



BA UNDERGRADUATE (COLCHESTER)

SINGING AND MUSIC PREPARATION

COMPULSORY SELF-TAPE:

- Please prepare an excerpt from ONE song of your choice, approximately 90 seconds long (or one verse and one chorus).
- Choose a song that best showcases your voice and is comfortably within your range (not too high or too low). Not everyone is confident at singing (yet!), so choose something you can sing comfortably.
- You can use a backing track, instrumental accompaniment, or sing *a cappella* (unaccompanied).
- It may be from any musical genre and in any language.
- Please memorise the lyrics.
- A mobile phone video is sufficient. Label the video with your full name, surname, and the course for which you are registering, e.g.

John Smith, BA World Performance (2026-2027)

- Please upload your video to YouTube and change the setting to 'Unlisted'. E-mail a link to the video to Dr Ulagh Williams (Head of Music, Southend) – uw24285@essex.ac.uk by **Monday, 21 September 2026**. The purpose of the video is to determine your voice type and singing experience; it is confidential and will not be shared with anyone.

VOICE PREPARATION

In Voice and Articulation classes during Term One, students explore their own voices. This term is about **you** and how your voice represents **you**. To help the Voice Team get to know you, we have created an assignment to better understand where you come from and the influences that make your voice unique to you.

Part of what makes your voice unique is the way in which you talk - your accent, word choice and how you structure sentences. Probably the way in which you speak has been influenced by your family, friends and other important people in your life.

In Articulation classes you will explore your idiolect or what we are calling your “**home**” accent. This is the accent you feel most easy, or “at home with,” when you are speaking with close friends or family. By exploring your “home” accent you can discover more about your voice and how it represents you. As a training actor, you will use your “home” accent as a foundation for understanding other accents, which you will acquire later in your training.

Part of what makes your voice unique is not only what you say but also how you say it. We will explore this in your voice classes through a personal, autobiographical story, which you will complete over the summer and bring into the first day of voice class.

Voice and Articulation Homework Assignment:

Your assessment task for Term 1 will be an autobiographical story (i.e. a true story about yourself) which you will audio record, then write down verbatim (word for word) into a transcript of the recording and bring with you to your first day of Voice class. Your autobiographical story will help you

- **explore the way sound communicates meaning in storytelling in relation to the meaning of the words,**
- **how a story engages the imagination, creates associations**
- **and how the storyteller’s voice can evoke an emotional response from the listener.**

The strategies you learn this term are transferable to your future learning and will help you develop your actor’s process. Your autobiographical story can also be used as performance monologues, audition pieces, or become material for devising larger pieces later in your training.

Please record your story in English, even if English is not your first language. Later in your training you will have opportunities to perform in other languages.

You will use the same autobiographical recording and written transcript for both Voice class and your Articulation class. In Articulation classes, you will review your recording and listen closely to your own “home” accent, or “idiolect.” Through listening strategies, the class, with tutor guidance, will identify sound signifiers within your home accent, noting specifics about your accent and what makes your speech patterns unique to you.

What should your story be about?

The story you will record, transcribe and bring to both your Voice and Articulation classes on the first day should tell a story that you find interesting and that you feel comfortable sharing with classmates you may not know very well. We are all getting to know each other through this assignment.

Some suggestions include:

- talk about the day you became best friends with someone,
- fell in love for the first time, describe your happiest memory,
- a birthday or other notable occasion.

Make sure the recording is of good quality - we want to hear every word that is said.

The recording should be no longer than 2 minutes.

Please do not write down your story first and then read it into your recording device. We need the story to sound as much like “you” as possible - not a version of you reading a copy.

The recording should not be overly prepared - it is fine to have hesitation sounds like “um,” “er,” etc. When you transcribe your recording, please include these hesitation sounds. Use ellipses [. . .] and dashes and other types of punctuation to indicate when your voice trails off or the thought changes quickly. Use bold, italics or underlining to indicate the stress of a word or phrase. Think about how you write your transcript not as grammatically “correct” but as a way of trying to visualise on paper how the sound of your voice moves through a thought as you tell a story. Playwrights do this when they typeset their plays. The visual word and how it is written often has clues about how the playwright “hears” their play in their head and how they might want it performed by the speaker. We will look at this more in depth later in your training when we look at speeches from different kinds of plays.

The aim of the transcription and your verbal sharing in class is to hear your natural rhythms, vocal inflections, impulsive speech patterns, and a sense of spontaneous communication.

What is autobiographical performance?

Deidre Heddon in her book *Autobiography and Performance* (2008) defines “autobiographical performance” as “a broad term which encompasses examples of solo autobiographical work, community and applied drama, oral narrative and oral history performance, verbatim drama, documentary drama, testimonial performance, performance art and instances of site-specific and time-based practice (p.11).” Autobiographical performance has a rich history and can take on many different forms. Examples from the U.S. include: Lisa Kron, Spalding Gray, Deb Margolin, Laurie Anderson, Rachel Rosenthal, Holly Hughes, Peggy Shaw, Lois Weaver, Annie Sprinkle, Kate Bornstein, Tim Miller or Marga Gomez.

In the U.K., examples include: Bobby Baker, Ursula Martinez, SuAndi, Mem Morrison, Donna Rutherford, Joey Hateley, Adrian Howells, Marisa Carnesky, Leslie Hill and Helen Paris.

What are the aims?

According to Lisa Kron, "The goal of autobiographical work should not be to tell stories about yourself but, instead, to use the details of your own life to illuminate or explore something more universal," (quoted in Heddon, D. (2008). *Autobiography and Performance*. London: Palgrave. P. 5).

For the purposes of this class we are going to define it as performance that tells a story based on the performer's personal experience.

One aim of assigning this task is, simply, we want to get to know you better. But another, more discipline specific aim emerges out of a tradition of voice training that assumes there is a close relationship between the "self" and the voice. How does your voice identify you - how does it shape who you think you are or who you want to be? The second assumption is that as you train your voice your perception of yourself changes. What you have to say and how you say it will change as well. As your voice teacher, I am interested in supporting that growth, developing your literal voice as you develop what you want to say as an artist.

Good luck! We look forward to meeting each of you during induction week.