

2019 Belmont University Research Symposium

Theatre I

Moderator: Jaclynn Jutting, M.F.A.

April 11, 2019

3:30 PM-5:00 PM

Johnson Center 324

3:30 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Accidentally Pioneering a Movement: How the Pioneer Players Sparked Political Reform

Sami Hansen

Faculty Advisor: James Al-Shamma, Ph.D.

Theatre in the twenty-first century has been largely based on political and social reform, mirroring such movements as Black Lives Matter and Me Too. New topics and ideas are brought to life on various stages across the globe, as many artists challenge cultural and constitutional structures in their society. But how did protest theatre get started? As relates specifically to the feminist movement, political theatre on the topic of women's rights can be traced back to an acting society called the Pioneer Players, which was made up of British men and women suffragettes in the early twentieth century. The passion and drive of its members contributed to its success: over the course of a decade, patrons and actors worked together to expose a rapidly changing society to a variety of genres and new ideas. In this presentation, I hope to prove that, in challenging traditional theatre, the Pioneer Players helped to pave the way for the avant garde, spur political reform, and promote uncensored theatre in Great Britain. Their efforts facilitated a transformation of the stage that established conditions under which political theatre could, and did, flourish.

3:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Philip Glass: A Never-Ending Circular Staircase

Joshua Kiev

Faculty Advisor: James Al-Shamma, Ph.D.

Although he may be one of the greatest composers that you've never heard of, he has been portrayed on the animated television shows, *The Simpsons* and *South Park*. But Philip Glass is no cartoon character: he has had a powerful impact on the worlds of theatre and film. Throughout his career, he has composed for opera and theatre in his trance-inducing, distinctive style. He has also earned major accolades for his film scores, earning Academy Award nominations for Martin Scorsese's *Kundun* (1997) as well as *The Hours* (2002) and *Notes on a Scandal* (2006). Additionally, he won a Golden Globe for Best Music Score for *The Truman Show* (1998). His fusions of Western and world music were among the earliest and most successful global experiments of their kind. He also enjoyed a successful career as a recording artist, signing an exclusive contract with the CBS Masterworks label. He is recognized as one of

postmodern music's most renowned proponents for the development of ambient and new age sounds.

4:00 PM-4:15 PM

Commedia Dell'arte: The Original Sitcom

Olivia Nelson

Faculty Advisor: James Al-Shamma, Ph.D.

Sitcoms have captivated the American TV viewer's imagination since their inception. From *Golden Girls* to *Full House*, to provide just two examples from the 1980s, sitcoms provide an escape from the monotony of everyday life into a world where everything is neatly wrapped up at the end of a thirty-minute episode. Viewers take comfort and solace in the neurotic yet fatherly Danny Tanner, or enjoy a good laugh at sassy, selfish, overtly sexual, yet ultimately lovable Blanche Devereaux. Sitcoms are popular because they allow audience members to see themselves within the characters. They are illuminating, but also impersonal: the characters are larger than life and the situations they find themselves in are unrealistic and silly. While television is a relatively new invention, the sitcom format is not. Beginning in the early 1500s, *commedia dell'arte* emerged as a form of entertainment that would remain popular for several centuries. Actors would don masks and assume the identities of various stock characters; audiences familiar with these characters and their scenarios could enjoy a performance even if it was enacted in a foreign language. Sitcoms employ similar characters and plots to those of *commedia*. For example, Blanche, from *Golden Girls*, is similar to El Capitano: both are over-sexed and underworked, and their actions consist of failed sexual exploits and attempts at love. Like its Italian precursor, the sitcom is popular due to its universal character types and scenarios, to which viewers can relate.

4:15 PM-4:30 PM

Breaking Down the Fourth Wall with Artaud, Punchdrunk, and the Wooster Group

Megan Huggins

Faculty Advisor: James Al-Shamma, Ph.D.

