TH352 SOUNDINGS FROM THE FRINGES: TEXT AND PERFORMANCE  
IES Abroad Dublin Syllabus

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course complements the Direct Enrollment option at the Gaiety School of Acting/National Theatre School of Ireland (GSA/NTSI), and takes place during the first several weeks of the Fall GSA/NTSI program.

This course draws its content from the annual Dublin Fringe Festival to examine fringe theatre in both its practical and aesthetic elements in the context of Ireland’s rich theatrical tradition. Offered as an intensive introduction to the full-time conservatory acting program at the Gaiety School of Acting/National Theatre School of Ireland, the two components of the course are arranged around four themes – the past, mythmaking, storytelling and performance. Students will attend 5 to 6 performances of as varied a nature as possible, including physical theatre, site-specific work, ensemble and non-naturalistic drama.

As a vital element, students will enroll in an intensive acting program, experiencing some of the key differences between Irish acting styles and preoccupations, and those in the US. Mindful of the emphasis on “devising” in the Irish theatre scene, students will partake in guided improvisations, as well as working with established Irish dramatic texts. The academic aspect will address the broader cultural implications of the actor’s work and provide an understanding of contemporary theatre-making within a European dramatic tradition. (3 credits)

INSTRUCTORS: Dr. Fintan Walsh, Amanda Maguire

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:
Performance workshop: guided improvisations from students’ own starting material, as well as working with established Irish dramatic texts.
Text and Production Analysis: seminar discussion, student presentations, attendance at theatre performances.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:
Acting component - (2 credits)
Essay on a chosen Irish playwright, 1,500 words – 30%
Class contribution – 30%
Final performance project – 40%

Academic component – (1 credit)
10 minute presentation – 40%
1,500 word essay – 40%
Classroom contribution – 20%
Students will be expected to volunteer for the Fringe Festival.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of the course, students should be able to:
1. Distinguish Irish Theatre from that in the U.S., both in concept and practice.
2. Articulate the skills required to work in a festival atmosphere, to cooperate with other theatre professionals, and to meet the demands of an intensive program of performance.
3. Define a “fringe” as opposed to a “mainstream” performance.
4. Apply their workshop learning to perform themselves, in an Irish context, and to an Irish audience.

CONTENT:
Week 1: Reading between the Lines
Required reading: Sean O’Casey, Juno and the Paycock
Acting Workshop:
Excerpts from the following will be used: W.B. Yeats - *Purgatory*,
Sean O’Casey – *Juno and the Paycock*

Dramatic reflections – how Irish Theatre re-presented the country’s own troubled history to establish a national identity.
Exercises: Speaking and Listening
Exercises: Elements of narrative projection - performer and audience, vocal and physical technique: language and gesture.
Organization of space – How staging connects audience and performer
Established versus Fringe – not just what is said but how it is said – taking leave of the text, the use of multi-media.

Tutorial: Where are We Coming From?
Some background on Ireland’s history. The weight of the past, and some reasons why we have inherited such a powerful theatrical tradition. Ireland’s painful divisions (partition, and the Civil War). How is theatre addressing historical and post-colonial themes?
Play: Sean O’Casey, *Juno and the Paycock*

Production Analysis
*Juno and the Paycock*, Abbey Theatre

**Week 2: Ancient to Modern**
Required reading: Marina Carr, *By the Bog of Cats*

Acting Workshop:
Extracts from the following will be used:
Brian Friel - *Translations*
Marina Carr – *By the Bog of Cats*
The prevalence of mythological reinterpretation in Irish drama.
Exercises: Improvisation – techniques for spontaneity and narrative skills
Solo work: Delivery of Monologue – Carr’s use of Greek Tragic models
Fringe: Topics in fringe productions

Tutorial: Myth and Legend
Irish drama has tended to incorporate and re-work mythological themes obsessively. The influence of magic and magical thinking will also be considered, in a cultural context, and also as a permanent feature of the human psyche under pressure.

