DESCRIPTION
In this course we will create characters inspired by history, memory, dreams and world lore through challenging exercises fusing Eastern contemplative traditions and Western theatrical improvisation. Students will learn how to access different aspects of themselves to enhance their own creative process and create a uniquely authentic theater.

Each session will begin with vocal exercises and physical warm-ups, based on Taoist exercises and Western dance techniques. Our character work starts with meditation and visualizations employing the Buddhist tradition of "mindfulness/awareness" practice, in which we place ourselves totally in the present moment.

We will work in solos, duets and in groups, gradually adding costumes, props and music. Grading will be based on attendance, commitment, class discussions and assignments. All students will read Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, as well as assigned readings from Trungpa’s Dharma Art (4 of these will be handed out during the semester) and John Welwood’s Ordinary Magic. Open to theater students, dancers, musicians, visual artists, writers, techies, business & social service students – anyone interested in discovering their own source of deep invention.

SYLLABUS
Jan. 29 – Physical and vocal warm-ups based on Taoist exercises and dance techniques.
Introduction to the material in this course: Improvisations, including “The Snake Dance,” a character and movement/ mindfulness/awareness practice integral to our work; “States of Being” Cards (a deck made up of emotions and states of mind) used with the Snake Dance.
Reading (for following week): Ordinary Magic (Introduction); Sacred Path of the Warrior (ch. 1).
[all readings from Dharma Art /True Perception TBA]
Meditation Circle. Circle Dance in which all lead, all follow simultaneously.

Feb. 5 – Physical and vocal warm-ups and “Snake Dance” with Character Cards (a deck made up of various real and imaginary beings). Each student then picks a card. This character will come to life in subsequent classes.
Meditation Circle and discussion. Circle Dance

Reading: Ordinary Magic (ch. 1 & 3); continue w/ Sacred Path of the Warrior.
Meditation Circle and discussion. Circle Dance

Feb. 19 – Physical and vocal warm-ups and “Snake Dance.”
“Conjuring the Characters,” in which each student begins to develop a specific character drawn from their imagination, memory, life situation. (Continue “Character Loops” if not completed)
WRITING ASSIGNMENT: short sketch of “Conjured Character” due next week
Reading: Ordinary Magic (Part 2 Introduction). Meditation Circle and discussion. Circle Dance

Feb. 26 – Physical and vocal warm-ups and “Snake Dance.”
Discussion of mindfulness/awareness practice re development and performance of our characters.
“Four Characters and Their Environment,” an exercise joining 4 disparate characters (chosen from preceding weeks) and their surprising environment.
Reading: Ordinary Magic (ch. 10). Meditation Circle. Circle Dance

March 5 – Warm-ups and “Snake Dance.”
“Four Characters and Their Environment” cont.
“Shadow” exercise introduced.
Discussion: “What is Lineage?”
WRITING ASSIGNMENT based on Ordinary Magic.
Reading: continue w/ Sacred Path of the Warrior and Dharma Art (excerpts TBA). Meditation Circle.

Mar. 12 – Warm-ups and “Snake Dance” with “Variables,” an addition to the basic exercise.
Duets & trios based on Picture Postcards w/ costumes, props, music and “Curtain Holders”.
Discussion of how this work can connect to the larger world, socially, politically, in community.
Meditation Circle. Circle Dance

Spring Break

Mar. 26 – Warm-ups and “Snake Dance”.
Continue w/Picture Postcard Characters, Meditation Circle & Discussion. Circle Dance

April 2 – Warm-ups and “Snake Dance”
Students begin to develop One-Minute Pieces based on their characters (conjured, word card or picture postcard). Includes costumes, music & sound effects, use of environment and possibly other characters.
Reading TBA. Meditation Circle and discussion w/ Sacred Path of the Warrior. Circle Dance

Apr. 9 & 16 – Warm-ups and “Snake Dance.”
Continue with One-Minute Pieces.
Reading Dharma Art (excerpts). Meditation Circle and discussion. Circle Dance

Apr. 23 – Warm-ups and “Snake Dance” w/ States of Being Cards.
“The Four Aspects of the Character” – examining our characters from 4 physical and vocal aspects.
And any One-Minute Pieces not shown as yet.
WRITING assignment based on Sacred Path of the Warrior.
Reading TBA. Meditation Circle and discussion. Circle Dance

Apr. 30 & May 7
Continue “The Four Aspects of the Character” and informal showings of our work (could include One Minute Pieces)
Meditation Circle and discussion

Important Note: For formal meditation instruction & practice:
SHAMBHALA MEDITATION CENTER OF NY 118 W.22nd St. 6th fl. 212-675-6544
Public sitting (free) weekdays 5:30-7pm, Sun. 9am-12pm Weekly Dharma Gathering Tues. 7pm
SHAMBHALA MEDITATION CENTER OF NY, 118 West 22nd Street, 6th floor (212-675-6544)
Learn to Meditate (1-hr. course): Sun. at noon and Wed. at 6pm (donation)
Sitting Meditation: Mon.-Fri. 5:30-7 pm; Sun. 9am-noon. (free)
Weekly Dharma Gathering (sitting and lecture by senior teachers): Tuesdays 7pm ($5 donation)