

Wendy Sayvetz - Vocalist/Guitarist, Actor

Company: Abaca Productions (abacaproductions.com)

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Type of Program: Residency; Theater & Music: High School

* Either an in-class residency tied to an English, Literature, Reading (including Remedial), or other relevant Humanities class...OR an after school residency.

“The Journey from Page to Stage” (How Written Words Become a Live Performance)

SYNOPSIS/OUTLINE/INDIVIDUAL SESSION DETAILS

A 20 session + Final Performance * residency that will teach students the art and craft of breathing life into written words through the creation of performance pieces. Students will use existing prose, poetry, scenes from plays, songs and/or their own original material to create, dramaturge, direct and perform solo and/or group performance pieces culminating in a final class performance integrating all the pieces into one production.

If an in-class residency, existing material would be taken directly from or related to the specific literature/reading curriculum of that class. If an after school residency, existing material can be taken from the curriculum of a student’s relevant literature/humanities class OR from a student’s own choice.

An outline summary and a detailed outline for each session or group of sessions follows. For Sessions 3-7, one short scene from a play, novel, or short story will be used as a demonstration vehicle – to be chosen in conjunction with the class teacher based on class curriculum, age, reading level, etc. If an after-school residency, to be chosen by Wendy (appropriate to age, reading level, etc.) unless it is directly connected to a specific class/curriculum.

*** Please Note:** If there is interest in this residency but time and resources are not available for 20 sessions + final performance, an abbreviated version is also available. It would consist of Sessions 1-11 only, eliminating Sessions 12-20, the creation, preparation and final performance phases of the residency.

Wendy Sayvetz – Residency: “The Journey from Page to Stage”

OUTLINE SUMMARY

I. Performance Fundamentals (Sessions 1-7)

Session 1: Reading to/for Yourself versus Reading to/for Others

Session 2: Acting Technique – Connecting to Others

Session 3: Acting Technique – Emotional Life and Preparation

Session 4: Acting Technique – Imaginary Circumstances

Session 5: Acting Technique – Character

Session 6: Acting Technique – Action

Session 7: Acting Technique – An Actor’s Toolbox

II. Interpreting Performance Material (Sessions 8-11)

Session 8: Interpreting a Monologue – Study and Rehearsal in Groups

Session 9: Interpreting a Monologue – Classroom Performances/Feedback

Session 10: Interpreting a Scene – Study and Rehearsal in Groups

Session 11: Interpreting a Scene – Classroom Performances/Feedback

III. Writing Original Performance Material (Sessions 12-14)

Session 12: Writing an Original Monologue

Session 13: Writing an Original Scene

Session 14: Writing an Original Poem or Song Lyric

IV. Creating Final Performance Pieces (Sessions 15-16)

Session 15: Choosing and/or Writing Performance Material in Groups

Session 16: Choosing and/or Writing Performance Material in Groups

V. Rehearsal/Integration of Final Pieces (Sessions 17-20)

Session 17: Rehearsal of Performance Pieces in Groups

Session 18: Rehearsal of Performance Pieces in Groups

Session 19: Integrating Pieces into One Show and Full Rehearsal

Session 20: Full Dress Rehearsal

VI. Final Performance: In or Outside of Classroom/Class-time

Wendy Sayvetz – Residency: “The Journey from Page to Stage”

I. Performance Fundamentals (Sessions 1-7)

Session 1: Reading to/for Yourself versus Reading to/for Others

Premise: Reading to and for yourself is fundamentally different from reading to and for other people.

Question: What do you do differently when reading words on a page to yourself and reading those same words aloud to others?

The answer to this question will be explored by examining a short (approx. one page) excerpt of narrative fiction from a novel or short story. Specific excerpt will either be related to a specific class curriculum or chosen by Wendy.

