

Theatre Practitioners & Styles

Your Task:

You should use the Internet to understand a various theatre style and research the practitioner responsible for its implementation.

You will then, on a specific day, give a 8-10 minute presentation / talk to the class on your specific theatre practitioner and their style of theatre.

You can choose to present your practitioner in any way you like. You could, for instance:

- Produce a short PowerPoint presentation
- Produce a Prezi and talk through some of the most important points

Or any other ways you feel would be interesting to introduce your practitioner and their ideas.

Your practitioner is:

Constantin Stanislavski

And your practitioner's style is:

Realism

Constantin Stanislavski is best known for developing a system of acting and personal development, advocating realism in the theatre. He is arguably one of the two most influential figures in 20th Century theatre. At the heart of realism are believable characters and action.

<http://www.theatrelinks.com/constantin-stanislavski/>

<http://www.theatrelinks.com/realism>

Visit the links on Stanislavski and Realism, noting responses to key questions outlined below:

- What was Stanislavski's date of birth and death?
- When was Stanislavski's work taking place and in which country?
- Name other practitioners and playwrights Stanislavski worked with?
- What was the name of the theatre Stanislavski established?
- Describe Stanislavski's 'system' and its key goals.

Using the supplementary materials or information you discover in your research, you must also lead the class in an activity or workshop inspired by Stanislavski. Be prepared to run the workshop and explain how the activity is representative of the style.

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Your practitioner is:

Emile Zola

And your practitioner's style is:

Naturalism

Emile Zola is often a forgotten figure in the development of modern theatre. He was not a theatre practitioner, as such, but nevertheless his legacy is significant. Perhaps more than any other person he best described the science of naturalism, paving the way for theatre practitioners and others to put the theory of naturalism into practice in their profession. Naturalism and realism are sometimes incorrectly used as interchangeable terms in the theatre. Unfortunately, when separated, they are often used inappropriately. Your task is to understand naturalism properly and the differences between it and realism.

<http://www.theatrelinks.com/emile-zola/>

<http://www.theatrelinks.com/naturalism>

Visit the links on Emile Zola and Naturalism, noting your responses to key questions outlined below:

- What was Zola's date of birth and death?
- What was Zola's profession(s)?
- Where was Zola's description of naturalism published?
- Detail the distinct (sometimes subtle, often forgotten) differences between naturalism and realism, as they apply to their practice in the theatre.

Using the supplementary materials or information you discover in your research, you must also lead the class in an activity or workshop inspired by Zola. Be prepared to run the workshop and explain how the activity is representative of the style.

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Your practitioner is:

Bertolt Brecht

And your practitioner's style is:

Epic Theatre

Bertolt Brecht is one of the key figures of 20th Century theatre and arguably the most important theatre practitioner since World War II. His theories, painstakingly implemented by Brecht himself, have influenced much of world theatre since his death. Brecht's theatre is the very essence of non-naturalism and understanding it will greatly assist any Drama student in comprehending what lies behind most modern theatrical performance.

<http://www.theatrelinks.com/bertolt-brecht/>

<http://www.theatrelinks.com/epic>

Visit the links on Bertolt Brecht and Epic Theatre, noting responses to key questions outlined below:

- What was Brecht's date of birth and death?
- How did Hitler's rise to power in 1933 affect Brecht's career?
- Why did Brecht call it Epic Theatre?
- What countries did Brecht visit after leaving Germany?
- What were Brecht's major plays and where were most of them written?
- Describe in your own words what Brecht meant by alienation-effect and what is the German word for this term?
- Brecht's was a didactic drama. What does this mean?
- Brecht collaborated with another theatre practitioner. Who was he? Both men were influenced by a style of theatre in Germany in the 1910's. What was it?
- Brecht was a staunch Marxist. In simple terms, what is the meaning of Marxism and how did this theory affect Brecht's drama?

- Detail a few of the acting techniques used in Brecht's Epic Theatre (compare these with realistic/naturalistic techniques).
- Detail five staging techniques used in Brecht's Epic Theatre (compare these with realistic/naturalistic techniques).
- Brecht established one of the great theatre companies of the world. What was its name?
- In 1947 Brecht was summoned before the House Un-American Activities Committee. What was this and why was Brecht called to appear before it?
- In summary, what do you think is meant by the term non-naturalistic theatre?

Using the supplementary materials or information you discover in your research, you must also lead the class in an activity or workshop inspired by Brecht. Be prepared to run the workshop and explain how the activity is representative of the style.

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Your practitioner is:

Jerzy Grotowski

And your practitioner's style is:

Poor Theatre

Polish theatre practitioner Jerzy Grotowski established an acting ensemble upon which to practice his many theories on modern theatre. The actors underwent extensive physical training and often spent many months rehearsing a play, which in some cases would only be performed once, to an audience of less than sixty people. His Poor Theatre style of drama was very popular during the 1960's and '70's and was imitated by theatre troupes around the globe. Grotowski's influence on world theatre has been substantial.

