

Fletcher Sample Group Performance Projects

FROM THE FIRST COURSE (Greece to French Neoclassicism)

Choose ONE of these three prompts/questions and use it as the basis for your presentation.

1. Adopting one of the historiographic approaches we discussed at the beginning of the semester (i.e., feminist, multicultural, gay/lesbian, Marxist, or semiotic), re-interpret and stage a scene or moment from one of the plays we've read as seen through the lens of that approach. Your staging may alter the script as you see fit, either revising the scene to include your focus or totally deconstructing the aims of that script. Focus question: In interpreting a script from your chosen historiographic perspective, does the result illuminate something about the script/form itself, or does it highlight something our own, present-day (WEIRD) assumptions about theatre?
2. Many of the texts we've read and performance forms we've studied this semester trouble Wilson and Goldfarb's distinction between ritual (focusing on group sharing and actually *doing* something) and theatre (imitating something). Take one piece of a plays we've read thus far and stage an interpretation of that play that contrasts how that play differs when imagined as religious ritual or as purely mimetic theatre. Exactly how your group does this is up to you. You may stage the same cutting twice (once as ritual, once as theatre) or you may shift gradually from one form to the other in a single staging. In either case, we should see clearly what elements make a performance "pure ritual" or "pure theatre." Focus question: How viable is a distinction between ritual and theatre?
3. Create and stage a meaningful encounter between two or more of the forms we've studied this semester. Be careful: the temptation here is to take surface attributes of one (usually Asian) form and simply superimpose them upon another (usually Western) form. Avoid presenting a random mix-and-match of props/costumes/stages (*Oedipus Rex* with Nō masks on a pageant wagon!); try instead to find two forms whose historical contexts or aesthetic or functional aims complement and enrich each other. Your group should be able to discuss how the styles you blend harmonize or comment upon each other ("it looked cool" is insufficient). Focus question: What do you lose and what do you gain by blending radically different performance forms?

FROM THE SECOND COURSE (English Renaissance to Present Day)

Choose ONE of these three prompts as the basis for your group's presentation.

1. A recurring theme in theatre we've studied so far involves how theatre (especially comedy) often seems to play to a particular audience at the expense of another part of society. Restoration comedies of manners, for example, catered to the old-money elite at the expense of the bourgeoisie. Domestic tragedies appealed to middle-class audiences while castigating upper and lower classes. Minstrel shows pitched themselves toward audiences of lower-class white workers at the expense of both African Americans and the upper classes. What groups are getting made fun of in present-day performances? At what audience are these performances aimed? For this question, identify a performance from the present (form stage, TV, movie, or net) in which you see one part of society making fun of another part, either overtly or subtly. Then, re-present that present-day performance in the style of one of the theatrical forms we've studied so far (ex: a melodrama version of *From G's to Gents*). We should be able to tell clearly what past theatrical form you're using to re-present the present-day performance. Focus Question: How does the earlier style highlight the social/class tensions in the present-day form? Does the present-day form use some of the same strategies to play on those tensions?
2. Stage a short scene from EITHER *Miss Julie* OR *The Intruder*. As the scene progresses, gradually shift the style so that by the end of the scene, a new set of theatrical techniques and aims now guides the piece. If you stage *Miss Julie*, shift from naturalism to symbolism. If you stage *The Intruder*, shift from symbolism to melodrama. You may re-write the script as you see necessary to accommodate the shift into the

different style, but you should avoid parody (be careful of this especially in melodrama—remember that melodramas were taken seriously). Focus questions: Can I see that you understand the conventions and aims of the styles you're dealing with? To what extent do the "new" styles you're shifting into prompt alterations in the original text?

3. Create and perform the Futurist version of *The London Merchant*. Dissolve time and space into speed while still keeping the plot of the play recognizable. That is, you can (and should) re-write the play, but we should still be able to tell that you're dealing with *The London Merchant*. Focus questions: what happens to the play's moralizing themes in a Futurist style? How do the aims of 18th century domestic tragedy and 20th century Italian Futurism mesh (or clash)?

