

SYLLABUS

STAGING IRELAND: IRISH THEATRE IN PERFORMANCE

Instructor: Sarah Jane Scaife, B.A., MPhil, PhD.

Contact Hours: 40

Language of Instruction: English

COURSE DESCRIPTION

No previous acting experience is necessary for this course. The practice of theatre is being used to facilitate and enrich the cultural exchange of ideas and the research tools necessary to intercultural dialogue. The students will learn about Ireland as a text and Irish drama as a literary form, through the practical engagement with the plays and drama of her writers.

This course will examine the texts of some of Ireland's greatest dramatists, and Ireland itself as a source of inspiration for its writers. The course will consist of two studio classes per week. Each week will focus on different writers from the course. The scenes will be taken from the work of a selection of playwrights: William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory, John Millington Synge and Marina Car. In the studio classes the students will work in groups, exploring the practical tools necessary to create a vibrant piece of theatre. Students will also be introduced to the theoretical frameworks and themes they will need to research, in order to direct and act in their scenes. The selected playwrights span from the early twentieth century to the present. There will be a six-week period of immersion into the writers and Ireland as text and then in the final two weeks we will work towards the production and performance of specific scenes for an audience.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the term, students should be able to use the experience of researching about Ireland and of taking part in the creation of theatre to create a healthy interest in both the research of and documentation of Ireland's culture. They will be encouraged at all times to explore cultural issues inherent in the texts and to interrogate those issues not only in relation to Ireland, but also in relation to themselves as Singaporeans in their interpretation of them.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

The course will culminate in an informal presentation of scenes explored. Students will work as directors and or performers. They will be expected to work in groups outside of class time and will introduce their selected scene, giving the contextual background from a historical and cultural perspective and also of how they came to their particular approach. The students will be expected to keep a journal/logbook, which will contain their notes on historical and theoretical considerations, artistic choices and performance methodologies.

METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)

Production/Performance: 50% (during the last week, will also include rehearsal period during the course)

2000 word essay based on journal notes: 30% (due at the end of week 7)

Class participation: 20% (continuous)

Course Outline

Weeks One and Two

Theoretical discussion: Introduction to W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory; new forms of theatre and the founding of The Abbey Theatre. Playtexts: (Yeats) *Purgatory*, *At the Hawk's Well*, (Lady Gregory) *The Gaol Gate and Spreading the News*. (Both) Cathleen ní Houlihan.

Studio Classes: Yeats and Gregory in Performance, These workshops will focus on: the heightened use of space, body and poetry; They will also look at how to draw the audience in to another time and place through the use of mask, puppetry and movement. The student will learn how Yeats looked to Ireland's ancient mythology for his new idea of 'total theatre' and of how Lady Gregory looked to folklore for her theatrical form.

Weeks Three and Four

Theoretical discussion: Introduction to John Millington Synge, his relationship to the Aran Islands and the Irish language as inspiration for his dramas but also to Europe to the new Expressionist Theatre. Playtexts: *The Playboy of The Western World* and *Rider's to the Sea*.

Studio classes: The students will be introduced to the use of storytelling as a device used throughout Irish Theatre; the use of heightened speech in Synge's dramas, which was inspired from his stay on the Aran Islands off the West coast of Ireland. They will also learn, through their immersion in the texts, how it was for the people of Ireland in the early 20th century.

Weeks Five and Six

Theoretical discussion: Introduction to Marina Carr, Ireland from a female Catholic perspective. We will once again look at the social issues arising after Independence, examining the institutions of Church, State and the Family. *By the Bog of Cats...* and *Portia Coughlin*.

Studio classes: Carr in Performance. These workshops will explore Carr's use of heightened language and mythic landscapes of the midlands of Ireland. Everything that was explored with the earlier playwrights can be seen in her work but with a savage twist and a social awareness that comes from her position as female and Catholic.

COURSE READINGS

Playtexts: *Purgatory, At the Hawk's Well*

Playtexts: *Cathleen ni Houlihan*

Playtexts: *The Gaol Gate and Spreading the News*

Playtexts: *The Playboy of The Western World and Rider's to the Sea*

Playtexts; *By the Bog of Cats...* and *Portia Coughlin*

Weeks Seven and Eight

We will have chosen our pieces for presentation and will work on them during these two weeks. There will also be time given for writing up of logbooks into essay style practitioner response.