

NYC College of Technology, CUNY
 Departments of Architecture Technology and Humanities
 THE 2280: History of Theatre Technology and Stages
 Interdisciplinary Option

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Office Hours by Appointment

SYLLABUS

Required Materials

- Reading pack of plays, histories, and criticism available on Blackboard.
- Timeline: <http://www.timerime.com/en/timeline/1626942/History+of+Theatre+Space+and+Design+in+the+West/>

Required Performance Events

Attend a professional theatre production in New York City with a partner from class. Get tickets to shows *early in the semester* and mark your calendars.

Blackboard Academic Suite

Participation in this class requires ongoing use of the Blackboard system. Announcements, assignments, review questions, quizzes, and exams are given on Blackboard and therefore regular access to a working computer is necessary in order to pass the course.



Course Description

This course examines contemporary and historical theater structures using research methods and knowledge bases from both theater and architectural history and technology. This course satisfies the interdisciplinary college option. This survey will be contextualized in terms of prevailing aesthetic, technological, and performative movements.

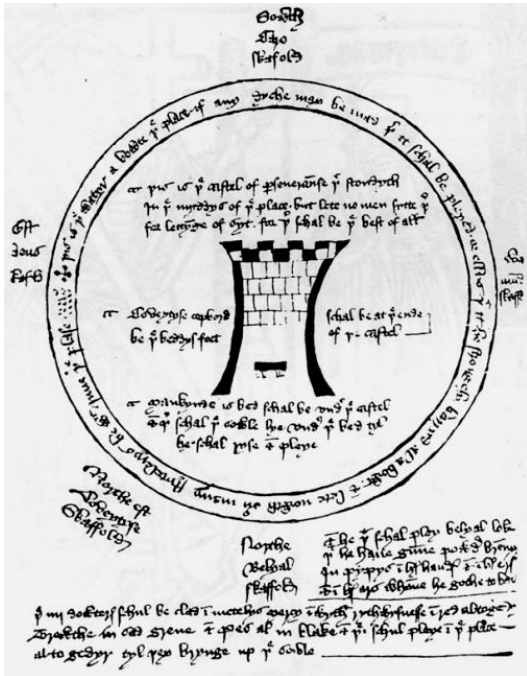
Learning Goals

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have a working knowledge of performance space typologies. Students will be able to:

1. Describe the physical features and technologies of theatre architecture and design.
2. Identify particular theatrical venues, artistic trends, and specific production designs.
3. Explain how different styles relate to artistic and historical contexts.
4. Explain the contribution of major theorists and designers.
5. Identify performance spaces, theatrical aesthetics, production concepts and techniques outside of purpose-built theaters and traditional notions of performance.
6. Articulate relationships between performance requirements, audience attitudes, and theatrical design.

Assignments

1. **Space/Design Project:** In pairs, attend a professional NYC play or musical in a purpose-built or converted theater. One student will observe, research, and analyze the scene design (“scenic space”) and the other will observe, research, and analyze “theatre space” (marquee, seating arrangement, interior and exterior architecture, lobby, etc.). Both students should sketch what they observe. There are three components to this assignment:



- a. **Group Presentations (10 minutes):** One member of the team will provide a history of the building (original design and construction, architectural style, past productions, etc.), describe the architecture of the building (through the use of plans, sections and elevations) and evaluate the interior spaces from an audience's point of view. How does the arrangement of the orchestra, seating areas, balconies, aisles, lobbies, etc. affect the reception of the play? The second member of the team will then present on the scenic design of the production, first providing historical information about the play (genre, themes, production history, etc.), followed by an evaluation of the set design (how the styles and elements respond to themes in the play, mechanical features, and overall success of the production). Both participants should use visual aids with their presentations. There will be time for questions and feedback. **(20%)**

- b. **Written Essay (1,800 words):** Individual students will submit a typewritten essay that responds to a series of prompts (see below). In addition to citing sources like theatrical reviews and playbills, students also need to reference scholarship on theatre design and architecture that supports an analysis of the particular theatre building or design elements. **(15%)**
- c. **Sketches (3 drawings):** Individual students will each submit 3 hand sketches of different areas within either the scenic space or the theatre space with their written essay. Sketching forces one to carefully observe their surroundings. These sketches can be fairly quick. They will be evaluated on the quality of the observation, not the drawing ability. Include notes and a scale figure. **(10%)**

Ticket stubs must be attached to essays. Essays must be typed in Times Roman, 12-point font, and double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, and black ink; follow MLA formatting and bibliography guidelines. For help on citation see <http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/>. Encyclopedias and textbooks should not be listed on the Works Cited page. These types of sources are great for starting your research, as they can provide a general picture of the subject matter and bibliographies with leads to additional material. However, there is nothing in encyclopedias and textbooks that will enable you to say something new or interesting about a subject. *Papers should use correct style and grammar. Credit will be deducted for oversight in these areas. In addition, late papers will be graded down one level (A- to B+) for each class period they are late.*

Prompts for Essay on "theatrical space":

Part I. When was the theater building constructed and for what use? Who is the architect? If it is a purpose-built theater, what kinds of plays were first performed there? If it is a converted space, what was the original use of the building and when was it converted? What changes did the architects have to make to adapt the building so it could be used as a theater? What vision did the architects have for the new theater, i.e., what kinds of plays or entertainment events were envisioned for the space? How did the architects execute their design concept on the exterior of the building, in the marquee, lobby, auditorium, and seating arrangements?

