

# THEA 324 (CRN 15454) : Special Topic ASIAN PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

## Teaching Staff

Course coordinator is Megan Evans (77 Fairlie Tce/302, phone 463-9793, [megan.evans@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:megan.evans@vuw.ac.nz)). Jim Davenport (77 Fairlie Tce/203, phone 463-6842, [james.davenport@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:james.davenport@vuw.ac.nz)) will provide design and technical support for the production. The course administrator is Kushla Beacon, the Theatre Programme Administrator (FT77/307, phone 463-5359, [theatre@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:theatre@vuw.ac.nz)). Jacqui Coates ([jacqueline.coats@gmail.com](mailto:jacqueline.coats@gmail.com)) will be assisting with vocal coaching on the production.

## Class Times and Venue

Second trimester. Lecture/Seminar sessions Tue, Wed 9-10:50am, Fri 10-11:50am, 225 Aro Street.

## Additional information

Any additional information, or changes to the course, will be announced in class and posted on the Theatre Programme notice boards on Level 3 of 77 Fairlie Terrace.

## Required Texts:

*Thea 324 Asian Performance Practices Course Reader*. Available from Student Notes, cost \$25.87  
*Chinese Theater: From Its Origins to the Present Day*, edited by Colin Mackerras. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983. Available from Vic Books, cost \$46.95; also on 2-hour reserve in the main library.

## Course Aims

This course will investigate cultural contexts, theoretical foundations, and performance techniques of Chinese theatre, especially *xiqu* (Chinese opera) as a basis for exploration and staging of American playwright Charles Mee's adaptation of Guan Hanqing's play *Injustice Done to Dou'E*, also called *Snow in June*, written in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). As with *xiqu*, Mee's adaptation incorporates music extensively and gives the opportunity to investigate the core *xiqu* aesthetic of synthesis of singing and stylised movement in the production. The musical score, however, is based on American folk music rather than *xiqu* musical structures so the challenge of the project is to find theatrically effective ways to integrate traditional Chinese and contemporary western performance elements on the stage.

## Course Objectives

By the completion of this course, students should have:

- A sound understanding of basic aesthetic principles underlying the Asian form being studied
- Investigated a number of major cultural and historical forces at work in the development of the form
- Gained practical experience in performance techniques of the studied form
- Gained practical experience in cross-cultural adaptation of performance techniques and texts
- Developed their understanding of and skills in acting as an art form
- Have increased their technical theatre skills, in lighting, design, publicity, etc.

## Course Content

The main elements of the course will be:

- 1) Extensive training in the performance conventions of Chinese *xiqu* – approximately three hours per week of class time will be devoted to this training which includes a series of martial arts kicks, gesture sequences and stage walks;
- 2) Introduction to major periods in Chinese history and related theatrical practices, through lectures, readings and in-depth video analysis;
- 3) Experimentation with the techniques and ideas encountered in elements 1 & 2 to develop our own theatrical approaches to staging, with the goal of finding staging that is rooted in but not necessarily recognizable as *xiqu*;
- 4) Rehearse and stage a full production of Mee’s adaptation, current working title: *Snow in Sweet Summer*.

PLEASE NOTE: This course is very practical and demands consistent commitment and collaboration. It is essential that you **be on time** for all classes and rehearsals. Please wear loose, comfortable clothes which won’t restrict your movement.

## Assessment:

Assessment for this course is internal. More detailed information on each assignment will be given out in class.

- 1) 10-minute presentation on theme or artist related to the production:  
topics and presentation dates to be selected by 18 July;  
presentations given in class during weeks 4-6. 20%
- 2) Practical work: 30%
  - a. *xiqu* training and experimentation (20%)
  - b. discussion leading and participation (10%)
- 3) Production work (artistic contribution, attendance, overall commitment) 20%  
including input from Jacqui Coates, Jim Davenport, Brendon Simpson, and Lee Barry

NOTE: for 2 & 3 above, approximately half the mark will come from your “performance”; half the mark will come from your preparation and reflection as evidenced by your workbook.

- 4) Essay (1500 word minimum): 30%
  - a. Reflection and analysis of the journey of the production and its results in performance, including critique of your own contribution to that process and product.

WORKBOOK 1 is **DUE Friday 17 August** (you’ll get a “mid-term” assessment of practical and production work to date)

WORKBOOK 2 & ESSAY are **DUE: Friday 12 October** (get it done by noon so you can enjoy the Thea 204 Greek scenes and end of semester party guilt free!)

