

A CURRICULUM: THEATRE COURSE FOR CLASSICAL UPPER SCHOOL (under the

Barney Charter School Initiative)

By

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## FORWARD

This project is presented as an alternative to the Common Core theatre curriculum for grades 7-12th. Sophie Saxton has created an outline for a classical curriculum and instruction emphasis on theatre. This project closely follows the Barney Charter School Initiative out of Hillsdale University, and therefore the curriculum is grounded in human nature, factual content, moral formation, and thoughtful patriotism. In addition, the author sought to provide a theoretical understanding for the need for theatre study in the classical schooling environment with examples of quality instruction in theatre classes. The curriculum has been created both for the use of teachers with no prior background in theatre education and those well versed. The project is broken into four parts: an introduction, a review of relevant literature, a curriculum, a series of appendices. Additionally the author has included a reflection on the development process.

Theatre can be a challenging subject to integrate into classical academies due to the funding model of charter schools and the assumed elective nature of the subject. However, the author has created a curriculum that teaches the importance of theatre as a foundational course of study. Historically, theatre was used to supplement English and History studies before it became a standalone subject in the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. (Cope, 2015) In the classical environment, it is still regularly used this way. The author argues that theatre as its own course of study has a valuable place in the classical curriculum. Regardless of charter standing, all schools should be encouraged to incorporate theatre programs for the benefit of students. Theatre can be used to advance students' social skills, analytical skills, deep critical thinking, moral values, and historical understanding. In addition to providing relevant literature and history, the author has formed a unit outline, suggestions for assignments, assessments, and detailed descriptions of theatrical games with targeted goals.

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## The Overall Course and Objectives

### All Grade Level aims for comprehension in:

- Critical and creative thinking
- Problem solving
- Communication
- Individual and collaborative planning and implementation
- Historical and cultural understanding
- Self- and social-awareness
- Research skills

#### *Units in a brief.*

##### Unit One

Fundamentals: Focus on classroom edicate, syllabus, foundational terms and exercises to establish a pattern of expectations and grounding within the theatre classroom. This unit provides an emphasis on staging and design rather than preformance. Allowing for students to become well rounded in their theatrical knowledge of physical properties and vocabulary. With exploration in all aspects of scenery, props, costumes, lighting, production management,

##### Unit Two

Beginnings of Western Theatre: Each grade level will explore different elements of western theatre from Greeks to Shakespeare. Sections have been broken down in a way that allows full processing and exploration within each aspect of western theatre. Sections include: Greeks, Romans, Christianity, Medieval era, and Elizabethan era.

##### Unit Three

Physicality and Improvisation: Unit will provide students with the skills to think on their feet both on stage and in life. With fun games and challenging obstacles students will learn how to rely on scene partners and subject matter given to them. This unit is meant to be fun and full of energy.

##### Unit Four

Global theatre: Theatre comes in all different shapes and forms. This unit allows for exploration of theatre found in all different parts of the world. Mainly a lecture based unit with lots of history. Students will be quizzed at the end of this unit and be able to explain in depth the discussed Global theatre areas. (Put break down here)

##### Unit Five

Individual and Communal Presence: Theatre as many other topics needs to have a focus on individual presence before a proper communal presence one can be established. What does that mean? As students are coming into their own as theatre artists it is important for self reflection. The objective of this lesson will depend on the classroom dynamic. Current students reflect upon their experiences and new knowledge they will have of theatre. Students may be asked to write a paper or give an oral presentation as to what theatre means to them on an individual level and why it is first important to identify themselves before adding the level of communal theatre making.

#### Unit Six

Roles in Theatre: Unit provides background information on the different roles within a theatre. Will include a research and presentation component in grades 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Grades 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> will be more practical, allowing students to be placed into different roles during a production season with time to work and reflect on these roles.

#### Unit Seven

Musical theatre, operas, operettas and plays: Unit seven and Ten are able to be combined depending on community theatre programs and opportunities for students to see a show in the community. In this unit students will be asked to prepare a song, monologue, or short scene to be prepared. They will research the history behind their piece and do script analysis break down. For each grade leave their analysts will become more intense and have more parts to it.

#### Unit Eight

The Theatre space - This unit will refer back to subject matter from unit one. It will expand on the space and how students as actors, directors and designers can best utilize the space that they are in.

#### Unit Nine

The imagined character (Costume, make-up, dramaturgical): Developing imagination is one of the most important components within a theatre classroom. This can be through character development, costumes, make-up, dramaturgy, scenic design and much more. In order to form a believable story, it's you who has to believe first that the life of your character is real and the story you are portraying is important. And to do that, you need to be able to build a small world of your character's life in your mind. In this unit students will be asked to do text analysis and create their own vision for the theatrical space.

#### Unit Ten

The audience experience (Field trips!!) How to engage in the ideas of the play. Again, this unit is designed to be paired with all the units above. It is a reflective unit with a bit of fun. Students will attend a show or put a show of their own on. (depending on grade) This unit will be the

largest writing unit. The goal is for students to incorporate all prior units and years within their reflection.