



TH 352 - SOUNDINGS FROM THE FRINGES

IES Abroad Dublin

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.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

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 will be able to:

- Distinguish Irish Theatre from that in the United States, both in concept and practice.
- 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.
- Define a “fringe” as opposed to a “mainstream” performance.
- Apply their workshop learning to perform themselves, in an Irish context, and to an Irish audience.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

IES Abroad Dublin courses are designed to take advantage of the unique contribution of the instruction and the lecture/discussion format, regular class attendance is mandatory. Any missed class, without a legitimate reason will be reflected in the final grade. A legitimate reason would include: documented illness or family bereavement. Travel, (including travel delays) is not a legitimate reason.

CONTENT:

Unit	Content	Assignments
Unit 1	Reading between the Lines 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? • 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.	Excerpts from the following will be used: • W.B. Yeats - Purgatory, Sean O'Casey – Juno and the Paycock
Unit 2	Ancient to Modern 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. • The prevalence of mythological reinterpretation in Irish drama. • Practical Investigation of the use of Hiberno-English: lexis, syntax, rhythm. 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	Excerpts from the following will be used: • Brian Friel - Translations • Marina Carr – By the Bog of Cats (1988)
Unit 3	Alternative Ways of Storytelling – The European Tradition, Mask Work, Commedia dell'Arte	Excerpts from the following will be used:

	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? Does it merely hark back to a previous feature of Irish communal life. Are we trapped by our stories? 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? • 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	• Corn Exchange/Annie Ryan - Dublin by Lamplight • Mark O’Rowe – Terminus
Unit 4	Liminality and Core: Exploration, Synthesis, Performance 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? • 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	Excerpts from the following will be used: • Phillip McMahon - Danny and Chantelle

REQUIRED READINGS:

Text and Production Analysis

- Marina Carr, By The Bog of Cats (1998)
- Phillip McMahon, Danny and Chantelle
- Sean O’Casey, Juno and the Paycock
- Mark O’Rowe, Terminus (2007)

Theatre Criticism

- Sara Brady and Fintan Walsh (eds). Crossroads: Performance Studies and Irish Culture. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2009.
- Nicholas Grene, The Politics of Irish Drama. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Eamonn Jordan (ed). Theatre Stuff. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2003.
- Melissa Sihra (ed). Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2007.

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 Readings:

- www.irishtheatremagazine.ie
- www.irishtimes.com