

Drama and Theater Arts classes Linz International School Auhof

Drama and Theater Arts classes at the Linz International School Auhof are dedicated to expanding students' personal boundaries through theatrical exercises, rehearsals, and performances. The classes support students' language learning with activities that emphasize creativity of linguistic and physical expression. Students learn how to present themselves confidently in front of groups, how to adapt and respond to new situations, and how to reflect critically. The classes work to build a team mentality even as they encourage individual growth.

During the first four years, the classes focus on students' voice, movement, and general presentation on the stage. Students participate in at least two full theater productions. Students' creativity is encouraged weekly through story creation and improvisation. There is also a strong emphasis on teamwork; we find theater classes are ideal for teaching mutual respect and tolerance for one another. The syllabi vary depending on the needs of the individual students and classes, and might include emphasis on such themes as social learning, language skills, and/or comportment. The performance styles are also flexible according to the skills and interest of the class, and may involve the performance of a scripted play, writing and performing an original production, performance of a radio play, pantomime, or a sampling of scenes. We try to involve the upper level students as much as possible in the younger classes' performances as a way to encourage tutelage and friendships across grade levels.

The upper level classes begin to refine students' dramatic skills. Larger productions, more challenging prompts, complex performance scenarios, various acting styles and leadership roles during productions characterize the upper form theater experience. During the 5th and 6th years, students are prepared for directing their own pieces through a general study of acting styles that may include realist and Epic theater performance, Theater of the Oppressed exercises, and a full production of an extant play. Students are also taught auditioning skills, which apply to theater productions as well as interviews and presentations. Students acquire more responsibility during productions to prepare them for their experience in the International Baccalaureate (IB) theater program.

The 7th and 8th grade years are generally dictated by the IB syllabus. Students take over production responsibilities themselves by directing and designing their own plays. The core classes focus on the practical application of theories and philosophies learned during the IB higher level and standard level courses. Students enrolled in the HL/SL course then explore these theater theorists and genres in depth, while developing their own directorial and design styles. The IB students must complete various projects during the course of their IB studies, including a research investigation, a playwriting exercise, a practical project (e.g. the production of a play, creation of a costume, lighting design) and a presentation.

Ultimately, the theater courses at the LISA work towards developing an independence both on stage and backstage. We hope to expand students' understanding of theater arts so that our students can enjoy a lifelong appreciation for the theater.

1st year: Intro to the stage

During the first year of theater classes at the LISA, students learn what the parts of the stage are and how to move and speak on stage. There is a strong emphasis on teamwork. Students learn to support and respect each other, on stage and in discussions.

- Poem recitations: vocal projection, proper posture on stage, general blocking
- Diction: singing, rhymes, tongue twisters
- Pantomime
- Beginning story-telling: writing story endings, beginnings
- Introduction to improvisation
- Stage characterization: exaggeration, movement, character background and expression
- Introduction to blocking, staging
- Creative thinking
- Teamwork, groupwork
- Performance, sometimes in collaboration with an upper form class

**Various units from the 1st and 2nd classes are interchangeable depending on the individual needs of the students and classes.

2nd Year: Intermediate Story-telling

Where, When, Who

In the second year LISA theater classes, students delve into more complex story-telling and character work. We also investigate warm-ups as a rehearsal technique. We examine the importance of physical, vocal, and mental warm-ups for theater and in general. In the second semester, students lead their class in warm-ups. This activity encourages students to take a leadership role early in their theater class experience. It also forces students to express themselves clearly and listen attentively to others.

- Warm-ups: physical, vocal, mental
 - Purpose of warm-ups for theater, choosing and leading effective warm-ups
- Unity of place, time, relationship
- Framing stories: in what context do we tell our tales?
- Open-ended script work
- Improvisation games, Chekhovians
- Creating comprehensive dialogues
- Give and Take exercises: working with partners on stage
- Character agility work: walks, gestures, voice
- Pantomime work, using properties and objects on stage
- Intermediate blocking
- Stage design, tour of space
- Commedia dell'Arte unit

3rd Year: Improvisation and Monologues

The third year of LISA theater classes is characterized by the learning and performance of short monologues. Students work on script analysis and character creation. They learn about stage design, costume, and movement. A highlight of the year is the students' performance of a monologue. They are given a two-page script to learn, stage, and perform on their own. In addition to the monologue work, students may rehearse improvisation in the context of scene work, and/or begin working on their 4th year play. Students may also begin drafting their own scripts for an upcoming performance.

