

Amy Altadonna

Sound Designer and Composer

Addendum - Independent Studies

Courses that I designed for and with students with focused interests and goals in sound.

Voiceover Recording for the Actor

THEATER 398: Practicum

Alexander Lafrenier

Spring 2016

3 Credits

In this course, we identified examples of quality voiceover recordings from a variety of artistic and commercial applications and discussed mic technique, recording quality, and editing in order to tell a story, and address a target audience with messaging.

Alex learned recording using Logic Pro X, microphone types and characteristics, frequency response, digital audio characteristics (sample rate, bit depth, VBR/CBR), processing (equalization, compression, noise reduction), gain structure, mic technique (proximity effect, breathing, distance from mic, noise rejection). We did hands-on comparisons of various microphones, articulating the differences between them for Alex's voice, and then looked at frequency response charts for confirmation of our assessments. We worked together on phrasing, thinking about audience relative to type of text, recording and editing down multiple partial takes. and talked about how to maximize the strengths and character of Alex's voice (ie taking advantage of proximity effect for his voice, using light compression and supplementing it's warmth with some very light-handed equalization).

We looked at videos of professional VO artists doing live sessions, I set up two informational interviews, one with a professional VO artist and one with a professional VO sound engineer.

I set up an opportunity for Alex to do character VO work for a video game design produced by a fellow UMass student, a short film shot locally, and he ended the semester with a reel - selected, recorded and designed by Alex - of six excellent VO samples, as well as his work on the film and the demo video game.

Studio Recording and Music Production

THEATER 298: Practicum

Devyn Yurko

Spring 2014

3 Credits

Devyn met her stated goals, which culminated in a three song EP featuring cover songs that she recorded (vocals and ukelele).

She learned principles of studio recording including microphone characteristics, microphone selection for various recording needs, signal routing for the digital studio, Logic Pro X recording/editing software, multitrack recording, and overdubbing. She mastered the art of music production, including signal processing, music editing, and mixing. She recorded herself as well as some other musicians and ultimately selected from her various songs three that she produced to completion.

Advanced Studio Recording and Music Production

THEATER 396: Independent Study

Devyn Yurko

Spring 2015

3 Credits

Capitalizing on the knowledge, skill set and experience she achieved during a previous independent study, Devyn pushed into more detail and precision in recording songs and mixing them. We explored advanced recording tactics, as well as introduced the use of acoustics and field recording to add texture to her work.

The outcome was a second EP of songs. Devyn demonstrated increased independence and facility with the art and technology of music production.

Music Mixing and Mastering Techniques

THEATER 396: Independent Study

Ben Finn

Spring 2015

3 Credits

Ben and I did an five-hour per week independent study called Music Mixing and Mastering Techniques. We combined experimentation, practice, demonstrations, and instructional videos to learn about industry- standard mastering techniques. Ben used his new knowledge and skill set to remaster his album of original songs using Logic Pro X. He re-recorded several tracks in the sound design studio, as well. Additionally, he created studio recordings of the original music he created for Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, using his skills to mix and master those into an album. The outcome was two skillfully mixed and mastered albums of original content, supported with high-quality recording technique.

Sound Design and Composition for Video Games

THEATER 196: Independent Study

Morgan Fryer- McCulloch

Spring 2016

3 Credits

Morgan came to me to learn how to use sound software to compose original music and how to design and edit in a digital platform in order to turn her musical and compositional abilities into design for gaming.

We focused on music creation, logic and design by doing some smaller format exercises using Logic Pro X and the EXS 24 Sampler, and the course culminated in Morgan completely redesigning the sound, effects, vocalizations and music for a segment of the classic game Zelda.

In the course of the semester, we examined digital storage and archiving,

We covered digital editing, software instruments, samplers including the EXS 24 Sampler, bussing, saving and bouncing audio, and portfolio presentation. We looked at commercially available sample libraries, talked about recording samples and using original recordings to create unique instruments using the EXS Sampler, building toward a portfolio of game music.

Her final project was a stunning reimagining of the aural world of Zelda and resulted in a strong portfolio piece for her desired career path.

