

Learning Places Fall 2018

SITE REPORT #3A

A Tribal Baroque Performance

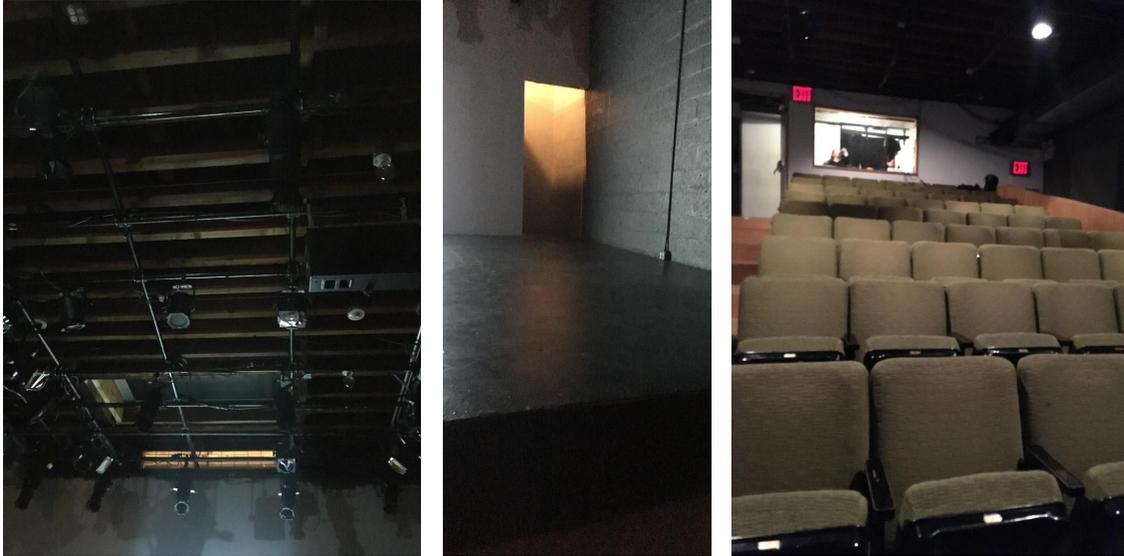


The Stage's Stories

The stage floor has marks of the steps of its previous performers. I absolutely love the idea that the floor itself tells a story of its past.

STUDENT NAME: MELANIE GUABA

SITE OBSERVATIONS



Lights Are Towards You - Plugs Are Towards You - Seats Are Towards You

Why did you choose these images? Do they summarize a feeling you have for the performance space? Do they focus on prominent objects or features? Explain.

These images all prove to me that the space, objects, and features, inside Wild Project were designed to revolve around the performer(s). I took these pictures in the order I placed them from left to right, but I didn't take them back to back. As minutes and sometimes a whole hour passed between each picture, before I took the next one, I would find what else faced the stage giving it all its attention.

PERMANENT THEATER

Answer the questions below *only* if you attended a performance in a purpose-built theater or an adapted space that is now a permanent theater.

1. Briefly describe the genre or type of performance (one sentence).

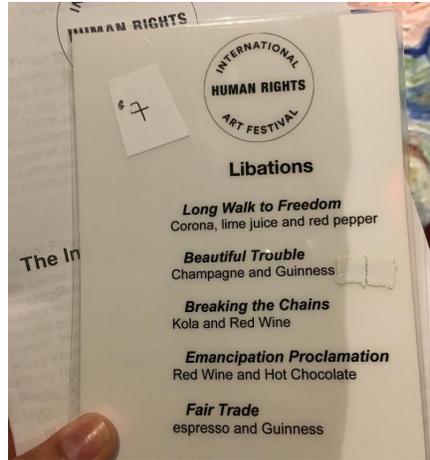
The International Human Rights Art Festival described Tribal Baroque's Thoth and Lila'Angelique's performance as using "countertenor and coloratura soprano vocals to create [a] fantasy [opera] based on love and devotion, accompanied by ritual theater, dance, foot-percussion, and violins."

2. Describe the dimensions, shapes, and arrangement of audience and performance spaces in the building: entrances, ingresses, egresses, lobbies, lounges, audience seating, box seats, and stage.

The entrance of Wild Project had a large transparent garage door next to the more normal sized glass door that I entered through. The garage door made me feel like I was stepping into a more laid-back space, one with a homey feel because garages are typically part of people's homes. The lobby space felt comfortable to be in because of its exposed high ceiling. This space was bright and filled with art pieces on its walls as well as counter space a couple of steps after you walk in that functioned as check-in and a bar. There were benches below the art pieces making this space the lounging area as well. Overall, the lobby/lounge was cozy. Passed the counter space, to the left was the entrance to the performance area. After walking through that door, I met with a hallway that had a direct view of the stage. The stage took up about a quarter of the room. Apple green seats meant for the audience filled the remaining three quarters of the room. Being that these were pull-down-seats saved much space in this tiny theater. I feel the need to mention that the seats were the comfiest I had ever sat in in a theater show. Even though I haven't been to many theater shows, it definitely set the bar high for the future shows I'll attend. There were no official box seats, but the fact that the stairs separated the rows leaving just two seats on its right side, made it feel like those were the box seats because they were privately for two people. The end of the stairway leads you to the sound room and one of the two "EXIT" signs. Then the second "EXIT" sign, or second egress, was back where I entered the performance space.