- 1.** Students will read the excerpt to themselves once followed by a brief discussion with Wendy of what the excerpt is about in general.
- 2.** Students will read the excerpt to themselves again but this time they will watch/examine and write down for discussion afterwards with Wendy what they are doing while they are reading.
- 3.** A volunteer from the class will then read the excerpt aloud to everyone, twice. The first time, students will simply listen/absorb. The second time they will observe and write down what they think the reader is doing as he/she reads aloud to them.
- 4.** Wendy will ask the students to share their observations of the reader and the reader to share his/her experience of reading aloud to the class as compared with reading to him/herself.

Learning Goals:

Students will understand and experience the difference – specifically in terms of tangible “actions” and “objectives” – between reading to themselves and reading aloud to others, reading for its own sake and reading for performance.

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I. Performance Fundamentals (Sessions 1-7)

Session 2: Acting Technique – Connecting to Others

Premise: All performing – whether reading aloud, playing a character in a play, singing, or dancing is an *interaction* between you and others – another/other performers and/or your audience.

Question: When you are performing, WHO is the most important part of the interaction either between you and another/other actors and/or between you and your audience?

1. Discussion of this question with the class within the context of Sanford Meisner’s definition of acting: “living truthfully under imaginary circumstances”, particularly the first part – “living truthfully”.
2. Demonstration between Wendy and a volunteer student, of Sanford Meisner’s basic building block of acting technique – the “Repetition Exercise”.
3. 2nd Demonstration of the exercise, this time between two volunteer students with Wendy guiding/coaching them in taking their attention off of themselves and listening/responding to and working off of their partner.
4. Wrap-up discussion with the class in which demonstration participants share their experience – and the rest of the class shares their observations of – the “Repetition Exercise”. Students will also be asked to share their observations of actors and/or music performers they have seen in movies, music videos, on television, on stage, etc. We will discuss which ones are focused on/connecting to others and which ones are more focused on themselves and compare the end result/effect on them of watching each type of performer.

Learning Goals

1. Students will know that a performer’s focus needs to be on the *other* person/people with whom they are interacting as opposed to self-conscious judgment/evaluation of their own performance.
2. Students participating in the demonstration will be able to take their attention off of themselves and fully listen and respond to their partners.
3. Students observing will understand and experience what it means for a performer to connect with another/other actors and their audience.
4. Students will appreciate and experience the difference between a performer who connects with others and a performer who is focused on him/herself.

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I. Performance Fundamentals (Sessions 1-7)

Session 3: Acting Technique – Emotional Life and Preparation

Premise: Acting is living truthfully under imaginary circumstances.

Question: What does it mean to “live truthfully” i.e. what is the emotional life of a character and how do you create that life in yourself as a performer?

- 1.** Brief discussion of emotional life in performing: why it is so important, how performers are able to discover and articulate the specific *emotional state* of a character and recreate i.e. fill themselves with it. Review of the last session on connecting and how it directly relates to emotional life.
- 2.** Two volunteer students will read aloud a short scene with everyone else following along. Students will then identify and articulate on paper what they see as the basic emotional condition of each character.
- 3.** Discussion of and consensus on the emotional condition/state of each of the two characters.
- 4.** Wendy guides the class in an emotional preparation exercise using each of the two emotional conditions identified in **#3** above. The two volunteer students re-read the scene immediately following the exercise. Wendy and the class discuss the difference between the first and second readings of the scene.

Learning Goals

- 1.** Students will know the meaning and necessity of **a)** believing in the imaginary circumstances of a performance piece and **b)** being emotionally full when performing.
- 2.** Students will understand how **a)** and **b)** in **#1** above are directly related to connecting to others (actors and/or audience) as a performer.
- 3.** Students will be able to identify and articulate the emotional states of the characters in the specific scene used for demonstration.
- 4.** Students will be able to fill themselves with the specific emotional life of one of the characters in the specific scene used for demonstration.
- 5.** Students will appreciate and experience the difference between an emotionally full performance and one that is lacking in emotional life.

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I. Performance Fundamentals (Sessions 1-7)

Session 4: Acting Technique – Imaginary Circumstances

Premise: Acting is living truthfully under imaginary circumstances.

