

Theatre Practice Policy

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BRITISH AMERICAN DRAMA ACADEMY

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Currently Being Updated

Theatre Practice in the Classroom/Rehearsal Studio Policy

Introduction

BADA believes that theatre is a vital art form and that the work can and should be challenging, experimental, exploratory and bold. Artistic freedom of expression is essential.

The classroom or the rehearsal studio is a workspace that requires students to be willing to learn; to work together as an ensemble with their peers and to cultivate a generosity of spirit towards them. It is an opportunity for students to explore their preconceptions so as to be open to discovering other ideas and perspectives on themselves and their work; to exercise their imaginations, to be free to experiment, and to accept that embarrassment and failure are both part of the actor's learning process.

However, the creative space must be a secure space for those who are working in it and this policy is designed to ensure that this is the case.

Core Values

BADA believes that:

- Good theatre can be about and may include appalling behaviour and unacceptable language, together with offensive acts and events within the narrative of the drama that may deeply affect the viewer and the performer.
- Making work that includes such material should not be used as an excuse for behaving unprofessionally within class or the rehearsal studio. Students and teachers have an obligation to consider their biases and work against them when they are identified. Indeed, the taking of artistic risks is dependent on class and workspace being inclusive and free from any fear about personal safety.
- It is an essential part of the training of an aspiring actor or indeed anyone who wishes to work in the theatre that they feel able to raise issues about the work that they are doing in class with their teachers and, in the context of collaborating on this work, with their fellow classmates.
- Everyone at the Academy possesses a unique history and has experiences that are based on differing group identities and individual life choices. Training to be an actor may accidentally expose these differences or purposefully use them for the work.
- Members of the BADA community have a responsibility to educate themselves about these issues rather than relying on others to educate them.
- Students, staff/faculty are responsible to address such issues when they meet them. It is not enough to be a bystander. If anyone feels that a colleague's voice is not being listened to or if they are being inhibited from speaking for themselves, it is everyone's responsibility to support that person by informing themselves about this person's circumstances and becoming their advocate.
- Everyone should take responsibility for the varying forms and degrees of power that they possess within the Academy. Staff, faculty, visiting artists, directors and students need to actively communicate their willingness to address these issues, and if necessary make an opportunity to discuss any incidents that may arise within the learning process.

Best Practice

1. Physical Contact

There are classes and exercises within class where physical contact between teachers and students and between students is an important part of the learning process. Before making physical contact with anyone else, BADA expects teachers and students to ask for and to be given clear consent before proceeding.

In some instances, teachers may explain that an exercise or class session will require repeated physical contact and request consent for that rather than asking for consent each time. However, it should not be assumed that consent from a previous day or week or exercise extends to the current exercise without confirmation. Students and teachers are empowered to change their mind about consent during an exercise and express that clearly so the physical contact can be stopped.

2. Scenes or Exercises involving the use of Derogatory or Biased Language

The acting student's work is to acquire a range of skills in the classroom or studio with the assistance of teachers and directors, such as text work, voice, and movement in order to create a particular 'character'.

That 'character's' beliefs and attitudes may not accord with what the student believes, but the skill of the trained actor is to portray them convincingly within the context of the drama. Sometimes that drama uses racism, homophobia, misogyny etc intentionally to make an artistic point.

However, BADA believes that it is essential to distinguish material that intends to explore complex and sometimes contentious issues and ideas by using a particular language or portraying characters who possess questionable beliefs from any kind of endorsement of such ideas or beliefs by the teacher, the writer, or the actor.

A number of historical texts will contain beliefs that are no longer commonly held or supported. Exploration of such texts, in particular within their historical context and an understanding of the difference between modern and historical perspectives are an essential part of an actor's training. And the exploration of historic language, beliefs and practices does not imply that they are supported in the present.

There must be a free and open dialogue within the classroom or the rehearsal studio between teachers and students and between students in which such language, beliefs and practices can be challenged without discounting their historical context. This is a corner stone of the educational process.

Academic Care

Students with questions about their work at BADA are encouraged to share any concerns they may have with the Dean or the Managing Director, both of whom maintain an 'open door' policy to all students and faculty.

Dispute Resolution

Ideally any issues relating to the aspects of classroom practice discussed above should be resolved within the classroom.

Should that prove impossible then the matter must be referred to the Dean of BADA. After an informal meeting with all concerned parties, the Dean will endeavour to arrive at a resolution to the difficulty that can be agreed by all concerned.

Should that be unsatisfactory to all or any of the parties then there will be a more formal adjudication. Everyone involved will be required to submit their concern in writing to the Dean by an agreed date.

The Dean will then convene a meeting of two members of the BADA faculty and chair that meeting to consider the written submissions and question all parties about this written evidence.

The Dispute Committee will be bound to produce their final adjudication, which will be binding on all parties, within five days of this hearing.