Field Recording and Sound Design for Film and Video

THEATER 396: Independent Study

Elaina Cho

Spring 2016

3 Credits

Elaina's goals are to work in film; she has a portfolio of shorts already to her name. She wanted to learn film field recording, and develop her use of sound design for film work. In addition, she is involved with the local film Running Embers that shot a sample short last year and is gearing up for the feature shoot this year. To that end, we researched various types of portable recorders, lav microphones, shotgun mics and all the additional gear necessary for a successful shoot.

We used the Zoom H4n portable recorder to do field recordings around the FAC, using both the shotgun for ambience and speech, and a lav mic for close-mic'd speech. We explored using these two techniques in different field contexts to reject noise, establish perspective, and get clear, articulate speech recordings.

Using information from the research and the hands-on recording sessions, we put together a gear package proposal for the Running Embers producer and director, and after a brief negotiation based on budget, had the proposal accepted by the production company. Ideally, when they shoot the feature, Elaina will get to use the gear she spec'd to do the set recordings.

She also learned about recording and editing in Logic Pro X, microphone types and characteristics including frequency response, phantom +48v power, gain structure, equalization for matching recordings, cables types and interfaces.

In terms of her design goals, she practiced by designing sound for video shorts, some of which I provided and others that she had previously shot and wanted to improve with sound design. She has those videos - a mix of animations and live footage - now in her portfolio. We examined in detail the alignment of sound to the visual story and looked at creative applications of processors to heighten the sound palette.

Finally, Elaina put these creative skills to a professional project; I invited her to design segments of The Brink, the video piece I made with videographer Holly Lynton.

Introduction to Studio Recording and Music Production

THEATER 396: Independent Study

Katherine Geraghty

Fall 2014

3 Credits

Katy learned to do studio recordings, including overdubbing, using Logic Pro X as a recording and editing platform. She delved deeply into the program, learning principles of equalization and compression, and even mastered the use of the sampler to create midi backing tracks. She produced two songs, one an original composition.

Production Focused Sound Design

THEATER 596: Independent Study

Michael Blagys

Fall 2013

3 Credits

This independent study was a sound design course focused on Michael's work on as the sound designer for the department's main stage production of *Peter Pan* in the Spring of 2014. He used a digital composition program to create original material to underscore the play based on early design meetings with his director.

Production Focused Sound Design

THEATER 396: Independent Study

Pamela McCaddin

Fall 2013

3 Credits

Focus in advanced sound design techniques in anticipation of her sound design for *Detroit*.

Production Focused Sound Engineering

THEATER 396: Independent Study

Ian Olney

Fall 2013

3 Credits

Ian's independent study focused on sound technology. We met to discuss advanced pieces of gear and their use that were not covered in Sound Design I. In order to offer hands-on, varied and practical experience, Ian worked as the Theater Department main stage production sound engineer. This meant that he worked on the planning stages of our productions, organized sound gear and oversaw (and participated in) the load-ins and strikes of our shows. He stood in for me during the time prior to Detroit tech when I was working on a professional production outside of the school. This combination of theory and practice gave Ian the skills to plan and implement a sound system and work with the various members of the production and design team.

Production Focused Sound Engineering

THEATER 398: Practicum

Daryl Laurenza

Fall 2015

3 Credits

Daryl's love of audio technology and sound engineering motivated him to focus on that part of sound for theatre. He applied his knowledge and practiced his skills as the sound engineer for Love and Information on our main stage; he did the technical paperwork, ran load in, planned all cable runs and did all the patching, routing and labeling for the show. He came to tech and addressed all technical notes that came up. He learned so much and found himself so engaged with audio that he volunteered to return to engineering for Collidescope 2.0.

Teaching Assistant, Sound Design I

THEATER 196: Independent Study

Sean Buenaventura

Spring 2013

3 Credits

Sean worked with me as a TA for 393S and as a general assistant on the sound engineering component of the Sound Design Department. As TA, he helped prepare classroom materials, and he assisted in addressing student questions one-on-one during class time. As the sound engineer assistant, Sean helped with the load in, maintenance, and strike of departmental productions while learning audio technology in greater depth.

Teaching Assistant, Sound Design I

THEATER 396: Independent Study

Matthew Morin

Fall 2015

3 Credits

Matt Morin was my Sound Design I TA, which involved taking attendance, prepping gear for class, and contributing individualized help for students during class time. Because he is interested in teaching at some point in his future, he focused on making observations about what was effective in demonstrating, practicing and assessing sound techniques - artistic and technological - in a classroom setting.