Question: What are the key imaginary circumstances of a specific piece of material i.e. those that will have the most impact/influence on performing it?

- 1.** Brief discussion of imaginary circumstances in performance and why it is necessary to identify, articulate and understand those circumstances that will have the most impact on you as an actor. How to look for the “clues” in a piece of material that reveal these key circumstances. Plus a review of the last sessions on connecting and emotional preparation.
- 2.** Two volunteer students will read aloud a scene (same one used in Session 3) with everyone else following along. Everyone will then make a short list of the circumstances they see as being most essential to performing the material.
- 3.** Discussion of and consensus on the key imaginary circumstances (and clues) of the scene and their impact on the characters’ emotional lives and connection to/with each other.
- 4.** The two volunteer students will then re-read the scene factoring in the key circumstances and staying focused on listening and responding to their partners. After this re-read, Wendy will discuss with the volunteer actors and the rest of the class what the difference was between the first and second readings in terms of their experience and observations.

Learning Goals

- 1.** Students will know the meaning and necessity of accurately identifying the essential imaginary circumstances in a piece of performance material.
- 2.** Students will understand how **#1** above is directly related to having a full emotional life and connecting to other actors/audience when performing.
- 3.** Students will be able to find clues and identify/articulate the essential imaginary circumstances in the specific scene used for demonstration.
- 4.** Students will appreciate and experience the difference between a performance that is based on knowing the key imaginary circumstances and one that is not.

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I. Performance Fundamentals (Sessions 1-7)

Session 5: Acting Technique – Character

Premise: A character is largely defined/determined by their point of view i.e. the filter or lense through which they see and experience the rest of the world.

Question: Within the “imaginary circumstances” of a specific piece of literature, who are you and what is your point of view i.e. how do you see the world?

- 1.** Brief discussion of the meaning of character. Specifically what are the things which define a person’s character in life and then in the context of a performance piece (theatrical and/or musical). Emphasis on point of view i.e. how a person sees and experiences the world, circumstances, people, etc. Plus a review of the last sessions on imaginary circumstances, emotional preparation and connecting.
- 2.** Two volunteer students will read aloud a scene (same one used in Session 3) with everyone else following along. Everyone will then write a brief description of each character along the lines of our discussion in #1 above.
- 3.** Discussion of and consensus on the character definitions/descriptions for both roles in the scene and how it is connected to the imaginary circumstances of the play/scene, the characters’ emotional lives and connection to each other.
- 4.** The two volunteer students will then re-read the scene factoring in their specific character definitions and staying focused on listening and responding to their partners. After this re-read, Wendy will discuss with the volunteer actors and the rest of the class what the difference was between the first and second readings in terms of their experience and observations.

Learning Goals

- 1.** Students will know the meaning and necessity of accurately defining one’s character in a piece of performance material.
- 2.** Students will understand how **#1** above is directly related to key imaginary circumstances, having a full emotional life and connecting to other actors and the audience when performing.
- 3.** Students will be able to accurately define the characters in the specific scene used for demonstration.
- 4.** Students will appreciate and experience the difference between a performance based on understanding one’s character and one that is not.

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I. Performance Fundamentals (Sessions 1-7)

Session 6: Acting Technique – Action

Premise: Theater is driven by the principal “action” of its characters which in turn is based on their connection to each other, circumstances, emotional life, and character.

Question: Within the “imaginary circumstances” of a specific piece of literature, what are you doing? I.E. what do you want/need more than anything?

- 1.** Brief discussion of a character’s action (same as objective) in performance and why it is necessary to know what you as a character want/need more than anything in the world. Identifying and defining your “action” in a way that will have the most impact on you as an actor. Plus a review of the last sessions on character, imaginary circumstances, emotional preparation, and connecting.
- 2.** Two volunteer students will read aloud a scene (same one used in Session 3) with everyone else following along. Everyone will then write down what they see as being each character’s “action”.
- 3.** Discussion of and consensus on the “action” of each character in the scene, its relationship to the imaginary circumstances of the play, and its impact on each role’s character, emotional life and connection to/with each other.
- 4.** The two volunteer students will then re-read the scene factoring in their respective “actions” and staying focused on listening and responding to their partners. After this re-read, Wendy will discuss with the volunteer actors and the rest of the class what the difference was between the first and second readings in terms of their experience and observations.

