Student performances are also digitally recorded, and they are required to provide feedback about their own training.



*Approved Innovative Course*

*Teacher qualifications:*

Instructors should be certified in both 6-12 Theatre and All Level Physical Education. SAFD certification and dance training recommended.

*Additional information:*

This course could also incorporate guest artists as teacher aides, since it is such a broad base of training.