

2016 Belmont University Research Symposium

Theatre II

Moderator: Jaclynn Jutting, M.F.A.

April 20, 2017

3:30 PM-5:00 PM

IHSB 341

3:30 PM-3:45 PM

Sarah Kane's *Blasted*: The Fragility of the Masculine Desperation for Power at the Center of Nationalistic Ideologies

Leah Broderick

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

Throughout the early 1990's, the world turned a blind eye to the genocidal atrocities happening in the former Yugoslav territories. English playwright Sarah Kane's 1995 debut play *Blasted* sought to assault this universal ignorance by putting audiences face-to-face with facts about humanity they would rather choose to ignore. Although one of the most brutal pieces of theatre ever created, *Blasted* is a vital piece of politically driven art because it makes society confront its own mortality by forcing people everywhere to acknowledge the senseless violence humans are capable of under Nationalistic regimes. Through each of her three characters, Kane explores interpersonal violence, and how the masculine hunger for power can almost too easily escalate into genocide when nationalism affirms violence for the sake of the country. Kane's play also explores the incredible resiliency humans can maintain in the wake of such violence, illustrating the power of our innate will to survive.

3:45 PM-4:00 PM

***Waiting for Lefty*: An Examination of Twentieth Century Agitprop Theatre**

Joe Mobley

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

In modern theatre, art tends to court politics more often than not. This increased significantly during the twentieth century, with playwrights like Brecht and Boal devising new theatrical techniques for affecting social change. In his play *Waiting for Lefty*, American playwright Clifford Odets wrote a finely crafted piece of communist propaganda. This drama embodies the agitprop genre of theatre. Through a series of vignettes, Odets provides a masterclass on influencing the masses through theatrical storytelling. In this presentation, I also present ideas for staging this dated piece in ways that will speak to today's audience.

4:00 PM-4:15 PM

***Blackbird*: The Effect of Loneliness on the Human Condition**

Astrid Rotenberry

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

David Harrower's *Blackbird* is a play about two lost people, Ray and Una, who shared an illegal relationship when Una was twelve years old. Years later, they are faced with the fact that that the

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intense loneliness they felt in the past drove them to pursue something that would ruin their respective chances for an ordinary life forever. Trying desperately to move on, Ray has changed his name and attempted to create a new life for himself, but cannot help but yearn for the person he once was with Una. Stuck in the mindset of an abandoned, lovesick twelve-year-old, Una clings to the relationship she once had with Ray and attempts to reconnect with the only person she ever felt truly understood her. Confronted with these two characters, who are entangled in a web of mistakes that has altered the course of both of their lives, audience members are taken on a dizzying, heartbreaking journey that causes them to reach down within themselves and question their beliefs on guilt, forgiveness, loneliness, and the difference between what is right and what is wrong.

4:15 PM-4:30 PM

The Role of Politics in *Execution of Justice*

Danielle Threet

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

Execution of Justice, a stage play by Emily Mann, explores several varying political and personal views of the historic murders of two of San Francisco's most well-known politicians, Harvey Milk (the first openly gay political official to hold office in the city) and George Moscone (then Mayor of San Francisco). This play takes a dramatized approach to describing the historical court case; doing so invites audience members to become deeply involved with its storytelling, and provides them with a unique opportunity to pass judgment against the killer, Dan White, effectively becoming a jury themselves. This play will grip any reader, regardless of her political views, right to her very core, and perhaps even make her consider options that she may have never thought of before.

4:30 PM-4:45 PM

Information for Foreigners: Gambaro's Use of Tactics to Incite Change in an Unstable Political Environment

Alex Drinnen

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

In her 1971 play, *Information for Foreigners*, Griselda Gambaro interrogates the role of leadership within a political setting. What makes a leader? What makes a follower? At what point is the audience complicit in its understanding of the world's atrocities? Is there such a thing as complicity? Through twenty scenes of disturbing dialogue and imagery, Gambaro confronts the audience head on with these questions and asks what it means to be human within the rapidly shifting political context that characterizes the modern era.

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Scenic and Costume Design for *The Good Woman of Setzuan*

Henry Beach, Kiley Carlson

Faculty Advisors: Paul Gatrell, M.F.A., Jessica Mueller, M.F.A.

Bertolt Brecht was a playwright, and a founder of Epic Theatre, who pushed audiences to view and understand the world as it was and then make the decision to change it. He did so by confronting the audience with the unexpected. In *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, he comments on the harsh nature of capitalism and the "every man for himself mentality," asking the audience to question whether or not it is possible to be good in a world that is filled with badness. In the 2017 Belmont University production, under the direction of Bill Feehely, our design team worked to support these themes while updating the setting of the play in order to increase its appeal to the contemporary audience. This included the creation of a dystopian world ruined by an ignorant, capitalist society.