Learning Goals

- 1.** Students will know the meaning and necessity of accurately identifying a character’s “action” in a piece of performance material.
- 2.** Students will understand how **#1** above is directly related to character, key imaginary circumstances, having a full emotional life and connecting to other actors/audience when performing.
- 3.** Students will be able to identify and define the “action” of the characters in the specific scene used for demonstration.
- 4.** Students will appreciate the difference between a performance based on knowing what one’s “action” is and one that is not.

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I. Performance Fundamentals (Sessions 1-7)

Session 7: Acting Technique – An Actor’s Toolbox

Premise: The “journey from page to stage” consists of understanding and putting into practice the basic elements of acting technique: connecting to others, imaginary circumstances, emotional life, character, and action.

Question: How does an actor – and a director, writer, dramaturge * – integrate the basic elements of acting technique to create a performance piece.

- * **1.** Brief discussion of the role and function of a director, dramaturge, and writer including how they work together with actors on performance material.
- 2.** Brief discussion of how to identify and focus on the one or two elements of acting technique that are most essential with any given role/piece of material and focus. It is different for different roles – and how to understand and make use of the other technique elements as important context, background, etc.
- 4.** Two volunteer students will read aloud a scene (same one used in Session 3) with everyone else following along. Everyone will then write down what they see as being the most essential one or two elements of technique for each character/actor to focus on in preparation.
- 5.** Discussion of and consensus on the one or two most essential technique elements for each character/actor. Review of these elements as defined in the relevant previous sessions along with other technique elements as context. Discussion of how each actor can most effectively prepare his/her role in the scene. Wendy will work with/coach the volunteer students/actors accordingly.
- 4.** The two volunteer students will re-read the scene and Wendy will discuss with them and the rest of the class what the difference was between the first and second readings in terms of their experience and observations.
- 5.** Students will form groups of three (actor, director, dramaturg) and choose (or be assigned) monologues/scenes for Sessions 8-11, material to be selected and provided by Wendy and/or the class teacher, age/interest appropriate, etc.

Learning Goals

- 1. Students will be able to integrate the fundamental elements of acting technique into an “actor’s toolbox” and will understand how to make use of them in preparing a specific piece of performance material.
- 2. Students will understand the specific roles of director, dramaturge, & writer.

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II. Interpreting Performance Material (Sessions 8-11)

Session 8: Interpreting a Monologue: Study and Rehearsal in Groups

Session 9: “ ”: Classroom Performances/Feedback

Session 10: Interpreting a Scene – Study and Rehearsal in Groups

Session 11: “ ”: Classroom Performances/Feedback

Note: The outline that follows applies to Sessions 8-11. Part One covers the group work sessions for both monologues and scenes. Part Two covers the classroom performance sessions for both monologues and scenes.

A. Part One: Sessions 8, 10: Study and Rehearsal in Groups

Premise: Creating theater is a collaborative process; interpreting existing material and taking its words “from page to stage” is a collaboration between actor, director and writer or dramaturge.

Question: How does an actor, director and writer or dramaturge collaborate to interpret and create a performance piece from existing material – monologue or scene – and create a performance piece?

Based on prior preparation (during Session 7) for Session 8, students will be organized in groups of 3, each assuming the role of: Actor, Director, or Dramaturg, and will have a specific monologue and scene to work on. For the monologue, each student will assume one role. For the scene, one student will double as actor and dramaturge.

With overall guidance and coaching from Wendy and the classroom teacher, each group of three will:

1. Led by the student dramaturges, groups will analyze and answer key questions based on acting technique elements covered in Sessions 1-7.
2. Led by the directors, assisted by the dramaturges, and performed by the actors, groups will rehearse the monologues/scenes.

