

## **AT504 RB *The Play in Performance***

**3 credits**

### **Content**

This practical two-part class will study British & European dramatic texts within the context of 20<sup>th</sup> Century and 21<sup>st</sup> Century history in Britain and Europe. You will also be encouraged to reflect on how this history has shaped and been shaped by the United States. The plays will be explored not simply as published texts, but as live performance experiences.

### **Post War British Drama** (Tutors: Steven Dykes, Aleks Sierz, Simeilia Hodge-Dallaway)

This section of the class considers the work of a selected number of British playwrights and the practitioners who have staged their work. The range of work maps the development of 'New Writing' in subsidized theatres and addresses questions concerning the evolution of playwriting, its funding and the socio-political context in which seminal texts have emerged. You will consider how plays have engaged with concepts of national & regional identity, issues of class, race & gender and the challenge of remaining relevant & inclusive in the digital age. The class is taught in a series of lecture-demonstrations and practical workshops. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural, geographical and political influences that affect a practitioner's methodology, with close reference to state subsidy of the arts in the post war era.

### **London Theatre** (Tutor: Steven Dykes)

London is home to the greatest variety of theatre in the world and this complementary class to *Post War British Drama* affords you the opportunity to sample a wide range of productions while studying at Rose Bruford College. The class comprises *approximately* ten theatre visits over the semester; the choice of productions reflecting the many aspects and styles of international theatre currently in production or on tour in London. Theatres visited include: the National, the Barbican, Royal Court, Almeida, Bush, Hampstead and various West End and 'fringe' venues. You will attend introductory and follow-up seminars and tutorials with tutors to discuss and analyse the productions in question.

### **Class Format**

There will be in-class discussions on reading assignments and theatre visits; the preparation & presentation of and reflection on practical scene work; and an overall written exercise.

### **Reflective Journal**

The written assignment for the class is to keep a record a record of your attendance at the ten shows that comprise the course's theatre visits. In class we will have listed reasons why people go to the theatre and what we believe to be the essential ingredients for an effective theatrical event. You will be required to reflect upon these at regular intervals as you observe different audiences at different venues, and as you define and refine your own criteria for a successful evening at the theatre. You should aim to strike a balance in your journal entries between an account of your own specific experiences and subjective responses to the productions attended – and an as-objective-as-possible analysis of topics that arise from classroom discussions and post-show feedback from the group in general.

### **Structure**

Entry One - After each show, you should record your initial thoughts and feelings.

Entry Two – After each class, you should record the class response and note how this has – or has not – informed/alterd your own perspective on the play / production / performance.

You should be making at least two entries a week, but you may also wish to include critical summations at key points in the term (i.e. reading week) to reflect on your experience up to that point.

Your conclusion should reflect upon whether your view of theatre has changed in the light of your attendance at the productions, classroom discussions and our survey of such topics as state subsidy of the arts. (Word Count 5,000 +)

### **Indicative Reading list**

Barker, Howard. *Arguments For A Theatre*. Manchester University Press, 1997  
Dromgoole, Dominic. *The Full Room (An A-Z of Contemporary Playwriting)*. London: Methuen, 2000  
Fortier, Mark. *Theory/Theatre - An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1997.  
Sierz, Alex. *In-Yer-Face Theatre (British Drama Today)* London: Faber, 2000.  
Sierz, Alex. *Rewriting The Nation* London: Faber, 2011  
National Theatre Annual Review and Financial Statements ([www.nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk))  
Arts Council England's Annual Report ([www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk))

### **Sample Playtexts**

#### **1956 and all that: The post-war situation and the Royal Court**

*Look Back in Anger* (John Osborne)  
*The Birthday Party* (Harold Pinter)  
*A Taste of Honey* (Shelagh Delaney)  
*Saved* (Edward Bond)

#### **The Public Plays of the '70s and '80s**

*Plenty* (David Hare)  
*Top Girls* (Caryl Churchill)  
*The Castle* (Howard Barker)  
*Road* (Jim Cartwright)

#### **1990s In-yer-face**

*Blasted and Cleansed* (Sarah Kane)  
*Shopping and Fucking* (Mark Ravenhill)  
*The Censor* (Antony Neilson)  
*Attempts on her Life* (Martin Crimp)

#### **The 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

*Stoning Mary* (debbie tucker green)  
*Sing Yer Heart Out For The Lads* (Roy Williams)  
*Osama The Hero* (Dennis Kelly)  
*NSFW* (Lucy Kirkwood)

### **Aims**

This class aims to enable you to:

- explore dramatic and/or musical theatre productions in performance
- experience various modes and scales of production, including the commercial West End, subsidized houses and fringe venues
- explore London theatre (and the city itself) beyond its commercial, tourist centre
- study the innovations and developments brought to theatre practice by particular practitioners
- consider the social and political significance of drama for a particular nation
- explore the ways in which theatre can be a means of challenging socially accepted notions of identity and nationhood

### **Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of *Post War British Drama* you will be able to:

- evaluate the contribution made by certain practitioners to the development of theatre within specific societies/cultures

- analyse the influence of cultural, social and political thought in creating and interpreting types of theatre which attempt to portray individual and collective identity
- demonstrate your recognition of how a particular theatre movement or genre has affected contemporary dramatic writing and theatre practice and relate it to your own experience
- examine the significance of nationhood / citizenship as ideological constructs in a theatrical context
- demonstrate an understanding of the 'performance culture' of the United Kingdom in the late 20<sup>th</sup> / early 21<sup>st</sup> Century

On successful completion of the *London Theatre* class you will be able to:

- evaluate the work of a variety of playwrights and the methods and techniques used by specific theatre practitioners and companies in the staging of their work
- demonstrate the application of specific technical terminology when analysing theatrical productions
- identify the ways in which current social and political concerns are represented in the work of playwrights, practitioners and companies.
- analyse the experiential nature of London Theatre in the context of wider theories of cultural interaction
- evaluate the current state of arts subsidy in the UK, with particular reference to the Arts Council of England funding of the National Theatre, Royal Court and other 'case study' organisations.
- analyse the arguments for and against the subsidy of the arts, national companies and public buildings
- structure a critical 'review' in your assessment of a production's strengths and weaknesses, building a Reflective Journal containing a body of such reviews

### **Assessment / Grading**

The course is graded A-F.

Class Participation / Scene Study Performance - 50%

Written Assignment (Reflective Journal) – 50%