

## Curriculum Vitae

# Tovah Close, MFA

Theater teacher and practitioner with a  
focus on voice, speech, accents and public speaking

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### TEACHING

#### Graduate Level

##### **Lecturer in Drama/Core Faculty Member**

University of Virginia Department of Drama MFA Acting Program 2021-present

- Full-time training of MFA actors in their second year of study. Fall curriculum includes revisiting foundations of vocal production, speech actions for heightened language, Shakespeare techniques including rhetoric, rhythm, verse and line. Spring curriculum includes methodologies for accent acquisition and performance including phonetics, pronunciation, prosody and oral posture.

##### **Adjunct Guest Artist**

Mary Baldwin University Shakespeare and Performance MFA Program 2018-2019

- Designed and taught a 10-week class in the fall semester for the third-year company on the actor's voice. Topics included spontaneous breath, ease and freedom, vocal release, resonance and placement, articulation, character voice, vocal health and warm up practices, and concluded with a Shakespeare monologue lab. The spring semester focused on anatomy of articulation, basic technique of dialect acquisition including placement, prosody, and sound changes, and an introduction to Received Pronunciation (RP) British.

##### **Guest Instructor**

February 2018

University of Virginia Department of Drama, MFA Acting Program

- Designed and taught a workshop for MFA actors entitled *Phonetics for the Actor*, which included an overview of phonetics, speech anatomy, exploring the consonant chart, gliding and sliding in the vowel chart, transcribing the actor's personal idiolect
- Included six one-on-one sessions in advanced dialect study
- Focus on integrating phonetics into existing speech study framework (Lessac and others), and awareness of personal speech habits in relation to so-called good standard speech

#### Undergraduate Level

**Lecturer in Performance (full-time)**

University of Virginia Department of Drama

2019-present

Courses Taught:

Acting I

Introduction to the basics of stage acting based on the Stanislavski system. Students work on building ensemble, presence, vocal and physical technique, pursuing objectives and playing actions while examining contemporary theatrical texts including *Rapture*, *Blister*, *Burn* by Gina Gionfriddo and *Stupid F\*cking Bird* by Aaron Posner.

Speaking in Public

A voice and speech class for non-majors. Topics include presence, physical awareness, eye connection, managing nerves, vocal technique, and crafting content that is narrative, persuasive, and personal in nature.

**Adjunct Instructor**

2011-2017

New York University

Tisch School of the Arts

Undergraduate Drama -- New Studio on Broadway

Courses Taught:

Speech IA:

Fall 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016

A first-year introduction to the basics of speech for the actor which includes creating context, scoring operative words, warming up the voice, consonant sounds and the narrow transcription of their phonetics, exploration of a poem employing and integrating all of the semester's topics.

Speech IB:

Spring 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017

Continues the speech training of the first year, including visceral exploration of vowels, diphthongs, triphthongs and the narrow transcription of their phonetics, a deepening of the understanding of devising context and discerning operative words. The semester culminated in a group project using Walt Whitman's "Pioneers! O Pioneers!"

Speech IIA:

Fall 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016

The second year of speech training introduced actors to heightened speech sounds (American Theater Standard) while working with text from Shakespeare and exploring tools for effective, authentic acting in verse. Topics included scansion, rhetoric, and imagery. The course culminated in a presentation of a Shakespearean sonnet or monologue.

Speech IIB:

Spring 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017

Introduction to dialects beginning with R.P./Standard British, and culminating in actor's choice of Estuary or Cockney. Actors explored sound changes, melody, rhythm, inflection, and physical and oral posture. Students worked on a monologue to audition standard for each dialect and presented it to the group.

Voice and Speech IIIA: Fall 2012, 2013, 2014  
Advanced exploration of voice for the actor including vocal presence and embodiment, adjusting to room tone, breath-body connection, and vocal health. The dialect unit in this course was advanced study of Dublin and/or Nuyorican dialects. Students worked on and presented a monologue at audition standard in each dialect.