- Writing scripts, using scripts to stage scenes
- Object improvisations
- Vocal work: pronunciation, breathing, projection exercises
- Improvisation in scene work, working with partners on stage
- Introduction to script analysis
- Monologue work: characterization
 - Character analysis
 - Blocking
 - Costume, set design
 - Memorization work
- Initial preparation for 4th class performance

**Various units from the 3rd and 4th classes are interchangeable depending on the complexity of the 4th class performance.

4th Year: Lower form Graduation Performance

During the fourth year of LISA Drama and Theater, students slowly transition from the lower form to the upper form. We write, rehearse, and perform a play. Students learn various memorization techniques, and may be involved in stage design, costuming, make-up and stage management.

- Performance year:
 - Script writing and research
 - Character development
 - Rehearsal
 - Costume, stage design
 - Stage management
 - Performance
- Elizabethan drama and William Shakespeare's plays
- Improvisation rules, listening to partners, building scenes spontaneously
- Story-telling
- Comedy and dealing with the unexpected
- Poetry interpretation and poetry as stimulus for scene creation

5th and 6th Year: History Survey Course

The fifth and sixth years of drama begin to focus more on the production of theater. Students receive a general overview of the major 20th century theatrical genres, and begin to analyze plays and productions from a directorial perspective. During the fifth year, students explore directing, costume, set design, and dramaturgy through realist, Epic theater, and Theater of the Oppressed plays and exercises. They also take part in various audition workshops meant to strengthen students' interview and presentation skills. The sixth year tends to focus on one specific style, in which the students rehearse and perform a full production. We also delve into performance critique and analysis by viewing and discussing various performances in and out of school. Important questions include: What purpose did the play have? For whom was this production created? What elements of production were most effective and why? How did the performers express character?

Course Units may include:

- Poetry interpretation and poetry as stimulus for scene creation
- Overview units on directing, costume, set design and dramaturgy
- In-depth acting seminars in various performance styles, such as
 - a. Realism
 - b. Epic Theater
 - c. Theater of the Oppressed
 - d. Jazz aesthetic in performance
- Introduction to theater layouts and blocking for various stages
- Stage Lighting
- Broadway musicals in pop culture
- Introduction to performance analysis and critique
- Rehearsal for and performance of play
- Post mortem discussions of play, rehearsal process, and performances

7th and 8th Year Theater Arts Core Course

Course Overview

Students in their 7th and 8th years cover some of the major world theater movements, from the origins of performance in African ritual to contemporary performances. Students study historical movements in terms of modern performance, as they learn to identify various performance and production techniques.

The core course primarily focuses the role of theater maker. Students process the physicalization of performance activities, enactment of scenes from plays, and the rehearsal and refinement of devised scenes. Students discuss the “Why here? Why now?” aspects of any performance they learn about or see. They explore why certain theater movements arose when they did, what purposes the movements served at the time, and how these movements continue to affect theater and performance today, all in an attempt to refine their own directing or design styles.

Although the students work with various historical and play texts, each unit only begins to explore the people, performances, and contexts in which various movements occurred. Therefore, students are encouraged to ask questions and to spend time outside of class delving into each movement’s people, plays, and performances. General questions include: What drives the characters in the plays we are studying? How do we reach our audiences through our characters and our performances? What relevance do these plays have in our lives?

Sample of Course Units

- Ritual and Performance, Yoruban celebration and Wole Soyinka
- Epic theater
- Anna Deavere Smith and docudramas
- Heinrich Müller’s *Hamletmachine*
- Augusto Boal and Theater of the Oppressed
- William Shakespeare and Elizabethan theater
- Playwriting
- Farce
- Postcolonial theater, Aimé Césaire’s *A Tempest*
- Museum theater, collaboration with the LISA Visual Arts classes
- Rehearsal and performance of a major production

**While some units are repeated from grades 5 and 6, specific plays are studied within their historical context in the 7th and 8th years.