3. Does the architectural design provide opportunities for voyeurism, food or alcohol consumption, reading, talking, or other interaction among audience members? Explain how the architecture might *encourage* or *limit* activities other than viewing the performance.

The architecture limits activities other than viewing the performance because the apple green seats all face the stage forcing the non-actors to face that way. The people of Wild Project try to loosen this feeling of only being able to watch the stage by selling \$7 "libations," as they call it, such as "Emancipation Proclamation" which, just as interesting as its name, is composed of red wine and hot chocolate. Maybe if you sit in the back there's a chance for voyeurism because you get to decide if you want to focus on either the performance happening on the stage or the subtle movements happening throughout the seats. I sat all the way in the front though because I didn't want to miss a thing from the show as sometimes people's heads get in the way and also because if they actors planned on picking someone from the audience to participate, I wanted to be an easy pick.



4. How did the architectural design and fixtures affect your reception of the play (sight lines, acoustics, lighting, etc.)?

I remember that there was a moment in the very beginning of the show that the male performer, Thoth, startled me with his yell. I honestly jumped out of my seat and I think I was the only one to do so too. I quickly got used to his loud chants and ended up enjoying them. The acoustics were what helped me get to the point where I was able to enjoy Thoth's loudness. In both the seventh and eighth scenes, the two actors had portable low lights that created huge shadows behind them which added a dramatic affect to the scenes. One of my favorite details in the show was the sparkly top that the female performer, Lila'Angelique, wore because the light reflected off of it and made beautiful shadows on the walls. Small things like that made me like being there, in that moment, watching that performance, all the more.

5. Describe the dynamic between the audience space and the performer's space. Was the stage a proscenium, thrust, or theater-in-the-round arrangement? Did the performance and audiences spaces ever merge (audience in stage area, actors in audience area, for instance)?

The stage in this theater had a proscenium arrangement. The performance and the audience spaces merged twice. The first time was when both actors came off of the stage and kneeled directly in front of me to start off the third scene. Here I jotted "came off stage to start scene 3." The second time was during the tenth scene when I jotted "[Thoth] came onto steps to perform real quick." He had jumped onto the audience side's stairs and went up to like the fourth step, continued to sing and dance facing the stage for about ten seconds, and then ran back to the stage. At this point I kept looking back and forth between the two performers because Lila'Angelique was still on stage.

6. **Use a metaphor to describe the audience/stage relationship (ocean, layer-cake, peephole, for instance...and don't use these examples!). Explain why you chose that image or idea.**

Roller coaster ride describes the audience/stage relationship because the audience doesn't fully know if they'll like the show until they sit through it just like a person wouldn't know if they like riding a roller coaster until they get on it. You can also have a favorite part to the show just like you can have a favorite part in the ride. You can like the beginning or the end or anything and everything in between of both circumstances. Both the audience/stage relationship and roller coasters can alter the way you feel throughout their entirety.

ANALYSIS/DISCOVERIES [FOR EVERYONE]

Use this section to reflect on your observations. Remember to refer to your observations when drawing general conclusions.

Performativity: ways in which theater becomes life, words become actions, audiences become actors, objects become agents, buildings convey meaning, and participants become engaged in broader social concerns.

1. **Describe the moments in the production where *theater* became more like *life* or when something occurred in the performance space that exceeded the internal action of the play itself.**

I think that where theater becomes more like life is where the performance conveys a message relatable to life. Thoth and Lila' Angelique's characters fall in love and realize that their voices were both made for and complement each other. Throughout the scenes, their love (and voices) brought down the villain that tried so hard to keep them separated. I think the message there might have been that love conquers all. At the end of the performance, the last thing the narrator said was "The Stranger is in us all. We are destroying our creation. Until we do, let's dance." The Stranger was the villain in the storyline, and in his factory, he created Electric Beasties to destroy the world, our world. I know I wasn't the only one in the audience that felt different with the narrator's final words. It was kind of a slap in the face and then his "until we do, let's dance," was a slight rub where it hurts. I interpreted that last part as him saying that our own destruction is inevitable, so let's enjoy life while we still can. The big social concern here though is that humans have caused climate change and all types of pollution to the point where we're killing our planet.

2. How might the designed and/or natural features of the performance space enable moments of performativity? Or, on the other hand, do the architectural and/or natural elements inhibit performativity?

