

Theatre Studies

Transition
Program



Swinburne Senior Secondary College

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Study Rationale...

Theatre as a form of cultural expression has been made and performed for audiences from the earliest times and is an integral part of all cultures. Theatre is ever evolving and exists as entertainment, education, ritual, an agent for change, a representation of values and a window on society. Theatre practice has developed and has influenced cultures over many centuries through a wide variety of productions in diverse spaces and venues for a range of audiences. Theatre makers work as playwrights, actors, directors and designers, producing theatre for diverse purposes.

Through the study of VCE Theatre Studies students develop, refine and enhance their analytical, evaluative and critical thinking skills as well as their expression, problem-solving, collaborative and communication skills. They work both individually and in collaboration with others to interpret scripts. Through study and practice, students develop their aesthetic sensibility, including an appreciation for the art form of theatre, interpretive skills, interpersonal skills and theatre production skills.

The study of theatre, in all its various forms, prepares students for further study in theatre production, theatre history, communication, writing, acting, direction and design at tertiary level. VCE Theatre Studies also prepares students for further learning in vocational educational training settings or for industry or community-related pathways.

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Unit Study Overview...

Unit 3: Producing theatre

In this unit students develop an interpretation of a script through the three stages of the theatre production process: planning, development and presentation. Students specialise in two production roles, working collaboratively, creatively and imaginatively to realise the production of a script. They use knowledge developed during this process to analyse and evaluate the ways work in production roles can be used to interpret script excerpts previously unstudied. Students develop knowledge and apply elements of theatre composition, and safe and ethical working practices in the theatre.

Students attend a performance selected from the prescribed VCE Theatre Studies Unit 3 Playlist and analyse and evaluate the interpretation of the script in the performance. The Playlist is published annually on the VCAA website.

Unit 4: Presenting an interpretation

In this unit students study a scene and an associated monologue. They initially develop an interpretation of the prescribed scene. This work includes exploring theatrical possibilities and using dramaturgy across the three stages of the production process. Students then develop a creative and imaginative interpretation of the monologue that is embedded in the specified scene. To realise their interpretation, they work in production roles as an actor and director, or as a designer.

Students' work for Areas of Study 1 and 2 is supported through analysis of a performance they attend. The performance must be selected from the VCE Theatre Studies Unit 4 Playlist. The Playlist is published annually on the VCAA website. Students analyse acting, direction and design and the use of theatre technologies, as appropriate to the production.

In conducting their work in Areas of Study 1 and 2, students develop knowledge in and apply safe and ethical theatre practices.



A word on Acting and Production Roles...

Acting

At Swinburne Senior every year the Year 12 Theatre Studies class is comprised of a variety of students. Traditionally the class has been made up of: (i) those who have moved into the Year 12 Study from Units 1 and 2 Theatre Studies at the College, (ii) those from within the College who have not completed either Unit 1 and or Unit 2 and (iii) those outside the College, enrolling into the College for the first time. It needs to be understood that acting is not a compulsory part of the Unit 3 course structure. Acting is one of a number of production roles that can be selected. So, given the non-compulsory nature of acting within Unit 3 and the diverse composition of the class, an 'audition process' forms a crucial part of determining the allocation of acting roles in the Play selected for staging in Unit 3. From the outset it needs to be noted that given the size of the class, the diversity of students enrolled and the physical nature of the performance space we have available, not all students can be guaranteed an acting role in the selected play for Unit 3. Students initially wishing to select acting, will need to participate fully and successfully in the audition process. These auditions will be used to determine whether you are offered an acting role in the selected play and what that part will be. The play itself is generally performed over 4 nights in the Production Week, so in the past we have often aimed to have two casts operating (each having 2 performance nights). This allows us to maximise the number of acting roles available. If an acting role is not offered in Unit 3, you will need to select another production role from the list prescribed by VCAA.

If you are successful in obtaining an acting role, you will also need to commit yourself to all Wednesday afternoon non-class based rehearsals (1pm - 3.30pm). **This means that those offered an acting role are unable to do a VET on a Wednesday afternoons during the 1.30pm - 4.30pm time slot.** There will also be two weekend rehearsals prior to the production week (proposed dates are listed here, but firm dates will be advertised early in Term 1). All non-class based rehearsals are compulsory for all actors, assistant directors and stage-managers. Those working in other Areas of Stagecraft will be required to attend these non-class based rehearsals at specifically scheduled times throughout the whole of the rehearsal period.