Learning Goals:

1. Students will understand, appreciate and experience collaborative process between actor, director and dramaturge or writer in creating theater.

3. Students will be able to a) work together in small groups and effectively define and put into practice essential elements of acting technique and 2) successfully prepare a short monologue and two person scene for performance.

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II. Interpreting Performance Material (Sessions 8-11)

Session 8: Interpreting a Monologue: Study and Rehearsal in Groups

Session 9: “ ”: Classroom Performances/Feedback

Session 10: Interpreting a Scene – Study and Rehearsal in Groups

Session 11: “ ”: Classroom Performances/Feedback

Note: The outline that follows applies to Sessions 8-11. Part One covers the group work sessions for both monologues and scenes. Part Two covers the classroom performance sessions for both monologues and scenes.

B. Part Two: Sessions 9, 11: Classroom Performances/Feedback

Premise: Thorough and effective preparation results in performance that is emotionally alive and that reflects/magnifies the truth of human nature, behavior, circumstances, and actions in a way that is “more real than real life”. In this way, live performance connects with, moves and has a lasting impact on audience members.

Questions: What effect does live performance ideally have on audience members? What do you as an audience member want to feel during a live performance? What do you as a performer or performance creator want to give your audience?

From the preparation during both the monologue and scene interpretation study/rehearsal sessions (Session 8, Session 10), the designated actor(s) in each group will perform their material in front of the class.

Each performance will be followed by brief discussion between Wendy, the class and the actor(s), director and dramaturge in each group to: 1) have each performance group member share his/her experience of the collaborative process of preparation and performance; 2) allow students to share their constructive feedback as audience members with each performance group

Learning Goals:

1. Students will understand, appreciate and experience the relationship between live performance and audience members and the impact of thorough and effective preparation of material.

2. Students will be able to: a) perform a short monologue or scene for the class based; b) articulate their own experience of: collaborating with their two group partners, rehearsing, performing and/or observing a performance they helped to create; c) formulate and share constructive feedback on the other groups’ performances; d) accept constructive feedback on their own piece

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III. Writing Original Performance Material (Sessions 12-14)

Session 12: Writing an Original Monologue

Session 13: Writing an Original Scene

Session 14: Writing an Original Poem or Song Lyric

Note: The outline that follows applies to all three sessions in this phase: 12-14.

Premise: Writing original material begins with an urgent need to tell a story which has an arc i.e. a beginning, a middle, and an end regardless of its form and no matter how unconventional/untraditional it is.

Question: What is the story I need to tell? What is its arc – its beginning, its middle, its end?

Wendy will discuss with the class the basic elements of storytelling: a) the urgent need to communicate something deeply important; b) choosing a specific form; c) who is/are the character(s)? d) who is your audience? e) what is the arc i.e. beginning-middle-end or introduction-conflict-resolution? Discussion will also cover how to make use of the basic elements of acting technique per Sessions 1-7 and the basic guidelines of writing song lyrics (verse, refrain, verse, refrain, bridge, verse, refrain) and its many variations.

Session 12: Each student will choose/find and write a summary of a story that he/she urgently wants to tell – it can be a true story or fictional; it can be based on an experience from their own life or from something they heard or read about. This story will be the basis of the original material they create in Sessions 13-14. Students will partner up to read each other’s stories together and make sure each one has a clear arc: beginning, middle, end.

Session 13: Students will be guided through the process of turning their story into a monologue (addresses another person, the audience or themselves i.e. a soliloquy) or a two person scene. Volunteers will share their work with the class followed by creative/constructive feedback from Wendy and students.

Session 14: Students will be guided through the process of turning their story into a short poem or song lyric – in first, second, or third person...or free-form. Volunteers will share their work with the class followed by creative/constructive feedback from Wendy and students.

Learning Goals:

1. Students will understand the basic impulse for writing original material and will be able to articulate their own urgent story with beginning, middle, & end.
2. Students will be able to use their story to create three different kinds of original material: monologue or two person scene; poem or song lyric.

