

Lyric Lab Syllabus

We strongly urge you to follow the order listed as many of the topics build upon previous material. You should feel free to take this course at your own pace. We suggest one or two units a week, but one or two a month is also an acceptable pace. Many of the exercises are optional, but you will benefit greatly if you take the time to complete them. Each unit except the final one has at least one video lecture.

Overview

In this unit, you will be introduced to some of the goals of the Lyric Lab. Additional topics include the mechanics of handouts, videos, assignments and tests.

Rhyme

Topics included in this unit include:

- Masculine Rhyme
- Feminine Rhyme
- Triple Rhyme
- Near Rhymes
- False Rhymes
- The Importance of Rhyme in Musical Theatre

Alliteration

Topics included in this unit include:

- Alliteration in Lyrics
- Consonance in Lyrics
- Assonance in Lyrics
- Meaning in Sounds

Daily Dozen

This unit introduces you to a series of five-minute daily exercises:

- Quatrains - Iambic/Trochaic
- Quatrains - Dactylic/Anapestic
- Rhyme
- Song Titles
- Springboards for songs
- Images From My Life
- A New Lyric to an Existing Refrain

Scansion

This unit is in two parts. The first section (corresponding to the first video), introduces the Vocabulary of Scansion and Meter.

The second part covers an Overview of Poetic Meter and includes a lengthy discussion about “perfect” meter.

Subtleties of Scansion

This unit covers some finer points of Scansion, including some problematic situations, with a look ahead at substitution and irregular meter. The video demonstrates scansion of some of the verses you will be scanning, and an explanation of some anomalies and how you might think about them.

Refrain Structure: AABA

This unit discusses the classic refrain structure called AABA.

Progression

This unit introduces the concept of *progression* in refrains. Specific progressions discussed are:

- Exposition/Development/Resolution
- Problem/Solution Progression
- Time Progression - Past/Present/Future
- Time Progression - The Calendar or the Clock
- Pronoun Progression
- Geography Progression

Character Through Diction

This unit discusses the meaning which can be communicated through the choice of words, including:

- Vocabulary
- Slang
- Grammar
- Syntax
- Alliteration/Consonance/Assonance
- Physical sounds

Refrain Structure: ABAC

This unit discusses a second refrain structure: ABAC, and compares it to the AABA structure.

Note: It is highly recommended that you complete the unit on AABA Structure before commencing this unit.

Which Structure to Choose?

This unit discusses the meaning inherent in structure itself, and why you might prefer one structure over another for a particular song.

Substitution

This highly technical unit discusses how meaning which can result when variations on regular meter are utilized. Eight reasons for substitution are discussed and explored:

- Avoiding accents
- Ensuring accents
- Allowing a phrase to breathe
- Allowing a singer to breathe
- Supporting the meaning
- Pickups
- Musical reasons

Spotting a Song

This unit discusses *the purpose of songs in musical theatre*:

- Exposition
- Conflict
- Action
- Character (corresponding to the second video for this unit)

The second video in this unit is dedicated solely to a discussion about songs whose purpose is some aspect of *character*:

- Self-discovery
- Decision-making
- Resolve Conflict
- Enflame Conflict

The unit concludes with a brief discussion about songs which are not driven by story.

Final Test

In the final test, you are asked to analyze three songs according to many of the principles covered by the Lyric Lab. Two of the songs you will be analyzing come from the canon of musical theatre; the third one will be one which you write yourself.