Basic Guidelines for all plays:

Guidelines:

- All groups will present during the Final Exam slot: Monday, May 10, 5:30-7:30 PM.
- Your presentation (performance and explanation) should take about **7-10 minutes**, with a MAXIMUM of 5 minutes total for setup and strike. I will deduct points for presentations that exceed 12 minutes.
- You may stage a scene with dialogue, a puppet show, an installation—whatever you see fit.
- Obviously, I'm not expecting extravagant, perfectly realized masterpieces. I'm looking at your preparation, engagement, and thoughtfulness—not your acting or directing abilities. That being said, performances should be planned and rehearsed. It's painfully obvious when groups are just improvising or BS-ing.
- Strive for bold, clear choices that you can rehearse and realize well rather than an epic *coup d'theatre* that you can realize only sloppily.
- Everyone in the group should participate in the presentation. **Everyone should be prepared to discuss the group's choices and rationale.**
- Ideally, the explanation of your choices should be as rehearsed as your actual performance. You may even incorporate an explanation into your performance creatively.
- You may use whatever costumes, props, music, etc. you can get your hands on. I encourage you to draw on your own resources rather than those of the department (costume shop, prop shop, etc.). Realize that departmental shops have busy schedules and standard policies for student check-outs. It is your responsibility to know and follow these policies and to treat all departmental faculty and staff with respect when asking for assistance for class projects like this.
- You may re-arrange the room so long as 1) no permanent damage is done (take care kicking doors, etc.); 2) the room can be reset to a neutral position; and 3) you can set-up and strike in 5 minutes or less.
- I hesitate to limit your creative impulses, but realize that others are doing work in this very hall. Ten minutes of primal screams or ultra-loud music may be disruptive to others. Especially since other classes will be giving final exams, I must stress: contain any noise within this space as much as you can.
- No candles!! Candles mean fire, and fire is *bad!!* **Nothing that could even remotely have a chance of setting off the room's smoke detectors is allowed. Recall the craziness of Dr. Fletcher with the smoke machine. Avoid!**
- Part of your grade will consist of "feedback"—filling out spectator evaluation forms and postmortem self-evaluations.
- These performances are not intended to be comic skits. I hope all of them are entertaining and fun to watch, but you should avoid playing only for laughs. Avoid *SNL* territory. I have much

more respect for a group that dares to be serious than for a group that falls back on fart jokes and comic cross-dressing.

- The project is worth 100 points (see rubric). I grade you individually. **A portion of your grade involves filling out audience response sheets and a self-evaluation (due by Wednesday, May 12 to my mailbox in 105 M&DA).**
- Support your group; I will be especially attentive to complaints that people are missing/blowing off scheduled rehearsals.

Rubric for Performance Projects (filled out by audience members for each group):

Group:			
What did they do?			
	Superb	Average	So-so
Performance: Is it rehearsed? Is group prepared? Is it executed well?	Super—Captivating, fully engaged, innovative use of design elements.	Basically smooth and rehearsed. Not overly daring or innovative but solid.	Clearly under-rehearsed or too simplistic.
Thought: How well does project address question? How prepared are group members to explain choices?	Project fully explores spirit and letter of question. Cast has clearly and carefully thought through their choices.	Project meets criteria for question. Not overly thoughtful, but not bad. Cast has basic idea of what they wanted to do	Project barely addresses question. Cast not too clear on how or why they made the choices they did.
Engagement /Creativity: How fully did group invest in this project? Were there especially cool or striking choices that worked?	Bold but harmonious choices; stimulating experience; created "oh, cool" moments of theatrical delight	Moderately creative; too many choices at once that don't mesh; one-trick pony. Could have been better, but not incompetent.	Bare minimum. Goes for easy or clichéd choices. Little effort or investment by group.

Notes: