Second year - Drama and Theatre Arts

Second Year Core Modules:

Theatre/Performance Lab A/B

This module for single-honours students is taught by practical sessions in the first semester, and offers an introduction to postmodern/post-dramatic devising by giving students a series of models for collaborative practice, such as exploring levels of presence, examining postmodern adaptation and devising physical sequences.

Value 20 credits

Theatre Praxis: Texts in Rehearsal

This core practical module for single honours students aims to enable the student to approach text-based material for performance through methodologies appropriate to that particular text. The taught element of the module is predicated on a large group context examination of the application of appropriate methodologies to extracts from a single performance text. Through the development of a number of different rehearsal techniques and methods of textual analysis, students are led into the process of preparation of texts for performance.

Value 20 credits

The Politics of Performance

This core course for single and joint honours students is taught in Weekly 2-hour class made up of lecture and seminar discussion. This module examines theatre as a cultural and political practice. The module investigates the ways in which theatre is shaped by the socio-political conditions in which it occurs and explores the effects of performance on the broader cultures in which it takes place. Students will examine theatre in its local, national and transnational contexts through the analysis of dramatic texts, theatre criticism, historical documents and performance events. The module builds on students' work in level one by encouraging them to develop a self-reflexive critical practice that integrates script analysis with theoretical and historical inquiry. To this end, classes will examine the cultural politics of theatre through a diversity of materials and case studies and students will undertake an in-depth written study that engages the topical and methodological concerns of the module.

Value 20 credits

Recent Year Two Study Options have included:

Modern Drama: Ibsen to Pinter

This module provides an overview of the main developments in theatrical representation in the UK and internationally from the 1870s to the 1960s. Students will examine representative plays to gain an understanding of themes and issues that they raise and address, as well as the methods through which they challenge and engage the audience. The module works to create a bridge between the modern and contemporary, providing an understanding of the period through groundbreaking plays that reflect the changes taking place in a society at the grip of two World Wars and major political struggles, where issues relating to class, gender, power, labour, capitalism and human rights are at the forefront. The module concentrates on the reciprocity between art and society through a range of texts that were influential in their time and continue to be strongly relevant today.

Shakespeare on Screen

This module explores the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays for television and the cinema, providing a historical and comparative study of versions of several plays. After some sessions on general matters of adaptation and technique, discussion will focus on specific plays (see below) with consideration of a variety of specific technical issues, such as the shaping of narrative, filmic and theatrical genre, acting and directing, cinematography. The option also considers thematic issues, including violence, representations of issues relating to gender and sexuality. The principal plays discussed will be *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Titus Andronicus* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The Dark Comedy

This module will consider the development of modern tragicomedy from Chekhov's realism through to the Beckett's metatheatre and the Theatre of the Absurd. Contemporary writers such as Alan Bennett are also discussed. The aim is to examine how tragicomedy potentially offers a more complex understanding of human experience than tragedy or comedy, with reference to existentialist philosophies, and also examine how tragicomedy aims evoke a complex audience response.

Popular Performance

The module will explore genres of popular theatre throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries relating and paralleling them to current popular theatre practices. The question is asked of 'what is popular?' contextualising it within theatre as a whole, as opposed to the study of what was termed historically as 'legitimate' theatre. Social attitudes and hegemonic influences towards popular theatre are considered. Music hall (in all its forms – including individual performers, song, dance, variety acts, dramatic sketches), pantomime (encompassing both the early Harlequinade and the contemporary form), shows and exhibitions, folk-drama and postmodern neo-burlesque are analysed in both their performative and their cultural and political roles and ideologies including class, gender and imperialism. Play texts and other printed sources are used and, in order to investigate and understand the essentially ephemeral modes of popular entertainment, students also work through practice as research towards a short performance of one of the genres studies.. Students see at least 4 relevant performances over the semester. The module is taught by tutor-led seminars and student presentations.