If you wish to ask for an extension (eg, because of illness, or pressure of work), please do so well before the due date. Unless there are exceptional circumstances (eg, medical reasons, with medical certificate) work handed in late may be penalized, at the discretion of the course coordinator. All projects must be satisfactorily completed for a grade to be awarded. **If work is still outstanding by Friday 26 October, then no grade will be awarded.**

## Relationship Between Assessment and Course Objectives

- 1) The presentation on theme or artist will support the company’s understanding of important themes related to the production, particularly with regard to cross-cultural issues implicated by the project.
- 2) Practical Work: Training in *xiqu* performance techniques, readings, and class discussions will support your understanding of *xiqu*, and some of the major cultural and historical forces at work in its development.

Experimentation with these techniques will increase your understanding of acting and intercultural theatrical practice. Workbooks give an opportunity for you to analyse and articulate your progress.

- 3) Production work will increase your skills in technical aspects of theatre—assessment allows your creative contribution and commitment to be acknowledged. Workbooks give an opportunity for you to analyse and articulate your progress.
- 4) The essay gives you an opportunity to critique the production, as well as reflect on and articulate your creative contribution and analyse the process by drawing connections between theory and practice.

### **Mandatory Course Requirements:**

In order to pass this course, you must complete all assignments, and achieve at least a C grade overall. A high standard of attendance, at least 80%, at classes is required. You must also attend all rehearsals and performances for which you are called.

### **Workload:**

It is always difficult to specify precisely the workload of courses which have a high practical and creative content. The university anticipates that you should be able to devote about 27 hours per week to a 36-point course at the 300-level. Therefore, you should probably expect to spend on average about 21 hours per week (*apart* from class time) in reading, preparation, thinking, writing, and rehearsal. We will try to balance the requirements of the course, but inevitably these hours will be substantially increased during the later phase of rehearsal and the performance period in September and October. **YOU SHOULD THEREFORE TAKE SPECIAL CARE TO MANAGE YOUR WORKLOAD IN THIS COURSE WITH YOUR OTHER COURSEWORK AND COMMITMENTS.** Also, a standard of professionalism includes **attending to your health and general wellbeing** by getting enough sleep and nutrition to function effectively, especially as performance looms.

In practical production work, it is vitally important that students support each other, in a collective and collaborative sense. Please **always** be on time to classes and rehearsals, and **always** take full responsibility for tasks allotted to you, or for which you volunteer.



### **General University policies and statutes**

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar available in hard copy or under 'About Victoria' on the VUW home page at [www.victoria.ac.nz](http://www.victoria.ac.nz).

### **Student and staff conduct**

The Statute on Student Conduct together with the Policy on Staff Conduct ensure that members of the University community are able to work, learn, study and participate in the academic and social aspects of the University's life in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The Statute on Student Conduct contains information on what conduct is prohibited and what steps are to be taken if there is a complaint. For information about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor or refer to the statute on the VUW policy website at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct)

The Policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/staffconduct](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/staffconduct)

### **Academic grievances**

If you have any academic problems with your course you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned; class representatives may be able to help you in this. If you are not satisfied with the result of that

meeting, see the Head of School or the relevant Associate Dean; VUWSA Education Coordinators are available to assist in this process. If, after trying the above channels, you are still unsatisfied, formal grievance procedures can be invoked. These are set out in the Academic Grievance Policy which is published on the VUW website at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/academicgrievances](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/academicgrievances)

### **Academic integrity and plagiarism**

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means *no cheating*. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

*The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.*

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

*Note: It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.*

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning,
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course,
- suspension from the course or the University.

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html)

### **Students with Impairments** (see Appendix 3 of the Assessment Handbook)

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities the same opportunity as other students to demonstrate their abilities. If you have a disability, impairment or chronic medical condition (temporary, permanent or recurring) that may impact on your ability to participate, learn and/or achieve in lectures and tutorials or in meeting the course requirements, please contact the course coordinator as early in the course as possible. Alternatively, you may wish to approach a Student Adviser from Disability Support Services (DSS) to discuss your individual needs and the available options and support on a confidential basis. DSS are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building:

telephone: 463-6070

email: [disability@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:disability@vuw.ac.nz)

The name of your School's Disability Liaison Person is in the relevant prospectus or can be obtained from the School Office or DSS.

### **Student Support**

Staff at Victoria want students to have positive learning experiences at the University. Each faculty has a designated staff member who can either help you directly if your academic progress is causing you concern, or quickly put you in contact with someone who can. In the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences the support contacts are **Dr Allison Kirkman, Murphy Building, room 407** and **Dr Stuart**

**Brock, Murphy Building, room 312.** Assistance for specific groups is also available from the Kaiwawao Māori, Manaaki Pihipihinga or Victoria International.

