

School of Drama Monthly Events June – August 2014

Summer Term and the evolving “Summer Semester” in June, July and August are also a period of great and regular activity for the School of Drama offering students a chance to partake in alternative and complimentary learning opportunities. In a similar vein to the School of Drama’s Winter Term activities each undergraduate level has different structured activities from the International Tour; the HSBC Mainland China Study Programme; Graduates’ Showcase: Theatre in Education Tour to the New Territories (in collaboration with the Academy’s Performing Arts Education Centre); Putonghua, Musical Theatre, *Commedia dell’arte*, Voice & Audition Workshops; Zurich University of the Arts Summer School “Common Stages”; MFA in DTE Professional Practice Summer project in the Studio Theatre; Directing Laboratory in the Drama Black Box; and professional internships. Additionally, the regular auditions for Semester A of the coming academic year’s Productions and Projects and for new students also took place. In addition faculty attended a number of international Performing Arts Conferences.

School Tours

London (31 May - 8 June 2014)

For the second year running Regents’ University London hosted our Degree 3 international tour to the UK capital, London. This again included a series of intensive workshops with Frantic Assembly, the National Theatre and the Globe Theatre,



Meisner workshops with Scott Williams and visits to numerous world-class professional productions. As with the international study tour last year, the group of 20 students has stayed at the campus of the Regent's University, London, one of the international sister colleges of the School of Drama. Most of the workshops were held at the heart of the city on the border of the Regent's Park. Li Wing-hong and Terence Chang (Lecturers in the School) accompanied the students.

Shanghai (2 - 8 June 2014)

This year the School of Drama’s Degree 2 students were hosted by the Shanghai Theatre Academy. 10 student recipients of the HSBC scholarships attended Acting, Directing, Voice and Movement classes at the STA, as well as attending professional performances at the Shanghai Drama Centre and a visit to **Suzhou**. The relationship with our sister School in Shanghai enabled students to observe and work in Putonghua and to be able to benchmark their own progress and skills against Mainland peers. Chair of the School of Drama, Prof Ceri Sherlock and Senior Lecturer in Directing, Roy Szeto led the tour.

School Workshops

Musical Theatre (10 June 2014)

In addition to intensive Musical Singing Workshops for 4YD1, 4YD2 and Degree 2, conducted by Li Wing Hong (Lecturer in Voice Studies) and Seesy Chow (Assistant Lecturer in Drama), a Musical Theatre Professional Audition workshop was conducted by Mohamed Drissi (musical director, choreographer and former Head of the Academy's Musical Theatre Programme). Students were put through the rigorous process of choice, presentation and performance of a selected song in the pressurised context of audition.



Physical Theatre (4 June 2014)

An introduction to *Commedia dell'Arte* by Stéphane Lam, offered in a collaboration with Le French May, was given by the distinguished French Artist whose company Theatre des Asphodeles were performing at the Academy's Drama Theatre. Students had the opportunity not only to explore classical Commedia characters through mask work and physical gestures (*lazzi*) but also to see Master artists using the technique in production – a rare opportunity for them in Hong Kong.



Putonghua (14 - 15 June 2014)

A Putonghua Drama Workshop conducted by Wu Xi (Lecturer in Drama) at Shenzhen University offered an opportunity for some students - selected by audition that tested their proficiency in Putonghua – to explore the work of renowned Chinese playwright Cao Yue in intensive scene work culminating in an internal presentation for acting faculty and the Chair of School.

Audition Workshop (19 & 25 June 2014)

An audition technique workshop for Degree 2 students was given by Edmond Lo Chi-sum (MFA and BFA alumnus of the School of Drama) and Artistic Associate of Chung Ying Theatre. This is a regular feature of the work of the School connecting industry (and future employers) with students giving them 'head start' access to a leading professional artistic director of one of the flagship companies and providing them with coaching and techniques for auditioning in a professional environment. Edmond also conducted a competitive audition for 4YD1 for internships with the company in their forthcoming autumn production of *Spring Fever Hotel*. Eight students were selected.

