

# THEA 324 Special Topic: ASIAN PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

School of English, Film, Theatre, and Media Studies

Trimester 2 2008

36 Points (CRN 15452)

## 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)). Mata Skipper ([mata\\_skipper@gmail.com](mailto:mata_skipper@gmail.com)) will be assisting with martial movement and mask design.

## Class Times and Venue

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

## Additional information

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

Please ensure your current email address is on VUW Student Records.

## Required Texts:

*Thea 324 Asian Performance Practices Course Reader*. Available from Student Notes, cost approximately \$30.00.

## 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 Mary Zimmerman's adaptation of the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West*. 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 studied 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
- Increased their technical theatre skills, in lighting, design, publicity, etc.

### Course Content

The main elements of the course will be:

- 1) Regular 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 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 *Journey to the West*.

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: 20%  
 topics and presentation dates to be selected by 18 July;  
 presentations given in class during weeks 4-7.
- 2) Practical work: 30%
  - a. *xiqu* training and experimentation (20%)
  - b. discussion leading and participation (10%)  
 NOTE: workbooks should evidence consistent attention to readings and class discussions, with reflection on possibilities for integrating this material with your practical work.
- 3) Production work (artistic contribution, attendance, overall commitment) 20%  
 including input from Jim Davenport, Mata Skipper, Horst Sarubin, and Jo Bean.

NOTE: for 2 & 3 above, approximately half the mark will come from your "performance"; half the mark will come from your preparation and reflection (INCLUDING reflection on readings) 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 15 August** (you'll get a "mid-term" assessment of practical and production work to date)

WORKBOOK 2 & ESSAY are **DUE: Friday 10 October** (get it done by noon so you can enjoy the end of semester party guilt free!)

## Extensions and Absolute Deadlines

Unless there are exceptional circumstances (e.g., medical reasons with certificate) work handed in late will lose a grade (e.g. drop from B+ to B, etc.) for each day or part day late, starting from the hour the work is due. Work submitted more than a week late without an extension may not be marked. Requests for extensions must be made to the course coordinator. They will not be given lightly and must be made well before the due date, in writing using the extension form available on Blackboard, attaching any relevant documentation, and must be signed by the course co-ordinator and attached to the report when submitted. Comments on late work will be minimal. **If you fail to hand in work before the one-week deadline, you may be considered as having failed to meet the mandatory course requirements and therefore fail the course.** Extensions will not be granted beyond Mon 20 October, except under exceptional circumstances. The University does not permit the School to accept work after the last day of the examination period.

**Aegrotat** provisions may apply if you are unable to submit your final project for unavoidable reasons. The Aegrotat procedures are listed in Section 6 of the Examination Statute in the University *Calendar*. In such a case you should also contact the course co-ordinator.

**If work is still outstanding by Friday 24 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 Statutes and Policies**

A copy of the General University Statutes and Policies can be found on Blackboard.

## **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 PROGRAMME

Readings listed for each class are from the Course Reader

WK	Mon	Wed	Fri	Other (evening)
1	<b>7 July</b> Intro	<b>9 July</b> “Interculturalism” What are we doing?	<b>11 July</b> Colin Mackerras “Tradition, Change”	
2	<b>14 July</b> Li & Jiang, “Conventionalization”	<b>16 July</b> Wichmann-Walczak “Listening” (through discussion of role types)	<b>18 July</b> Wichmann-Walczak “Listening” (plot/structure)	Evening read thru Day/time TBA
3	<b>21 July</b> Barrett: “Religious Tradition in Chinese Civilization”	<b>23 July</b> Shao “Religion in Xiyou ji”	<b>25 July</b> Shao “Religion in Xiyou ji” cont.	Auditions
4	<b>28 July</b> Thorpe: “Devils, disease and the <i>Chou</i> ”	<b>30 July</b> “Interrupted Dream” from <i>Peony Pavilion</i>	<b>1 Aug</b> 2 Presentations	Rehearsals TBA
5	<b>4 Aug</b> <i>Silang Tan Mu</i> 2 Presentations	<b>6 Aug</b> 3 Presentations	<b>8 Aug</b> Siu: “Cross-dressing up to Power” 2 Presentations	Rehearsals TBA
6	<b>11 Aug</b> <i>Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy</i> 2 Presentations	<b>13 Aug</b> 3 Presentations	<b>15 Aug</b> Gaoxing Jian: <i>The Other Shore</i> 2 Presentations	Rehearsals TBA WORKBOOK #1 <b>DUE Fri 15 August</b>
Break	Build	Build	Build	
Break	Rehearsal	Rehearsal	Rehearsal	(Daily Rehearsal: Times and calls TBA)
7	<b>1 Sept</b> 2 presentations	<b>3 Sept</b> 2 presentations	<b>5 Sept</b> 2 presentations	Nightly Rehearsals
8	<b>8 Sept</b> Lee “Re-taking Tiger Mountain by Television”	<b>10 Sept</b> Mou Sen, “Interview” and <i>File O</i>	<b>12 Sept</b>	Nightly Rehearsals
9	<b>15 Sept</b> Rehearsal	<b>17 Sept</b> Rehearsal	<b>19 Sept</b> Rehearsal	Nightly Rehearsals <b>NOTE: Pack-in Sun 21 Sept.</b>
10	<b>22 Sept</b> Rehearsal	<b>24 Sept</b> Rehearsal	<b>26 Sept</b> Rehearsal	Nightly Rehearsals
11	<b>29 Sept</b> Tech Rehearsal if needed	<b>1 Oct</b> No class <b>OPENING!</b>	<b>3 Oct</b> No class (eve perf)	Dress Rehearsals and <b>PERFORMANCES</b>
12	<b>6 Oct</b> Training and Reflection	<b>8 Oct</b> Training and Reflection	<b>10 Oct</b> No Class	WORKBOOK #2 and <b>ESSAY DUE Fri 10 October</b>