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**AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER ANNOUNCES  
THE SAN FRANCISCO SEMESTER**

**As part of A.C.T.'s Tony Award–winning theater and training institution,  
the all-new 15-week study away program brings undergraduate students from across the  
country into an active, ongoing engagement with the  
San Francisco Bay Area arts community.**

**Inaugural semester begins September 2014**

SAN FRANCISCO (September 18, 2013) – **American Conservatory Theater** (A.C.T.) Conservatory Director **Melissa Smith** announced today that A.C.T.'s Tony Award–winning theater and training institution has launched **The San Francisco Semester**, an all-new study away program bringing undergraduate students from across the country into an active, ongoing engagement with the eclectic and energetic arts community of San Francisco and the Bay Area. With a focus on the practical aspects of the craft of acting and life in the professional theater, the 15-week program features a 17-credit core curriculum enhancing students' undergraduate study with rigorous, upper-level classes in acting styles, voice/dialects, physical theater, and devised (student-created) work. A.C.T. joins the ranks of such other distinguished study away programs as La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club and the National Theater Institute. The inaugural San Francisco Semester begins September 2014. For additional information, visit [act-sf.org/sfsemester](http://act-sf.org/sfsemester).

Says Smith: "The San Francisco Semester builds on and enhances A.C.T.'s other renowned Conservatory Programs – the Young Conservatory, Summer Training Congress, Studio A.C.T. and Master of Fine Arts. In fact, as we planned this new course of study, we sought ideas from students and faculty in those programs, and their excitement at the prospect of this new offering, and willingness to spread the word about it, has fueled our enthusiasm for expanding the student presence at A.C.T. Student actors - age 8 to 80 - have long infused A.C.T.'s atmosphere with a unique vitality – their passion, energy and curiosity are infectious and inspire the professional artists here to take creative risks in their work. Undergraduates who come to A.C.T. for The San Francisco Semester will find they have landed in a vibrant, multigenerational artistic community where people of all ages and backgrounds work alongside one another to make magical theater. When San Francisco Semester students return to their home colleges, they will have gained a deep, experiential knowledge of what it means to be a professional theater artist, while living in San Francisco, a city known for its extraordinary creative capital. We believe their time here will be truly life changing!"

Surrounded by other theater students from around the country, students of The San Francisco Semester will deepen and expand their understanding of theater as they define themselves as artists. In the classroom and at performances across the San Francisco Bay Area, students will explore theater from a

multitude of angles—from the page to the stage, as viewer and performer, and across a variety of artistic genres.

Through inspiring, experiential courses and wide-ranging artistic encounters, The San Francisco Semester pulls students into thrilling conversations about theater as an ever-evolving art form. As part of the program, students will collaborate with some of the top artists in the industry, invigorate their imagination and creativity, and experience stirring, unforgettable performances. From A.C.T.'s 1,000-seat Geary Theater to Davies Symphony Hall to intimate downtown spaces, students will come face-to-face with some of the boldest productions anywhere and witness performances by some of the country's most eclectic range of artists. In addition, students will participate in master classes with A.C.T. faculty, A.C.T. artistic associates, and guest artists on specialized aspects of theater.

The San Francisco Semester curriculum includes:

### **ACTING STYLES**

#### *ACT 404 – 4 credits*

In this class, students explore the essential tenets of acting in various contexts. Particular emphasis will be given to A) the reinforcement of universally applicable techniques, B) strategies for adapting performances to meet the demands of different material, and C) the relationship between form and content. Scenes and monologues for the class will be chosen from works by master playwrights that allow for the exploration of different acting styles, as required by the text and suggested by the time period in which the plays were written. Possible authors include Shakespeare, Moliere, Wilde, and Shaw. Additionally, students will explore on camera acting as a “style” and experiment with techniques that differentiate screen from stage acting.