Speech IIIB: Spring 2013, 2014, 2015  
A dialect scene study course for upper-level students, including review and cold reading of dialects learned previously, and student-led exploration of new dialects of particular interest, including US Southern, French, Italian, Russian, Brazilian, and Scottish.

Senior Tutorials: Fall 2013  
Highly individualized ongoing one-on-one sessions with select students in areas of concern or interest, such as vocal health, phonetics review or dialect acquisition.

### **Adjunct Instructor**

New York University  
Tisch School of the Arts Summer High School Program

Courses taught:

Spoken Voice: Summer 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014  
Introduced advanced high school actors to Middendorf- and Linklater-based breath and voice work, Viewpoints, and an exploration of heightened text leading to a devised voice and movement project rooted in Shakespearean text.

Speech for the Actor: Summer 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014  
Introduced speech tools to advanced high school actors, including verbal action, broad transcription IPA, Shakespeare tools such as scansion and rhetoric. Students devised and performed a speech-focused group presentation of a Shakespearean sonnet.

### **Adult Continuing Education**

#### **Instructor**

Live Arts

“Dialects with Tovah Close” Workshop Series 2018-2019  
Designed and taught a series of stand-alone dialect workshops for members of the Charlottesville community. Dialects taught included Standard British, Irish, New York, and US Southern.

#### **Master Class**

Virginia Players at UVA Drama

“Anatomy of a Dialect” April 2019

Designed and taught a workshop on the three primary foci of dialect acquisition-- placement, sound changes, and musicality. Students then scaffolded this work onto a Standard British dialect.

## **K-12**

### **Instructor**

Live Arts

Spring Break Filmmaking Camp

April 2018

A one-week intensive, co-taught with Light House Studio, in which middle school artists devised, wrote, filmed, acted in, and edited a short film, "Case 31."

### **Drama Faculty**

Governor's School of North Carolina

Summer 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013

- Assisted the head drama instructor in casting, rehearsal, games, and exercises.
- Designed and implemented a voice and speech curriculum for gifted high school seniors including:

Vocal Technique: Vocal warm-up for rehearsal and performance, physical readiness and availability, and a connection to the actor's personal use of breath, diction and the space.

Dialects: Explored articulation and dexterity of speech organs, basic phonetics, and an overview of the sound changes for R.P., Cockney, Irish and Scottish dialects.

- Served as voice and speech consultant on the following studio productions:

*Our Country's Good*-- Summer 2010

*Summertime*-- Summer 2011

*Twelfth Night*-- Summer 2012

*Red Noses*-- Summer 2013

### **Guest Teacher**

August 2013

Epic Theater Ensemble "Epic Next" Summer Intensive

- Designed and led voice and speech classes with high school groups, addressing physical awareness, body-breath-voice connection, articulation, and verbal action.
- This program fosters social change by mentoring and training student artists from underfunded public schools in New York City.

### **Faculty**

American Conservatory Theater

Young Conservatory Summer Programs

Courses Taught:

High School Acting Technique: \_\_\_\_\_ Summer 2006, 2007, 2008

Devised projects, monologues, physical character embodiment, scenes from American Realism rehearsed and performed for an invited audience.

Middle School Acting Technique: \_\_\_\_\_ Summer 2006, 2007, 2008  
Exercises, games, and scene work with emphasis on helping students feel comfortable in their bodies and being seen.

High School Voice and Speech: \_\_\_\_\_ Summer 2006, 2007, 2008  
Development of breath, resonance, articulation, work on Shakespeare sonnets, and introductory dialect work including R.P. and Irish.

Middle School Voice and Speech: \_\_\_\_\_ Summer 2006, 2007  
Breath and resonance development, exploration of Lewis Carroll's *The Jabberwocky* and T.S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* to promote growth and familiarity with heightened text and to encourage imaginative work.