Production Analysis
(sample) Taylor Mac, Fringe Factory
*From the Heart*, 13 North Great George’s Street (Fringe)

**Week 3: Alternative Ways of Storytelling - The European Tradition, Mask work, Commedia dell’Arte**
Required Reading: Mark O’Rowe, *Terminus*

Acting Workshop:
Extracts from the following will be used:
Corn Exchange/Annie Ryan - *Dublin by Lamplight*
Mark O’Rowe – *Terminus*
The importance of monologue in recent Irish Theatre.

An alternative tradition. – Carnival – Fiesta - Fringe

Exercises: Mask work; Doubling – what is hidden and what is revealed

Exercises: Mirror Work and Comic Exaggeration

Selection of Performance Pieces

Tutorial: Storytelling

One notable feature of Irish theatre over the last 15 years has been the growth and durability of monologue as a device. What does this say about how our culture has been changing, fragmenting? Or does it merely hark back to a previous feature of Irish communal life. Are we trapped by our stories? Or can we change and amend them? Are there ways to escape the tyranny of the word onstage and how are dance, mime, performance art and site-specific work superseding more customary forms?


Production Analysis
(sample) *True Enough! The Interactive Post-Fact Game Show With Real Cash Prizes*, Pantibar

**Week 4: Liminality and Core: Exploration, Synthesis, Performance**

**Acting Workshop:**
Theatre Styles: compare and contrast text and production
Ensemble work: ‘The Company’ spatial awareness, risk taking, group dynamics
Exploration of aspects of the “Fringe”: script, improvisation, language, role of actors/ back stage, multimedia, theatre space; (found space; site generic, site specific,) publicity, budget
Preparation, Rehearsals and Final Performance

**Seminar: Future Trends**
What’s hot in Irish theatre right now? Where is it leading us? As the boundaries between fine art, dance, film and theatre become blurred and the dividing line between audience and players more problematic, what can we anticipate about the future? Does theatre have a role at all in the Ireland of the 21st century? If so, can we discern any glimpses of what it might be?
Play: Phillip McMahon, *Danny and Chantelle*

Production Analysis
(sample) *The Butcher Babes*, The New Theatre
Guest speaker: Phillip McMahon, Playwright and co-director of Thisispopbaby

From the Heart, 13 North Great George’s Street (Fringe)

**REQUIRED READING:**
Text and Production Analysis
Phillip McMahon, *Danny and Chantelle*
Sean O’Casey, *Juno and the Paycock*
Mark O’Rowe, *Terminus* (2007)

Theatre Criticism
Performance Workshop
Edward Braun, *The Director and the Stage*
Peter Brook, *Albert Hunt and Geoffrey Reeves* Margaret Eddershaw, *Performing Brecht*
Martin Esslin, *An Anatomy of Drama*
Keith Johnstone, *Improv for Storytellers*
Charles Marowitz, *Recycling Shakespeare*
Collaborative Theatre, *The Theatre du Soleil Sourcebook*, ed. by David Williams

Selections from:
Samuel Beckett, *Texts for Nothing*
Georg Buchner, *Woyzeck*
Marina Carr, *By the Bog of Cats*
Corn Exchange, *Dublin By Gaslight*
Marie Jones, *A Night in November*
Martin McDonagh, *Pillowman*
Frank McGuinness, *Mary and Lizzie*
Gary Mitchell, *In a little World of their Own*
Mark O’Rowe, *Terminus*
W.B. Yeats, *Purgatory*

**RECOMMENDED READING:**
www.irishtheatremagazine.ie
www.irishtimes.com

**BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF INSTRUCTORS:**
Fintan Walsh received his MPhil and PhD at Trinity College Dublin School of Drama, Film, and Music. He teaches Film Theory and Criticism, Theatre History, and Contemporary Theatre Practice to undergraduate and graduate students at TCD. He is a script development consultant to the Abbey Theatre. He also teaches and holds administrative responsibility for drama and theatre in education at a primary school in Dublin, with particular emphasis on community outreach. He taught the IES Abroad Dublin course on Contemporary Irish Theatre.

Amanda Maguire is a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and received a Licenciate from the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA) in London. She is a tutor at the Gaiety School of Acting/National Theatre School of Ireland and she designed and taught the IES Abroad Dublin TH390 Theatre Workshop. She is a winner of the Edinburgh Fringe “First” Award.

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