<http://www.theatrelinks.com/jerzy-grotowski/>

<http://www.theatrelinks.com/poor>

Visit the links on Grotowski and Poor Theatre, noting responses to key questions outlined below:

- What was Grotowski's date of birth and death?
- What did Grotowski call his theatre establishment?
- Why did Grotowski call his style of drama Poor Theatre?
- Who or what was the most important thing in Grotowski's theatre?
- Offer one example of what you might call Rich Theatre today? Justify your response with an explanation.
- Detail some of the unique rehearsal and performance characteristics of Grotowski's Poor Theatre.
- In Grotowski's theatre, what was the spatial relationship between actor and audience? Distant? Intimate? Describe the typical performance space.

Using the supplementary materials or information you discover in your research, you must also lead the class in an activity or workshop inspired by Grotowski. Be prepared to run the workshop and explain how the activity is representative of the style.

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Your practitioner is:

Antonin Artaud

And your practitioner's style is:

The Theatre of Cruelty

Understanding Artaud and his theories about the theatre can prove to be quite a difficult task. Artaud's theatre is somewhat anti-literary (does not rely on the text to communicate meaning to the audience) and is primarily a loud and often violent movement-based experience which shocks the audience's senses. His Theatre of Cruelty is perhaps most closely linked to Surrealism in the performing arts. Artaud's influence on 20th Century theatre has been widespread.

<http://www.theatrelinks.com/antonin-artaud/>

<http://www.theatrelinks.com/cruelty>

Visit the links on Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty, noting responses to key questions outlined below:

- What was Artaud's date of birth and death?
- Artaud spent several years of his life in what type of institution?
- Define surrealism.
- What was the name of the book in which Artaud's collected essays/theories on theatre exist? Explain the reason why you believe this book is titled such?
- What were Artaud's views on the society of his time?
- What were the main purposes of the Theatre of Cruelty?
- What significant world events do you believe may have directly influenced Artaud and his work?
- Describe the main acting characteristics of the Theatre of Cruelty?
- Describe the main staging characteristics of the Theatre of Cruelty?
- What was Artaud's theatre a reaction against?

Using the supplementary materials or information you discover in your research, you must also lead the class in an activity or workshop inspired by Artaud. Be prepared to run the workshop and explain how the activity is representative of the style.

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- Produce a short PowerPoint presentation
- Produce a poster and talk through some of the most important points
- Talk through the information you have presented in your handout

Or any other ways you feel would be interesting to introduce your practitioner and their ideas.

Your practitioner is:

Augusto Boal

And your practitioner's style is:

The Theatre of the Oppressed

South American theatre practitioner Augusto Boal has worked with many people, primarily in Brazil. For some years he was a city councillor in Rio de Janeiro where, through the use of a special type of interactive theatre, he heard the voice of the people, using his political position to make their world a better place. Boal's influence has been significant and his workshops in various countries around the world are welcomed with much anticipation from the theatre community. His theatre knows no boundaries and is as relevant for the people living in the slums of Rio to teenagers in the schools of Australia.

<http://www.theatrelinks.com/augusto-boal/>

<http://www.theatrelinks.com/oppressed>

Visit the links on Augusto Boal and the Theatre of the Oppressed, noting responses to key questions outlined below:

- Why do you think Boal titled his style of practice Theatre of the Oppressed?
- What is Forum Theatre? What does it involve from the actor and audience?
- Describe Invisible Theatre? How does it work?
- What are some of the issues people working in this style often raise with practitioners such as Boal?
- What do you think of this special blend of theatre and politics? Does it have its place in modern culture?
- In what ways has the role of theatre in society altered with Theatre of the Oppressed?
- How is Boal's theatre similar to the purpose of much of Brecht's didactic Epic Theatre?

Using the supplementary materials or information you discover in your research, you must also lead the class in an activity or workshop inspired by Boal. Be prepared to run the workshop and explain how the activity is representative of the style.

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Or any other ways you feel would be interesting to introduce your practitioners/styles and their ideas.

Your styles are:

Existentialism and the Theatre of the Absurd

Existentialism is the theory behind the unconscious movement Theatre of the Absurd, which is perhaps more of a genre than a style. Significant practitioners were not traditional theoreticians and directors, but instead were major playwrights. The movement leapt onto the world stage in the form of unconventional plays, primarily by European (and later American) playwrights. Absurdist theatre directly influenced much of European drama for more than ten years and within it lie some of the best plays of the 20th Century.

<http://www.theatrelinks.com/theatre-of-the-absurd-links/>

Visit the links on Existentialism and the Theatre of the Absurd, noting responses to key questions outlined below:

- Once you have learnt how to correctly pronounce existentialism (not the simplest word in the English language), in your own words try to define what it means (more difficult than pronouncing it!).
- Who were some of the key people behind the theory of existentialism?
- What does absurd mean in the context of this movement?
- What were the two decades where the Theatre of the Absurd was impacting on world theatre?
- Today, significant international theatre is seen consistently around London's West End district and New York's Broadway. At the height of its influence, the Theatre of the Absurd and much of European drama centred on which city?
- Name three Absurdist playwrights and list their major plays.
- What was unusual about the plot structure of most Absurdist plays?
- Analyse the pace of an Absurdist play. They were often characterised by what type of movement on the stage?

- What was the status of language in Absurdist plays? Was it important? What role did it play and why?

What are some of the connections between the theory of existentialism and the subject matter of many Absurdist plays?

Using the supplementary materials or information you discover in your research, you must also lead the class in an activity or workshop inspired by Absurdism. Be prepared to run the workshop and explain how the activity is representative of the style.