

## Lyric Lab Syllabus

Please follow the order of the units as listed on this syllabus 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. Most units have a video, a handout, a test, and an assignment. Some units have multiples of some of these, and some units have optional exercises.

### 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.

There is also a short video about *Writing in a Structure*.

### 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 in this unit include:

- Alliteration in Lyrics
- Consonance in Lyrics
- Assonance in Lyrics
- Meaning in Sounds
- Alliteration as a Unifying Device

### Prosody

Topics in this unit include:

- Bad Prosody
- Euphony
- Poetic Meter (v. Spoken Meter and Musical Meter)
- Repairing Prosody

## Scansion

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

- Vocabulary of Scansion
- The Reason for Scansion
- Poetic Meter
- “Perfect” Meter
- Scansion Techniques

## 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.

## The Chorus

This unit attempts to distinguish the Chorus from the Refrain. Topics in this unit include:

- Differences between Refrain and Chorus
- The Chorus in operetta
- The Chorus in 20th Century songs
- The Chorus in traditional Broadway shows
- The Chorus in Contemporary Pop Musical Theatre
- The Modified Chorus in modern musical theatre

*Please note: some of the videos refer to a different order of units (they mention Verse, then Chorus, then Refrain). The order of the units and assignments has altered since the videos were edited. The order of units is correct on the syllabus: 1) the Chorus; 2) the Verse; 3) Refrain.*

## The Verse

This unit on the Verse, along with the following two units on the Chorus and the Refrain, form a central core about *structure* in lyric writing. Topics in this unit include:

- Historical purpose of the Verse
- Physical context
- Narrative context
- Interpretive context
- Progressions in the Verse

## 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

Included is a reminder about writing within a structure.

## ABAC

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

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

A second video discusses progressions in ABAC structure.

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

## 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.