Part II. As discussed throughout the semester, the design and organization of spectator space informs the ways in which audiences experience theatre (democratic vs. hierarchical, socially interactive vs. socially hermetic, monumental vs. intimate, sacred vs. profane, etc.). In your opinion, how does the composition of the production's *theatrical space* (defined by McAuley) influence your experience of the production? Based on your experience and observation of other audience members, how did the contours, dimensions, dynamics, and arrangements of *theatrical space* contribute to social engagements before and after the start of the play? Did certain design elements create expectations about the performance? In your opinion, was the *theatrical space* an appropriate choice for the play you witnessed? Why, or why not?

Evaluation: You will be graded on how well you are able to show a connection between Parts I and II, i.e., how well you are able to *describe* theatrical space and how well you discuss elements of theatrical space in terms of social experience and interaction.

Prompts for Essays on “scenic space”:

Part I. When was the play written and by whom? What is the genre of the play (tragedy, family drama, satire, spectacle, etc.)? Who designed the stage scenery and how does this particular design converse with the designer's body of work? Describe the scenery as best you can: talk about colors, shapes, moving set pieces, stationary set pieces, realistic and non-realistic elements, historical styles, and the ways in which light, sound, and physical movement interacted with scenic elements.

Part II. How did the set design interact with, support, contradict, or enhance the themes, narrative, and style of the play? How, specifically? Were there moments in the production when visual texts meaningfully superseded verbal texts? In the end, do you believe the design was successful (thematically, narratively, as a form of spectacle or entertainment)? Why, or why not?

Evaluation: You will be evaluated (graded) on how well you are able to show a connection between Parts I and II, i.e., how well you are able to describe the design in words and how well you analyze the design in terms of the themes, stories, characters, and actions of the play itself.

2. **Written homework (reading responses) and quizzes.** Weekly assignments based on the week's reading must be completed on Blackboard and OpenLab prior to the first class meeting every week (usually a Tuesday). There are no opportunities to take quizzes after due dates. Uncompleted quizzes will be marked a “0” in grade books. **(30%)**
3. **Final Exam.** Identify approximately 10 images (name of designer or architect, date, name of production, artistic and historical styles, functional aspects, technology, physical elements, etc.). Students will also be asked to write a 2-paragraph essay based on an image of their choice. In the essay, students should demonstrate 1) they know information covered in lectures and textbooks, and 2) they are able to think critically about ways in which historians use evidence and the relationships between architecture, theatrical space and cultural forces. **(20%)**

Participation, Attendance, and Punctuality (5%)

- A tour of a Broadway or off-Broadway theater will be scheduled during the semester at a time the class does not normally meet. Attendance is mandatory.
- There are reading assignments for all class meetings. You will need to spend time reading and thinking about the material on your own in order to prepare for class discussions.

- The reading pack of critical texts and archival material (Blackboard) must be brought to class.
- Use of cell phones, iPads, and headphones is *strictly prohibited*. If you are discovered using an electronic device during an exam you will automatically receive an 'F'.
- One goal of a liberal arts education is to learn how to engage in critical conversation. This skill involves summarizing your ideas persuasively, defending your interpretations with evidence, listening to those who disagree with you, and re-evaluating your claims based on other arguments or evidence. In this class, you cannot demonstrate and further develop critical discourse unless you are actively present in class. Therefore, attendance means not only arriving to class on time but also actively participating.
- NYCCT regulations allow absences for 3 meetings in a bi-weekly class without penalty. Each lateness counts as a half absence. If you are more than 20 minutes late you will be marked absent. A fourth absence will result in the lowering of the final grade by 10 points (a B- becomes a C-). A fifth absence will result in an automatic WU for the final grade in the course (which becomes an F on your transcript). There are *no exceptions* to this rule, so use your absences wisely. Doctors' notes or any other excuse for an absence or missed deadline will not be accepted, so *save* your absences for unforeseen illnesses or family emergencies. An excellent attendance record is necessary to do well in this course.



SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, READING ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS

Class Dates	Classroom Activities	Reading Assignments [READ IN ORDER AS LISTED]	Due Dates, Quizzes and Exams
Week 1 1/28 1/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review syllabus, textbook, timeline, and goals ▪ Blackboard log-on instructions ▪ Conceptual framework for the course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ McAuley, <i>Space in Performance</i> pp. 1-3, 17-35. ✓ Dwyer and Perry, <i>PAJ</i>, pp. 2-7. 	Take notes every class. Quizzes and homework are due the FIRST meeting of class every week.
Week 2 2/4 2/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MODULE 1: Social Space ▪ Theatres Dionysus and Teatro Olimpico at Vicenza 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bieber, <i>The History of the Greek and Roman Theater</i> ✓ Lefebvre, <i>Production of Space</i> 	Quiz 1
Week 3 2/11 2/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Noh Theater 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Fenollosa and Pound, <i>The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan</i> ✓ Interview with B. Tschumi 	Reading response 1
Week 4 2/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MODULE 2: Devotional Space ▪ Theater Dionysus and Medieval cathedral ▪ In class writing: the performance archive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Wiles, <i>A Short History of Western Performance Space</i> ✓ Gertsman, "The Loci of Performance" 	Quiz 2
Week 5 2/25 2/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yoidi Full Gospel Church (Seoul, Korea) and Aláàrìnjó (Yoruba) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Carlson, <i>Places of Performance</i> 	Reading response 2
Week 6 3/4 3/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MODULE 3: Adaptive Space/Structures re-used ▪ Public Theater, NYC ▪ Schedule presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hayes, "Stage and City" (ed. Fair) 	Quiz 3
Week 7 3/11 3/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Field Trip: Public Theater ▪ Marina Abramović Institute for the Preservation of Performance Art and Beijing Opera 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pang, <i>The Distorting Mirror</i> 	Quiz 4
Week 8 3/18 3/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MODULE 4: All The World's a Stage ▪ Elizabethan Public Theater ▪ Belfast Kaleidoscope project – walking, community theatre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Introduction to <i>Hamlet</i> (Arden) ✓ Leacroft. <i>The Development of the English Playhouse</i> ✓ Orrell, <i>The Human Stage</i> 	Reading response 3
Week 9 3/25 3/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institute of Contemporary Art-DS+R ▪ NYPL: Ten Arquitectos ▪ Perry and Marty Granoff Creative Arts Center for Brown- DS+R 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Colomina "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism" 	Reading response 4
Week 10 4/1 4/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In-class presentations of Space/Design projects 		Due: Space/Design Essays

Class Dates	Classroom Activities	Reading Assignments [READ IN ORDER AS LISTED]	Due Dates, Quizzes and Exams
Week 11 4/8 4/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In-class presentations of Space/Design projects 		
Week 12 4/29 5/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MODULE 5: Performing Technology ▪ Kabuki special effects ▪ Medieval Puppetry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Swift, "Technology and Wonder" ✓ Saltz, "Live Media: Interactive Technology and Theatre" 	Quiz 5
Week 13 5/6 5/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Robert Wilson ▪ The Bix Project ▪ Workshop production with Royal Osiris 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Di Benedetto "Concepts in Spatial Dynamics" ✓ Benjamin. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" 	Reading response 5
Week 14 5/13 5/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MODULE 6: Performative Architecture ▪ Lincoln Center Alice Tully Hall (DS+R) and Appia's Hellerau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Kolarevic, Branko. "Towards the Performative in Architecture" ✓ Appia, "A New Art-Material" 	Reading response 6
Week 15 5/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wyly Theater-REX/OMA ▪ Blur Building-DS+R 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ "Liz Diller Plays with Architecture," <i>TED Talk</i> 	
Week 15 5/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FINAL EXAM 		

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- Allen, John J. *The Reconstruction of a Spanish Golden Age Playhouse: El Corral del Principe, 1583-1844*. University Presses of Florida, 1983.
- Appia, Adolphe. "A New Art-Material [1902]," in *Twentieth-Century Theatre: A Sourcebook*, ed. Richard Drain (14-15). Routledge, 1995.
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- Di Benedetto, Stephen. "Concepts in Spatial Dynamics: Robert Wilson's Dramaturgical Mechanics and the Visible Stage." In *Space and the Postmodern Stage*, eds. Eynat-Confino and Sormova. Prague, 2000, 62-70.
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- Khan, Omar and Dorita Hanna. "Performance/Architecture: An Interview with Bernard Tschumi" in *Journal of Architectural Education* (2008), 52-58.
- Kolarevic, Branko. "Towards the Performative in Architecture" in *Performative Architecture: Beyond Instrumentality*, eds. Branko Kolarevic and Ali Malkawi, (204-13). New York Spon, 2005. Lawrence, A.W. *Greek Architecture*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983.
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