### **PHYSICAL THEATER**

#### *ACT 414 – 3 credits*

Using the expressive body as the main vehicle of communication, students will delve into the many dimensions of play. Heightened play (e.g. *commedia*, *clown*), playing with a partner, playing with and for the audience, and the play of rhythm and timing are some of the themes that will be explored. The work is designed to increase an actors' capacity to live in the moment: spontaneously and ferociously. This class meets three hours each week and outside of class for preparation.

### **VOICE, VERSE AND CHARACTER**

#### *ACT 424 – 3 credits*

Through experiential exercises and techniques, students will free, develop and strengthen their voices, explore verse with a focus on the art of rhetoric and the acting clues available in the structure of heightened texts, and learn to use dialects as an extension of character. This class meets three hours each week and outside of class for preparation.

### **CULTURAL LANDSCAPES / ARTS COLLOQUY**

#### *ACT 434 – 3 credits*

Students attend A.C.T.'s professional season, selected conservatory performances, as well as outings to other Bay Area theaters, concerts, dance performances, and museums each week as a basis for exploration into period and culture, play analysis, and stylistic development. Students will write essays based on their experiences. This class meets an equivalent of 45 hours (including attending performances, class meetings, and discussions with artists). Students will write two 1,500-word essays selected from topics—related to the cultural, historical, and esthetic world of the events they attend—and one 3,000-word research paper on the development and significance of one of the artists and his or her works.

## DEVISED WORK

*ACT 454 – 4 credits*

Taught by renowned Bay Area director Mark Jackson, students will collaborate with a Bay Area artist to develop practical skills for devising original work. Students will also develop an understanding of the global context of devised work and how it is practiced, including the study of companies that practice devised work on the national and international level. The class culminates in a full performance project that also draws on skills taught elsewhere in the curriculum and may combine movement, text, and music, depending on the particular talents of the ensemble. This class meets for four hours each week and outside of the class for preparation.

For additional information on The San Francisco Semester, visit [act-sf.org/sfsemester](http://act-sf.org/sfsemester).

Established in 1965, American Conservatory Theater is a Tony Award–winning theater and training institution whose work is energized and informed by a profound commitment to developing the next generation of theater artists. A.C.T. is the largest theater company in the San Francisco Bay Area and employs more than 800 people each season, from teachers and artists to technicians and administrative staff. During the past four decades, more than 300 A.C.T. productions have been seen by close to 7 million playgoers in the company's magnificent Beaux Arts–style theater located in the heart of San Francisco's Union Square theater district.

Ranked as one of the top programs in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*, the **A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program** is the only theater training program in the country accredited to award the master of fine arts degree, yet is not affiliated with a college or university. The essence of A.C.T.'s actor training lies in the interplay between the professional company and the Conservatory. Student actors at A.C.T. perform frequently within the program in studio productions, as well as in cabaret and Shakespeare productions that tour to the larger Bay Area. Third-year M.F.A. Program student actors perform in A.C.T.'s mainstage production of ***A Christmas Carol*** and also audition for roles in A.C.T. mainstage productions. In recent years, students have played leading roles in ***Armistead Maupin's Tales of the City***, ***Once in a Lifetime, Marcus; or The Secret of Sweet***, and ***The Caucasian Chalk Circle***, as well as performing in new and commissioned works. Many graduates of the program go on to distinguished careers in theater and film and include such celebrated actors as **Elizabeth Banks, Annette Bening, Christopher Fitzgerald, Danny Glover, Omar Metwally, Dileep Rao, Anika Noni Rose, Anna Deavere Smith, and Denzel Washington**. A.C.T. provides a wealth of talented actors for productions across the San Francisco Bay Area: graduates of the M.F.A. Program have taken on **leading roles in productions at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, Magic Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, San Jose Stage, and Shakespeare Santa Cruz**, among others. The M.F.A. Program functions as the cornerstone of the A.C.T. Conservatory, which also includes the Summer Training Congress, Studio A.C.T., and the Young Conservatory, and trains more than 3,000 students annually. For more information, visit [act-sf.org/conservatory](http://act-sf.org/conservatory).

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A.C.T. is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council on Postsecondary accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education.

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