Antonin Artaud, a radical theatre artist working during the first half of the 20th century, developed a style and philosophy of storytelling called the Theatre of Cruelty. Artaud wanted to shock his audiences into an emotional connection with the people and situations around them. Hoping to shake the audience out of their complacency by combatting realism, Artaud envisioned performances that would eliminate the fourth wall and confront the audience directly. Two contemporary theatre companies, the Wooster Group and Punchdrunk, adapt Artaud's ideas to modern storytelling practices. The Wooster Group incorporates technological advances in its jarring, innovative performances, and Punchdrunk creates immersive and occasionally interactive experiences. Both companies embrace the concepts of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty and strive to break down the fourth wall to reach their audiences and build deeper connections between audience, actor, and content.

4:30 PM- 5:00 PM

Feminist Manifestas – Women Playwrights

Dixie Currey, Reilly O’Connell, Jake Wallace, and Jade Wilkison

Faculty Advisor: Jaclynn Jutting, M.F.A.

In 2000, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards published “Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future,” which dealt with real world problems faced by women within the 3rd wave of feminism. In the class Women Playwrights, we, the students, were tasked with exploring how we as artists and individuals wanted to explore feminism in our lives. For some, this meant exploring our lives as women. For others, it meant exploring the ways gender inequality and prejudice shapes the experience not only of women, but of all human beings. We hope to paint a picture of feminism that includes all genders, sexualities, races, ages, classes, and walks of life.

2019 Belmont University Research Symposium

Theatre II

Moderator: James Al-Shamma, Ph.D.

April 11, 2019

3:30 PM-5:00 PM

Johnson Center 327

4:15 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Surviving Imprisonment in America: Drama Therapy for Incarcerated Women

Kendall Crawford

Faculty Advisor: James Al-Shamma, Ph.D.

With the United States positioned as the leading nation in incarceration rates, the intentional use of theatre in order to achieve psychological growth and change within inmates is an invaluable asset to the healing of the imprisoned, specifically to incarcerated women who have undergone sexual trauma. Navigating prison for women is often combined with the trauma of sexual assault, as almost half the women in the nation's jails and prisons were sexually abused prior to their imprisonment. With an emphasis on punishment, prisons often have the effect of retraumatization and revictimization rather than rehabilitation for abused women. Through the integration of dramatic therapy into prisons, female inmates are provided with the opportunity to collectively overcome and process and explore ways to cope with their feelings of worthlessness and PTSD symptoms that stem from their experiences with sexual harassment, abuse, and rape. The creation of theatrical rehabilitation programs in prisons allows for a safe space in which these women, confined and defined by their abuses, are able to empower one another to confront their past trauma. Theatre, in this way, serves as the means for their survival and an outlet to exercise their stifled voices.

4:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.

Finding Holes, Founding Theaters: An Exploration into Theatre Companies in Nashville

Evelyn Petty

Faculty Advisor: James Al-Shamma, Ph.D.

Nashville's theatre community is growing at a rapid rate – new companies are popping up left and right. Nashville already has many well-established and professional theatre organizations, so why do new ones continue to emerge? Nashville is home to a unique theatre community that is still growing to fill artistic gaps. All kinds of theater companies — professional, semi-professional, and start-ups— fulfill a need. All three types will adapt to meet new challenges and fill artistic holes by any means necessary in order to make the community whole.

4:45 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Adolphe Appia: A Lighting Designer's Theory of Acting

Zachary Payne

Faculty Advisor: James Al-Shamma, Ph.D.

Adolphe Appia was not only one of the most important turn-of-the-century innovators of theatrical lighting, he also envisioned fundamental changes in the use of the stage setting and attempted to redefine theatrical art itself. He was both theorist and practitioner, the latter in the areas of scenography and lighting design. Although most of his writings address the relationship between light and music, he also envisioned a completely new approach to acting. For Appia, the stage space was dynamic and inclusive – he wished to encourage interaction between actor and spectator. His designs show his desire to unify theatrical production in a complete environment with the actor at the center. His theories were ahead of his time and helped reinvigorate the 20th century stage.