The designed and/or natural features of the performance space enable moments of performativity such as when Thoth brought his performance to the audience steps. Due to me being in the first row, Thoth going up the stairs made me have to turn around to see him, but since he was facing the stage in order to continue singing to his Lila'Angelique, he was still performing in front of me. This made everyone that was once behind me during the show, now in front of me, and therefore be part of the performance for me. How everyone in the audience was reacting to Thoth's sudden action was part of the show for me. It was also like Thoth was one with the audience and so the whole theatre space was one big performance. This was possible was the of the proscenium arrangement of the space and how Thoth was easily able to connect with the audience like that. I also had the best seat in the house because looking forward or turning my whole body to look behind me, gave me a front row view of the show.

QUESTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH. Write down questions that require further research to answer. These should follow directly from your analysis section and be complex and specific enough to serve as the basis of a research project; do not include questions you can answer with a quick google search. Focus your research questions on spatial and architectural aspects of the performance space.

1. How have some of the most famous theater shows, like "Hamlet," benefited from the architectural aspects of the performance space?
2. How does the location of the viewer's seat in different stage setups like proscenium, thrust, or theater-in-the-round, affect the performance for them?
3. How does the spatial and architectural aspects of the performance in a thrust stage differ from that of a proscenium stage of a show that has done both? Or a show that has done any two (or more) different stages?

SITE REPORT #3B

STUDENT NAME: MELANIE GUABA

FURTHER RESEARCH

Develop a new research question (or revise one of your questions from part 3A of this report).

This question should concern EITHER:

The relationship between the performance you viewed and the staging (if in a traditional theater space) or the place where it was performed (if in a provisional theater space).

OR

The relationship between a social / political issue and the performance you viewed.

Research Question:

Tribal Baroque has performed in both traditional theaters, like in Wild Project, and provisional theater spaces, like in Angel Tunnel in Central Park. How have and/or do their performances differ in regards to these two types of theater spaces and staging that they've performed in?

Find 2 sources. *You can choose to use: internet sources, books, archival documents or ephemera, scholarly articles, newspaper articles, or performance reviews. Your choice should be intentional.

Write an MLA citation for each source:

Source 1

McAllister, Gwyn. "Tribal Baroque Returns." *The Martha's Vineyard Times*, 2 Sept. 2015, www.mvtimes.com/2015/09/02/tribal-baroque-returns/.

Source 2

Tumin, Remy. "Dancing, Singing, Living to Their Own Beat." *The Vineyard Gazette - Martha's Vineyard News*, 3 Sept. 2015, 4:27pm, vineyardgazette.com/news/2015/09/03/dancing-singing-living-their-own-beat.

Why did you select these sources? How do they address all or part of your research question?

I selected these sources because they address all of my question. Both sources quote Tribal Baroque's Thoth and Lila'Angelique when they talk about the different types of spaces they've performed in. Tumin said that:

"The couple feeds off the energy of the crowd, whether performing for strangers in a park or an audience seated in a theatre. Both venues provide limits and freedoms [to them]. 'Performing outside can be really amazing and, surprisingly so, there's no expectation,' Lila'Angelique said. Inside a theatre, 'there will be an energy and that will be the entire show,' Thoth said. 'It keeps you on your toes because the piece itself will change according to what the audience is watching. We will learn stuff just because the audience is really excited because the audience will force us to jump off a cliff.'"

McAllister supported this by including that Lila'Angelique said that "That's the way we get our energy... By having an audience, it forces you to make choices immediately. It's allowed us to find the avenues, the melody, the choreography."

Describe the process you used to find this source including any keywords and the search engine or tool you used to search.

Tribal Baroque isn't popular on EBSCO. I started my search there by typing "Tribal Baroque" in the search bar and even though I got nine results, none of them had to do with what I was looking for. I went ahead and typed in "AND Thoth" and I got nothing. Since these performers have been based in New York City for a while, I was positive that I was going to have luck on nytimes.com, but I didn't. There I got two results that again, had nothing to do with what I was looking for. My last resort was Google. So I typed in "Tribal Baroque," "Tribal Baroque Thoth," "Tribal Baroque Thoth and Lila'Angelique," and "Thoth and Lila'Angelique," all getting similar results. My searches were all along the same lines, but I was still hopeful I'd get a ton of articles and performance reviews about them with every new click or enter. I had to click on about 40 results that mostly consisted of photos of the performers or a list of their songs or an old link to get tickets to a performance of theirs that has passed. So again, about 40 results later, and 4 pages into Google, I found my two sources.

What other sources or further information would you need to answer your question? Where would you look for that information?

To get ahold of further information, Tribal Baroque does have a YouTube channel with a bunch of videos and over 600 subscribers. Watching some of their videos could give me a better understanding of how they connect their performances to their stage because they are the ones making and posting the videos. Also, it would be pretty easy to talk to them in person and maybe get my question directly answered because according to their website, skthoth.com, they are in Angel Tunnel in Central Park from Wednesday to Sunday from 4:30 to 6:30pm, performing for free.