Grading criteria for 7TA and 8TA

- Discussion and class participation*
- staging and performance of scenes from various scripts
- creation and performance of TO forum theater scenes
- Presentations about specified theatrical genre, character analysis
- Script memorization quizzes

7th and 8th IB Theater Arts Course

In this course, the focus is to contextualize plays and their performances historically, politically, and culturally. The course delves into the theories and philosophies behind theater movements and genres we study during the core classes. As per the IBO syllabus, our course consists of four components:

1. Theatre in the making
2. Theatre in performance
3. Theatre around the world
4. Independent project

Each of these components is covered in a variety of ways, from learning about stage design, lighting techniques, make-up, rehearsal, movement, and directing, to performance. We spend as much time learning about Western theatre practices as we do learning about theater styles around the world. The culmination of the course is the selection, design, and production of the student's own independent project, a practical enterprise that requires use of all the skills learned in during the student's previous theater classes.

Unit Overview:

Many of the following units are repeated from the core course.

- Ritual and Performance, Yoruban celebration, Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*
- Bertolt Brecht and Epic theater, *Mother Courage*
- Anna Deavere Smith and docudramas, *Fires in the Mirror*
- Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine*
- Augusto Boal and Theater of the Oppressed
- William Shakespeare and Elizabethan theater
- Kabuki theater, *The Forty-Seven Samurai*
- Medieval performance, *The Second Shepherd's Play*
- Greek theater, Sophocles' *Electra*, Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice*
- Indian Kathakali performance
- Theater of the Absurd
- The Musical

Grading criteria for year 7 and 8

Each project is completed according to the IB Theater syllabus. The research investigation, practical performance proposal, and presentation is completed in shorter form during year seven as practice for the full projects during year eight. Students receive separate handouts detailing each of the project requirements.

- Discussion and class participation
- Journaling
- Participation in at least two-three performances
- Research investigation
- Practical Performance Proposal
- Theater performance and production presentation
- Independent project proposal and portfolio

Please see below for specifics on the four IB projects

IB Course Requirements for the HL students

- Study two different stimuli, and, from these, develop two action plans for performance
- Participate in at least three performances, in three different roles/capacities
- Study at least two contrasting theatrical practices
- Independent project. Choose one of two options:
 - either A: devising practice
 - or B: exploring practice

Assessment requirements and grading criteria for HL students

- Research investigation, 2000-2500 words with visuals, graded for:
 - Research skills
 - Task relevance
 - Presentation
 - Critique of sources used in research
- Practical performance proposal, 250 word written presentation with visuals including a 1000-1250 word rationale
- Theatre performance and production presentation, 30-minute oral presentation, 7-10 images, graded for:
 - Analysis
 - Synthesis
 - Reflection
 - Applied research
- Independent project portfolio, 3000 words from core syllabus and option A or B, graded for:
 - Preparation
 - Process
 - Reflection
 - Presentation
 - Application of research practice

IB Course Requirements for the SL students

- Study one different stimulus, and, from this, develop an action plan for performance
- Participate in at least two performances, in two different roles/capacities
- Study at least two contrasting theatrical practices
- Independent project. Create and present an original work inspired by any source, of any origin. Pursue a specialized interest with rigour and imagination.

Assessment requirements and grading criteria for SL students

- Research investigation, 1500-1750 words with visuals, graded for:
 - Research skills
 - Task relevance
 - Presentation
- Practical performance proposal, 250 word written presentation with visuals
- Theatre performance and production presentation, 20-minute oral presentation, 5-7 images, graded for:
 - Analysis
 - Synthesis
 - Reflection
- Independent project portfolio, 2000 words from core syllabus, graded for:
 - Preparation
 - Process
 - Reflection
 - Presentation

Journal

In addition to the above listed requirements, students must keep a journal during their theater HL/SL and core theater arts courses. According to the IBO syllabus details, the journal “should focus specifically on learning experiences, rather than being simply a record of triumphs or an exhaustive chronicle of everything the student experiences in theatre. Therefore, students should select carefully those experiences from the course that illustrate personal growth and understanding of theater” (page 17, IBO Theater Arts guide).