Voice (7 - 12 July 2014)

An intensive week-long Voice Workshop was given by international artist Richard Armstrong from Banff in Canada as a partnership between the School of Drama, West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) and company in residence Theatre du Pif. Exploring the Roy Hart School of vocal technique a select group of professionals and students engaged in an extremely demanding but rewarding daily routine of focused work on the voice and vocal delivery. WKCD kindly offered two places (for a student and teacher) to participate and the workshop took place at the Academy's Dance Studio 4.

Directing Laboratory (31 July 2014)

Throughout July Degree 2 directing students with actors from across the School and an alumnus were engaged in exploring classic 'cutting edge' text theatre from the recent Western canon in the School's refurbished Drama Black Box. Heiner Muller's *Hamletmachine* and Sarah Kane's *Blasted* offered the two directing students each an immense challenge, not just in interpreting these non-linear non-narrative texts, but in communicating and epic and dark emotions with the actors. A process based laboratory it stretched all participants to the limits of their present skills of artistic expression. The laboratory was conducted under the supervision of two of the faculty's most experienced directors, Chair of the School of Drama, Prof Ceri Sherlock and Senior Lecturer in Directing, Roy Szeto.

ZdhK/HKAPA "Common Stages" – Summer School (14 July - 9 August 2014)

One of the School of Drama's first class honours graduating Directors Cheung Siu Hei, Donald participated in an unique Academy event – a trans/art summer school in collaboration with the Zurich University of the Arts. 35 students participated of which 15 came from Zurich, 10 from HKAPA, and ten others from Shanghai Theatre Academy, 2 from Guangdong, 2 from Singapore, 2 from Taiwan and 2 from School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong. Most students were Masters' level with a few exceptional participants from undergraduate and sub degree level. Teachers came from ZdhK (Zurich University of the Arts) supplemented by one from HKAPA and one from LaSalle. From Hong Kong Danny Yung (Zuni Icosahedron and School of Drama Advisor) also gave a lecture and conducted a master-class. Sessions were conducted at HKAPA and Zdhk North Point "Connecting Spaces". (The latter space is an incentive by the Swiss Government and Zdhk to develop more permanent transcultural/international programme platforms in the Asia Pacific from a base in Hong Kong) and installation presentations were given at North Point, Yau Ma Tei and at the Academy in various locations. Chair of the School of Drama, Prof Ceri Sherlock was the resident Academy member of faculty for the duration of the project and performances.

Graduate's Showcase

The 2014 30th Anniversary Graduates' Showcase was a great success and thanks are again due to the continued support of Shun Hing Education and Charity Fund with its donation as Principal Sponsor for the School of Drama. This has enabled the School

to develop this event as *the* annual platform for its industry focus. It has enhanced the students' professionalism and the School's industry connection. This has been welcomed by key industry figures by faculty and by students. The Graduate Showcase has now established its place in the calendar, both for the local creative industries' potential employers and for the Academy.



In 2014 more industry professionals attended the showings, which this year included an additional “Open Dress Rehearsal” for those industry and Academy members both students and teachers who were not able to attend the main event. At the “meet the students ‘sharing’ session” after the Showcase evening performance more members of the industry stayed behind to engage in conversation with students than in 2013 or 2012. Industry

professionals, particularly amongst the valued School of Drama alumni were unanimously impressed by the initiative and that Shun Hing in supporting the School should provide the graduating students with such an opportunity for an industry focus. They also voiced that it gave the School a renewed relevance and active connection between vocational training and profession, which they wholeheartedly supported. Indeed many alumni commented that they wished that they had had such an opportunity ‘in their time at Drama School’.

The majority of the 2014 School of Drama graduating class were in a fortunate position this year of already having offers of employment to transition from School to industry. They had a range of contracts from single productions to year as well as a few more ‘permanent’ contracts - in many ways the result of the School of Drama’s pro-active strategy in relation to the local industry and the support of sponsors such as Shun Hing.

The *2014 School of Drama Graduates’ Showcase* took place on 24 June in Dance Studio 1 at the Academy. 18 Graduating Acting Students and 2 Directing Students took part supported by a production team of 11 students and alumni. There were two performances during the day - a preview at 2pm and show at 8pm and an additional open dress rehearsal the evening of 23 June.



