PERFORMANCE STORIES: EAST MEETS WEST with Lanny Harrison

SPRING SEMESTER 2015: Course ARTS-UG 1050

Class: 2:00 – 4:45pm, Wednesdays  Gallatin Studio 430, 1 Washington Place
Office hours: 12:45 – 1:45pm, Wednesdays in Rm. 429 (also by appointment)
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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 guided sitting meditation, vocal exercises and physical warm ups based on Taoist exercises and Western dance techniques. Our character work is inspired by the Buddhist tradition of "mindfulness/awareness" practice, in which we continually place ourselves in the present moment. Specific writing and movement structures will be used to further enhance the process of creating three characters over the semester and framing them in theatrical pieces. We will work in solos, duets and in groups, gradually adding costumes, props and music. Grading will be based on attendance (2 absences only), commitment to mindfulness/awareness practice, class discussions, assignments and final solo projects.

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 (now True Perception these will be in the form of handouts) and John Welwood’s Ordinary Magic. We will explore the question: “What is the relationship between creating theater and meditation practice?” This course is 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. 28 – Sitting Meditation w/guided instruction
Physical and vocal warm-ups based on Taoist exercises and dance techniques. Introduction to the material in this course; class 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 (pgs. xiiv - 7); Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior (Preface, Foreword, Chapt. 1) [all readings from Dharma Art/True Perception provided by L.H.]
Circle Dance in which all lead, all follow simultaneously - various forms to be practiced over the semester.

Feb. 4 – Sitting Meditation Circle, w/instruction
Discussion (of reading & practice)
Physical and vocal warm-ups and “Snake Dance” w/repetitive movement that ‘waxes & wanes’. Each student then picks from a deck of Character Cards made up of various real and imaginary beings. This character will come to life in subsequent classes.
Circle Dance
reading for next week: Shambhala (Chapt. 2 & 3) & Ordinary Magic (Talks 1, 3, 6)
Feb. 11 – Sitting Meditation Circle, Discussion
Physical and vocal warm-ups and “Snake Dance” with Character Cards.
Beginning of story structure: “Character Loops,” based on lying/sitting/standing/walking/dancing exercise
with voice.
Reading: Ordinary Magic (ch. 1 & 3); Sacred Path of the Warrior (ch. 4, 5, 6)
Circle Dance

Feb. 18 – Sitting Meditation circle & discussion
Physical and vocal warm-ups and “Snake Dance.”
“Conjuring the Characters,” in which each student begins to develop their 2nd character - this time 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, ch. 8, 10, 12), Shambhala: Sacred Path (7,8,9)
Circle Dance

Feb. 25 – Meditation Circle & discussion
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 (each chosen from
preceding weeks) and their surprising environment.
Reading: Ordinary Magic (Part 4 Introduction, ch. 24, 27, 30); Shambhala: Sacred Path (Part 2, - 10, 11, 12)
Circle Dance

March 4 – Meditation Circle & discussion
Warm-ups and “Snake Dance” with Areas, an addition to basic exercise
“Four Characters and Their Environment” continued
“Shadow” exercise introduced.
Discussion: “What is Lineage?”
WRITING ASSIGNMENT based on Ordinary Magic (choose a chapter - can be any chapter in book -
how does it relate to your present life? how does it relate to our class work?)
Reading: Shambhala: Sacred Path of the Warrior (13, 14, 15); Dharma Art (hand outs).
Circle Dance

Mar. 11– Meditation Circle & discussion
Warm-ups and “Snake Dance” with “Variables,” an addition to the basic exercise.
Creating our 3rd Character - Duets & trios based on Picture Postcards w/ costumes, props, music with
“Curtain Holders”.
Discussion of how this work can connect to the larger world, socially, politically, in community.
Reading: Shambhala: Sacred Path of the Warrior (16, 17, 18 )
Circle Dance

Sitting Meditation & Contemplation homework

Spring Break_________________________________________________________________

Mar. 25 – Meditation Circle and discussion re our meditation homework over the break
Warm-ups and “Snake Dance”.
Continue w/Picture Postcard Characters
Reading: Shambhala: Sacred Path of the Warrior (19, 20, 21)
Circle Dance

**April 1** – Meditation Circle and discussion
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 (from the class)

WRITING ASSIGNMENT - Shambhala: Sacred Path of Warrior, a contemplation of poem that begins Part 1 (“From the great cosmic mirror…”)

Circle Dance

**Apr. 8** – Meditation Circle & discussion
Warm-ups and “Snake Dance” leading w/One Minute Piece Characters
Continue with One-Minute Pieces.
Reading *Dharma Art* (hand out); sitting meditation homework - environment, timing, posture

Circle Dance

**Apr. 15** - Meditation Circle & discussion
Warm-ups & Snake Dance
Continue with One-Minute Pieces
WRITING ASSIGNMENT - contemplation of 2nd poem in Shambhala: Sacred Path of the Warrior that begins Part 2 “That mind of fearfulness…”
Reading from *Dharma Art*; sitting meditation & contemplation homework

Circle dance

**Apr. 22**– Meditation circle & discussion
Warm-ups and “Snake Dance”, leading w/2 students at a time
“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* - *pick a chapter that speaks to your life & our work in class*

Circle Dance

**Apr. 29**

Meditation Circle and discussion
Warm ups & Snake Dance
Continue “The Four Aspects of the Character”; continue with One Minute Pieces

Circle Dance

Sitting meditation homework - environment, timing, posture

May 6
Meditation Circle and discussion
Warm ups & Snake Dance
Informal showings of our work (could include One Minute Pieces)
Last Circle Dance

Note: For formal meditation instruction & practice:
SHAMBHALA MEDITATION CENTER OF NY will be moving from W. 22
new address & sitting meditation hours will be provided when the move is complete

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)