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IV. Creating Final Performance Pieces (Sessions 15-16)

Session 15: Choosing and/or Writing Performance Material in Groups **Session 16: “ ”**

Note: The outline that follows applies to both sessions in this phase: 15-16.

Premise: It is essential for performers to choose/create material that they love, that inspires them to want to share it with others, and that speaks to them.

Question: How does an actor, director and writer or dramaturge choose and/or create performance material that will best express who they are and what they want to share/communicate with their audience?

With guidance from Wendy (and classroom teacher if applicable), students will decide: **1)** if they want to act, direct, dramaturge, and/or write, choose one thing or combining two such as writing and acting, writing and directing, dramaturging and directing, etc. **2)** if they want to write original material or interpret existing material (from a play or prose literature). **3)** what type of piece they want to work on: monologue, scene, poem, song or a hybrid...

Based on the above, and with guidance from Wendy (and the classroom teacher if applicable) students will team up in groups of at least 2 people but no more than 5 people with 1 group member designated as director.

Under Wendy’s supervision and coaching, students will either choose/find/adapt existing material or write original material to create a group performance piece. This process will take place during Session 15 and Session 16.

Learning Goals:

1. Students will be able to identify and articulate the specific way in which they want to participate in the final class performance: as actor, director and/or writer/dramaturge; as interpreter or writer of original material; through monologue(s), scene, poem(s) or song(s).

3. Students will be able to: **a)** team up with appropriate classmates for the purpose of creating a collaborative performance piece; **b)** collaborate successfully to create a group performance piece that is ready for rehearsals beginning in the next session.

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V. Rehearsal/Integration of Final Pieces (Sessions 17-20)

Session 17: Rehearsal of Performance Pieces in Groups

Session 18: “

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Session 19: Integrating Pieces into One Show and Rehearsal

Session 20: Dress Rehearsal

Note: The outline that follows applies to all sessions in this phase: 17-20

Premise: Concentrated rehearsal and preparation is required for successful performance.

Question: How do actors, directors, writers or dramaturges make the best use of rehearsal time in order to create a successful performance?

Sessions 17-18: With supervision and guidance from Wendy (and class teacher if applicable), students will rehearse their pieces in groups, incorporating the basic elements of acting technique covered in Sessions 1-7 along with any other applicable technique elements such as those having to do with writing in its various forms.

Sessions 19-20: With supervision and guidance from Wendy (and class teacher if applicable), students will weave their respective group performance pieces into an integrated production – a kind of revue or variety show – and rehearse the production in preparation for a final performance for an invited audience. Groups will also decide if they want to use any costumes, props, etc. and if so, will do so during these two sessions.

Learning Goals:

1. Students will be able to effectively collaborate in small groups to prepare and rehearse their group performance piece.

3. Students will be able to effectively collaborate as an entire class to:

a) integrate their respective performance pieces into a coherent revue/variety production; **b)** prepare and rehearse the class production.

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VI. Final Performance: In or Outside of Classroom/Class-time

Premise: Being prepared and loving/caring deeply about your material creates a great experience for both performers and audience.

Question: After all the preparation, what’s the most important thing to do in a performance? (Let it all go, have fun, and be in the moment with fellow performers, yourself, and the audience.)

A final performance of the class revue/variety production will be held either during class time in the classroom or at another appropriate time and place for an invited audience of parents, friends, etc.

Learning Goals:

Students will experience the joy and excitement of:

1. performing,
2. seeing one’s creative ideas made real
3. seeing one’s creative efforts bearing fruit
4. transforming words on a page into life on a stage.

MISSION STATEMENT

Wendy Sayvetz’s purpose as an artist and arts educator is to touch and connect people of all ages and backgrounds with the timeless inspiration of live theatrical and musical performance in a wide and diverse range of styles and forms and to give young people both the tools and experience of creating and performing material that expresses their deepest most joyful selves.