### ***Manaaki Pihipihinga Programme***

This programme offers:

- Academic mentoring for all Māori & Pacific students at all levels of undergraduate study for the faculties of Commerce & Administration and Humanities & Social Sciences. Contact [Manaaki-Pihipihinga-Programme@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Manaaki-Pihipihinga-Programme@vuw.ac.nz) or phone 463 6015 to register for Humanities & Social Science mentoring and 463 8977 to register for mentoring for Commerce and Administration courses
- Postgraduate support network for the above faculties, which links students into all of the post grad activities and workshops on campus and networking opportunities
- Pacific Support Coordinator who can assist Pacific students with transitional issues, disseminate useful information and provide any assistance needed to help students achieve. Contact; [Pacific-Support-Coord@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Pacific-Support-Coord@vuw.ac.nz) or phone 463 5842.

Manaaki Pihipihinga is located at: 14 Kelburn Parade, back court yard, Room 109 D (for Humanities mentoring & some first year Commerce mentoring) or Room 210 level 2 west wing railway station Pipitea (commerce mentoring space). Māori Studies mentoring is done at the marae.

### ***Student Services***

In addition, the Student Services Group (email: [student-services@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:student-services@vuw.ac.nz)) is available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/)

VUWSA employs Education Coordinators who deal with academic problems and provide support, advice and advocacy services, as well as organising class representatives and faculty delegates. The Education Office (tel. 463-6983 or 463-6984, email at [education@vuwsa.org.nz](mailto:education@vuwsa.org.nz)) is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building.

### **Theatre Facilities**

There are standard requirements regarding conduct within 77 FT, 93 KP and 225 Aro St:

#### Smoking

**Smoking is not permitted.** Please smoke outside and dispose cigarette ends in the ashtray provided outside the main door at 77 FT.

#### Food

Food and beverages (with the exception of water) **may only be consumed in the Green Rooms.** There is strictly no food allowed in the studio theatre, dressing room, film room, library, foyer area, and 93 KP or 225 Aro St (except kitchen area). Strictly no food or drink in the AV suite. Alcoholic drinks are not to be brought onto the premises unless authorized.

#### Green Room

The Green Rooms at 77FT and 93KP are available to students working in the Theatre Programme. **You are expected to clean up after yourselves** (this includes returning any mugs removed from the Green Rooms and washing dishes or operating the dishwasher).

#### Library

Students are encouraged to make full use of the Robert Lord Library at 77 Fairlie Terrace; however, please note that **books and other materials do not leave the building.** Please return books to shelves before you leave the library. There is also a small theatre video collection in the cupboard in the seminar room, for viewing within the building. Apply to the Administrator for the key.

### *End of Class*

Rooms 306 (lecture theatre), 205 (film room), 209 and 305 (seminar rooms), studios, studio foyer, 93 KP and 225 Aro St must have the **desks and chairs returned to order for any following classes or rehearsals**

### Lockers

Lockers are available to majoring Theatre students on Level 0. There are only 52 so once they run out those with double lockers may have to share. Students provide their own lock and key. See the Administrator in room 307. Access your lockers via back stairs through Green Room. Please make sure the outside door to this stairwell remains shut Access will not be available during the trimester break so please take everything with you at the end of this trimester and inform the Administrator if you are not taking a Theatre subject next trimester.

### **Theatre Rules**

Safety and security within the premises occupied by Film and Theatre is the responsibility of everyone who uses these facilities. While we make every effort to ensure that our premises are safe and hazard free, we need the cooperation of all students and visitors.

1. If you have an accident there is a first aid kit in the Green Room. You must fill out an accident report form that you will find in the first aid kit.
2. If you are unsure of the operation of a piece of equipment or feel unsafe in what you are doing, **stop**. Seek advice or help from someone else. Do not put yourself in a dangerous situation.
3. Any student or visitor who discovers an actual or potential hazard must report it without delay to either the Theatre Technician or Administrator or to any other member of staff. Where possible a written report is appreciated.
4. If you are working on the floor of Studio 77 and there is work being done overhead, wear one of the safety helmets provided.
5. Floor traps are an extreme hazard. An open floor trap must never be left unattended.
6. All equipment used in the studios must be handled carefully and in the appropriate manner with due regard to safety. Any breakages or damage must be reported as soon as possible.
7. Drapes, balcony rails and bungee cords are only to be taken down after consultation with the Theatre Technician. Under no circumstances are they to be used for other purposes or removed from the building. They are to be rehung or replaced during pack-out.
8. Equipment, rostra, furniture and drapes are not to be removed from 93KP, 77FT and 225 Aro St without the express permission of the Theatre Technician.
  - Equipment, rostra, furniture, drapes and studio floor are not to be painted or altered in any way without the permission of the Theatre Technician
  - Red theatre chairs are not to be used for classes or rehearsals – only as audience seating during productions
  - Materials necessary for teaching purposes (whiteboards, AV equipment etc.) must be accessible at all times – even when a set is in place
9. All students are expected to assist with security by making sure that doors are locked, windows closed, heaters switched off and the security system activated before the building is vacated. After hours, please ring Security on 5398 (463 5398) to have them check and lock the building.
10. It is the responsibility of individual students to read the safety notices relating to fire, earthquake etc. and act as indicated in the notices.
11. Pack-outs. Mandatory for all personnel involved in the current production. No one is released from pack-out duty until authorized by the supervising technician.