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## PROFESSIONAL THEATER COACHING

### Production Dialect/Vocal Coach (Professional)

<b>Touring (dialect consultant)</b> <i>The Elephant in the Room</i>	November 2019
<b>Heritage Theater Festival, UVA</b> <i>Steel Magnolias</i>	August 2019
<b>Heritage Theater Festival, UVA</b> <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	June 2019
<b>Heritage Theater Festival, UVA</b> <i>A Chorus Line</i>	June 2018
<b>Mile Square Theatre, Hoboken, NJ</b> <i>Betrayal</i>	April 2017
<b>Epic Theater Ensemble, NYC</b> <i>The Winning Side</i> (FKA <i>Ad Astra</i> )	January 2017
<b>Off-Broadway: 59E59</b> <i>Bauer</i>	August 2014
<b>Epic Theater Ensemble, NYC</b> <i>32 to Base</i>	August 2013
<b>Summer Theater of New Canaan, CT</b> <i>Carousel</i>	July 2011
<b>Parenthesis Theater Company, NYC</b> <i>The Lady's Not for Burning</i>	April 2011

**Occam Repertory Theater, NYC**  
*Featuring Loretta*

November 2010

**Summer Theater of New Canaan, CT**  
*Camelot*

June 2009

**Production Dialect/Vocal Coach (Academic):**

**University of Virginia Dept. of Drama**  
*The Wolves*  
*Just Like Us (Staged Reading)*  
*We are Pussy Riot or Everything is P.R.*

October 2018  
March 2018  
September 2017

**NYU Tisch, New Studio on Broadway**  
*The Apple Tree*, March 2015  
*The Baker's Wife*, April 2014  
*Little Women the Musical*, February 2013  
*James Joyce's The Dead*, October 2012

2012-2015

**DMR Adventures**  
*Guys and Dolls*

June 2018

**American Conservatory Theater MFA Program**  
*The Reluctant Doctor*

February 2007

**Honors Thesis, U.C. Santa Barbara**  
*Ein Jahr/One Year*

Sept. 2004- April 2005

Undergraduate honors thesis in which I wrote, directed, designed, and performed in a two-person play adapted from the letters my grandparents exchanged while engaged and separated during the earliest years of the Holocaust. The creative process relied heavily on language and the connection between my personal voice and the voices of my grandparents. The piece explored the permeability of time and space and the power of the written word.

**Production Dialect/Vocal Coach (Volunteer):**

**Live Arts, Charlottesville VA**

*The Children (canceled due to covid)*  
*The Wolves*  
*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*  
*Ragtime*  
*Big Love*  
*Top Girls*

February 2020  
March 2019  
February 2019  
October 2018  
March 2018  
February 2018

**Private Dialect Coaching & Accent Reduction:**

Coaching actors for auditions and performances, and non-native speakers of English looking to reduce saturation of accent. The process may include dialect research, teaching of sound changes, prosody, oral posture, one-on-one adjustments, and application to relevant texts or spoken materials.

Representative Dialects Coached:

**British:** Cockney, Estuary, Period RP, Scottish, Standard British, Yorkshire

**European:** Czech, Dublin Irish, French, German, Italian, Polish, Russian, West Irish, Ukrainian

**North American:** African-American Vernacular, Boston, Dominican, General American, Maine, Mid-Atlantic/Theater Standard, New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rican, Texas, Tidewater Southern, Wisconsin

**African/Caribbean:** Ghanaian, Trinidadian, Zulu South African

**Asian:** Arabic, Indian

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## EDUCATION

<b>MFA</b>	<b>American Conservatory Theater</b> Master of Fine Arts Program <i>Primary Instructors: Melissa Smith, Deborah Sussel, Dawn-Elin Fraser, Jeffrey Crockett, Dennis Krausnick, Gregory Wallace, Lisa Porter</i>	2008
<b>BFA</b>	<b>University of California, Santa Barbara</b> Department of Theater and Dance <i>Primary Instructors: Irwin Appel, Michael Morgan, Judith Olauson Tourney, Tom Whitaker, James Donlon</i> Honors Thesis: "Ein Jahr/One Year," Advisor: Judith Olauson Tourney	2005
	<b>Knight-Thompson Speechwork</b> <b>Experiencing Speech</b> <b>Phonetics Intensive</b> Andrea Caban, Julie Foh, Nathan Crocker, Tyler Seiple	2019 2021
	<b>Breath Embodiment</b> Jeffrey Crockett New York Intensive Ongoing training	2013 March 2021- present
	<b>The Linklater Center, New York City</b> Freeing the Natural Voice, Dianne Schoenborn	2013