Tragic Acts

The module offers an introduction to Greek tragedy in its historical, cultural and performance context. The seminars will be based on close reading of selected plays in translation, exploring their ethical and political implications both in classical antiquity as well as in the modern reception of the plays. We shall examine modern discourses of tragedy and the tragic as well as the larger debates on the demise of tragedy in the modern era. Particular attention will be given to the transformations of tragedy on the contemporary stage and film, analysing the ways in which directors and theatre groups have responded to the intellectual and aesthetic challenges that the classical texts pose.

In the next academic year the module will focus on female characters in the Greek tragic plays, discussing issues of gender, identity and representation.

Assessment: 1. Presentation, 2. Essay OR performance history project including a production record of 3-5 productions of a specific tragic play and relevant documentation (programmes, theatre bills, reviews, etc.) followed by a critical commentary on the way a specific aspect of the Greek text has been dealt with in different stagings.

All have the value of 20 credits

Recent Practical Intensive Option Modules have included:

Mask into text

The course gives a basic introduction to the art of mask work, concentrating in particular on the use of half masks in text based, rather than improvised, theatre. In this process students will learn to use the white full naïve mask, the four archetypal temperament masks, the five archetypes - Innocent, Fool, Trickster, Hero, Mother, and character half masks relating to Blood Wedding.

Voice and the Actor

This consists of workshops providing students with a practical vocal skills base that can be applied to live performance work as well as to performance analysis. The module provides skills enhancement in voice. By the end of the module students will have gained skills in voice production through a vocabulary of physical exercises leading to the convincing realization of given texts and developing an appropriate individual and collective sensibility through voice and speech.

Acting

The module is an introduction to selected embodied, physically-based, non-naturalistic approaches to acting and performance. It will draw on exercises and methodologies including those of Jacques Lecoq, Philippe Gaulier, Grotowski, Meyerhold, Gardziniece, Laban and Dorinda Hulton's work on integrating breath/image/word. Exercises will be applied to a range of texts. A training strand in physical and vocal awareness, flexibility and expressivity will add rigour to our exploration of text and characterisation.

Collaborative Strategies: Immersive

This module will introduce you to a range of contemporary performance strategies to enable collective devising practice to take place, framed by further reading and theoretical reflection, focusing on a particular contemporary aesthetic or model of practice. The module will progress through a series of tutor-led workshops to supervised rehearsal where, in small groups, you will be responsible for researching material, constructing a performance text and staging a 15 minute piece of original theatre. The emphasis of this module is on ensemble practice and you will be assessed primarily on the dramaturgical quality and coherence of the work your group creates. This module will focus on immersive theatre and strategies to involve and engage your audience directly and viscerally in the performance space and action of the event.

Collaborative Strategies: Documentary

This module will introduce you to a range of contemporary performance strategies to enable collective devising practice to take place, framed by further reading and theoretical reflection, focusing on a particular contemporary aesthetic or model of practice. The module will progress thorugh a series of tutor-led workshops to supervised rehearsal where, in small groups, you will be responsible for researching material, constructing a performance text and staging a 15 minute piece of original theatre. The emphasis of this module is on ensemble practice and you will be assessed primarily on the dramaturgical quality and coherence of the work your group creates. This module will focus on documentary theatre and how to construct and stage a performance text that is drawn from existing documents and/or verbatim interviews.

Writing for Performance

The module will offer students the opportunity to explore a range of different models of writing for performance that will include approaches drawn from dramatic playwriting, autobiographical practice, performance poetry, narration and storytelling. Students will put existing examples of texts into practice, analyse the results through discussion and further reading, and explore ways of creating and staging performance texts of their own.

The module will proceed by peer evaluation, analysis and feedback of work in progress. Students will produce performance texts, either individually or in small groups, which they will perform as the final summative practical assessment.

Theatre Crafts 2

The module is taught in 2-hour weekly seminar, lecture and practical classes, building on the foundation level Theatre Crafts 1 module. Students specialise in one area of theatre production Stage Technologies, Design or Stage Management. Whilst developing skills taught in the previous year, the students will be taught and assessed working on performance events, specific practical and theoretical project work.

All have the value of 20 credits

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