COURSE OUTLINE

Readings listed for each class; CR=Course Reader; HO=Handout (given previous class)

Week	Tuesday	Wednesday	Friday	Other
1	<b>10 July</b> Intro	<b>11 July</b> CONVENTIONS Li and Jiang, “Conventionalisation” in CR	<b>13 July</b> ROLE TYPES Wichman “Role- Specific” in CR (get Handout of script!)	Song sessions
2	<b>17 July</b> THE SCRIPT <i>Snow in Sweet Summer</i> (HO)	<b>18 July</b> SOURCE TEXT Guan, <i>Snow in Midsummer</i> in CR	<b>20 July</b> GENDER Hall and Ames, “Sexism” in CR	Song sessions Auditions/Casting
3	<b>24 July</b> MUSIC Liang, “Chinese Traditional Opera” in CR	<b>25 July</b> YUAN DYNASTY <i>Chinese Theater</i> Chap. II	<b>27 July</b> ACTOR/CHARACTER/ AUDIENCE Yan, “Theatricality” in CR	Rehearsals TBA
4	<b>31 July</b> MING DYNASTY <i>Chinese Theater</i> Chap. III	<b>1 Aug</b> <i>PEONY PAVILION</i> Tang, “Interrupted” in CR	<b>3 Aug</b> Reread Yan “Theatricality” esp re <i>Peony Pavilion</i>	Rehearsals TBA
5	<b>7 Aug</b> QING DYNASTY <i>Chinese Theater</i> Chap. IV	<b>8 Aug</b> JINGJU <i>Chinese Theater</i> Chap. V	<b>10 Aug</b> JINGJU & REGIONAL FORMS Wichmann-Walczak, <i>Judge Bao</i> in CR	Rehearsals TBA
6	<b>14 Aug</b> CULTURAL REVOLUTION <i>Chinese Theater</i> Chap. VI	<b>15 Aug</b> CULT REV <i>The Red Lantern</i> in CR	<b>17 Aug</b> CULT REV Chen, “Family, Village, Nation/State” in CR	Rehearsals TBA WORKBOOK #1 DUE Fri 17 Aug
Break	Set Build TBA			
Break	Rehearsals TBA			
7	<b>4 Sept</b> INTERCULTURAL PRACTICE Shepherd, “Interculturalism” in CR	<b>5 Sept</b> SHAKESPEARE Li, “Chinese Faces of Shakespeare” in CR	<b>7 Sept</b> XIQU for Western Audiences Zeitlin “My year of Peonies” AND Wichmann-Walczak “Ma Bomin” in CR	Rehearsals TBA
8	<b>11 Sept</b> EARLY SPOKEN DRAMA Liu, “Impact of Shinpa” in CR	<b>12 Sept</b> SPOKEN DRAMA Mou Sen, “Interview” and <i>File O</i> in CR	<b>14 Sept</b> Workshop with MTAs, (Volunteers needed to stay through until 1pm)	Rehearsals TBA
9	<b>18 Sept</b> Rehearsal	<b>19 Sept</b> Rehearsal	<b>21 Sept</b> Rehearsal	Rehearsals TBA NOTE: <b>Pack-in Sunday 23 Sept</b>
10	<b>25 Sept</b> Rehearsal	<b>26 Sept</b> Rehearsal	<b>28 Sept</b> Rehearsal	Rehearsals TBA

11	<b>2 Oct</b> Technical Rehearsal if needed	<b>3 Oct</b> No class (evening performance)	<b>5 Oct</b> No class (evening performance)	Preview <b>M 1 Oct</b> Performances <b>T 2 Oct – Sa 6 Oct</b> <b>Pack-out 6 Oct</b>
12	<b>9 Oct</b> Training and Reflection	<b>10 Oct</b> Training and Reflection	<b>12 Oct</b> No class—	Workbook #2 and Essay <b>DUE</b> <b>Fri 12 Oct</b>