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## ACTING (Selected Credits)

**THEATER:**

*A Christmas Carol*  
*Or,*

Mary  
 Nell

American Conservatory Theater  
 The Process Group, NYC

<i>Orestes 2.0</i>	Helen of Troy	BoCoCa Theatre Festival, NYC
<i>The Contrast</i>	Letitia	Metropolitan Playhouse, NYC
<i>Lobby Hero</i>	Dawn	Vortex Theater, Albuquerque, NM
<i>Orlando</i>	Sasha	A.C.T. MFA Program
<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>	Gwendolen	A.C.T. MFA Program
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Titania	A.C.T. MFA Program
<i>David Copperfield</i>	Mrs. Micawber	A.C.T. MFA Program
<i>Intimate Apparel</i>	Mrs. Van Buren	A.C.T. MFA Program
<i>The Beard of Avon</i>	Anne Hathaway	The Garvin, Santa Barbara, CA
<i>Lobby Hero</i>	Dawn	Vortex, Albuquerque, NM
<i>Pentecost</i>	Amira	Theater UCSB
<i>The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek</i>	Pace	Theater UCSB
<b><u>TV</u></b>		
<i>Corona Sisters (Ad)</i>	Jess	Lindsay Branham Prod.
<i>Boardwalk Empire</i>	Conventioneer	HBO
<b><u>VOICE OVER</u></b>		
<i>UVA Primary &amp; Specialty Clinics</i>	TV Commercial	NBC 29

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## DIRECTING

<i>Serenity Hill in the Pandemic Ep. 1</i>	Webseries	Hamner Theater
<i>Serenity Hill in the Pandemic, Ep. 2</i>	Webseries	Hamner Theater
<i>Serenity Hill in the Pandemic, Ep. 3</i>	Webseries	Hamner Theater

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS/SERVICE

- Actors Equity Association member 2008-present
- Voice and Speech Trainers Association member 2011-present
- Volunteer voice over artist for Indivisible Charlottesville radio PSA, 2018
- Volunteer voice over artist for Charlottesville Waldorf School radio ads, 2018-2019
- Judge for the Moomaw Oratorical Contest hosted by the Jefferson Society, University of Virginia, 2019
- Volunteer actor for Doug Grissom's "In an East German Living Room," 2019
- Guest Judge for Renaissance School's annual Shakespeare monologue competition, 2018
- Alumni Board of Directors, American Conservatory Theater 2010--2014  
-Secretary, 2012-2013

## ACADEMIC HONORS/AWARDS

- UCSB Department of Theater & Dance "Outstanding Senior" award, 2005
- UCSB Senior Honors Project Research Grant (\$1,000), 2005
- Graduated UCSB with High Honors (top 8.5% GPA of graduating class)

## OTHER RELEVANT TRAINING



Anti-Racist trainings: “The Call of this Moment” led by Rev. Jacqui Lewis, “Teaching in Crisis: Disruption and Identity” led by the National Alliance of Acting Teachers  
Facilitated Course design c3 from UVA’s Center for Teaching Excellence  
What is Contemplative Pedagogy? from UVA’s Center for Contemplative Study  
Scene Study for Professional Actors: Scott Freeman  
Acting for the Camera: Rosalyn Coleman  
Alexander Technique: Frank Ottiwell, Emily Whyte, Rahimah Wright, Jennifer Tweel Kelly  
Armed and Unarmed Stage Combat: Gregory Hoffman  
Ballroom Dance (2 years): various  
Yoga and Pilates (15+ years): various  
Clown: Leslie Felbain  
Neutral Mask and Commedia Mask: Matthew Graham Smith  
Private Singing Lessons: Richard Ruff (2 years)  
UCSB Gospel Choir (1 year): Victor Bell