School Productions

2014/15 Studio 1, Drama 1, Project 1 productions

Auditions for 2014/15 Studio 1 Lorca’s *The House of Bernarda Alba*, Drama 1 Poon Wai-sum’s *My Days in Cat Town*, Drama Black Box Project 1 *Order* productions

took place in the Summer Term and dramaturgical and design meetings have been on going throughout the summer period. Directed respectively by Prof Ceri Sherlock, Roy Szeto and Acty Tang the productions will begin rehearsal in September for presentation in November and December. The range of work illustrates the School's aspiration to explore both Chinese and Western classic texts from a contemporary viewpoint and further to engage with contemporary performance practices. My Days in Cat Town will open in the Drama Theatre on 21 November and is the School's own featured 30th Anniversary event as part of the Academy's Performing Arts Symposium.

Performing Arts Education Centre (PAE)'s School Tour in New Territories (30 June - 10 July 2014)

For the third year the Theatre in Education/PAE tour to the New Territories visited Secondary Schools and performed a facilitated social issue drama to over 1,000 schoolchildren. Again a combination of MFA and BFA in Drama students collaborated in a work that tackled the highly relevant topic of cyber and online bullying. Directed by MFA in Drama graduate Bob Szeto the project was also supported School of Theatre an Entertainment Arts graduates and managed by the Academy's Performing Arts Education Centre.

MFA Professional Practice Summer Project

The availability of the Academy's Studio Theatre in August enabled MFA in Drama Drama and Theatre Education (DTE) students to further explore a 'professional environment' presentation of a theatre piece. Tracing the whole process from creation through devising to rehearsal, design, scenography, scenic construction, publicity and house management the group of students largely secondary school teachers had a unique experience to use Academy facilities in 'down time' greatly to enhance their experience and knowledge of production through professional practice. Something that will have immediate practical application in their daily work in Schools in Hong Kong, raising standards and expectations of their own pupils. The summer project underlines the unique nature of the MFA in Drama DTE major as practice as research and practical knowledge, a factor that makes this major the most attractive, and successful in numbers, of our MFA in Drama majors and the most successful such course available in Hong Kong.

Faculty Activities

Prof Ceri Sherlock (Chair of the School of Drama) attended the *20th Performance Studies International Conference (PSi 20)* held for the first time in Asia, at the Shanghai Theatre Academy from 4 to 8 July 2014. He chaired the opening and two other sessions at the Conference which explored the themes of "Avant Garde, Tradition and Community". There were over 600 international delegates from the USA, Europe, Asia Pacific and China.

Estella Wong (Senior Lecturer in Academic Studies in Drama) conducted an intensive 'Summer Camp' in Drama and Theatre Education on 10 June 2014 for the Drama Centre, Shanghai. This highly successful course indicated the growing interest in this

field in the Mainland and the School's of Drama's reputation and expertise in this area in the person of Estella Wong.

Poon Wai-sum (Resident Playwright & Discipline Leader in Dramatic Writing) conducted intensive playwriting master-classes during 30 June - 5 July and 10 - 17 July at our sister School at the Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA) in Taiwan. His multi-award winning play *The Emperor, his Mom, a Eunuch and a Man* for Hong Kong Repertory Theatre was revived during August for performances in September. It is directed by Roy Szeto, Senior Lecturer in Directing and stars many School of Drama alumni as actors.

Li Wing-hong (Lecturer in Vocal Studies) attended Estill Voice training System level 1 and 2 courses: Figure for voice control & figure Combination for six voice Qualities with Certified Master teacher & Certified Course Instructor Naomi Evers from 19 to 23 June 2014. He also earned the Certificate of Proficiency of Estill Voice International on 22 June 2014, and is one of the only 2 Hong Kong local voice practitioners who obtained this certificate.

Li Wing-hong also attended Estill Voice Workshops in the Estill Model: Advanced Figure & Voice Qualities, Application, Combinations, Variations with Anne-Marie Speed and Paul Farrington, Certified Master Teachers, Certified Course Instructors with Service Distinction & Advance Testing Privileges at the Royal Academy of Music, United Kingdom during 21 to 23 July 2014. And he attended Voice and Speech Trainers Association (VASTA) Conference in London on 4 - 9 August 2014. He and Aole Miller, visiting guest lecturer from Lasalle College of the Arts in Singapore and discussed the potential of having the VASTA Conference being held in Hong Kong or Singapore in the near future (possibly 2017).