Is Theatre Studies a Folio subject?...

The short answer to this question is **NO**. There is no SAT (School Assessed Task) in Units 3-4 Theatre Studies.

However, at Swinburne in Unit 3 Theatre Studies you are required to maintain a significant **Production Journal**. This **Journal** needs to include documented evidence of a range of research and work that you have carried out in the production of the play at each of the three stages of the production process (Planning, Development and Presentation), along with detailed examples of specific levels of collaboration you have engaged in.

In Unit 4, when the focus of the course shifts to the development of a theatrical interpretation of a prescribed scene and monologue (published annually by the VCAA), you will also need to complete a **Scene Interpretation Booklet** covering the development and suggested implementation of your interpretation of the scene and monologue from the perspective of either actor/director or designer.

Both the **Journal and Booklet** are pieces of coursework and are not in themselves SAC's - they are not scored, so again, **NO** there isn't a Folio in Year 12 Theatre Studies.

If an acting role is not offered to you in Unit 3 and Acting continues to interest you, then in Unit 4 you will be completely free to select Acting and Direction as your focus. Over the years a number of our students who focussed on non-acting Production Roles in Unit 3 (lighting, sound, costume, make-up, set, properties etc) successfully transitioned into Acting and Direction in Unit 4, some achieving very high study scores. Your Production Role choices in Unit 3 do not necessarily lock you into choices for Unit 4. There are no auditioning processes in Unit 4.

Production Roles

Over the course of Study, students undertake work in a range of Production Roles. These are prescribed by the VCAA as:

- Actor
- Director
- Set Designer
- Properties Designer
- Costume Designer
- Make-up Designer
- Lighting Designer
- Sound Designer

In Unit 3&4 students will primarily work in 2 of the roles. Most students will work within these 2 roles across both units. However, it is possible to swap to new roles in Unit 4.



2021: *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

Possible Play for 2022...

The play that is up for consideration for 2022 will be the one act, unit set comedic farce 'Black Comedy' by British playwright Peter Shaffer.

You will know by late Jan as to whether we be producing this or another play. Whatever play is selected (teacher choice), we will be applying for the performance rights in early Feb.

BLACK COMEDY

Struggling sculptor Brindsley Miller and his fiancée, Carol, are having a party with the aim of impressing Carol's bombastic father, Colonel Melkett, and millionaire Georg Bamberger. They hope the two men might purchase some of Brindsley's sculptures. Without permission, they have borrowed the furniture and effects of their fussy neighbor, Harold, to make their own flat more presentable. Just before the guests arrive, the main fuse blows, plunging the flat into darkness. What follows is a frantic romp with unexpected visitors, mistaken identities, and surprises lurking in every dark corner! Only we, the audience, can see the action that ensues in the dark. As you might expect, the results are chaotic, disastrous " and very funny, indeed!

This Peter Shaffer one-act play is a wonderful example of modern British comedic farce and is a fusion of a range of Theatre Styles (Eclectic) - Comedic Farce, Comedic Naturalism, Sight and Physical Theatre.



Black Comedy - various productions

Elements of Theatre Composition...

Learning the Elements of Theatre Composition is crucial in Unit 3-4 Theatre Studies. They form part of the language of analysis of theatre interpretation and work carried out within specific Production Roles. They are also tools for the ways in which you will explore and develop script for production across the whole of Units 3-4.

VCAA understands the Elements of Theatre Composition may include the following:

- **Cohesion** – the unity and balance of various aspects of the interpretation.
- **Motion** – the movement or implied movement of actors and design features in the theatre space. This may include position, pattern, arrangement, proportion and spatial flow.
- **Rhythm** – the pace, timing and tempo within the interpretation.
- **Emphasis** – aspects of the interpretation are given a particular focus, importance or prominence.
- **Contrast** – juxtaposition of seemingly different or opposing aspects or qualities within the interpretation.
- **Variation** – changes to the dynamics of the interpretation, as may be evident in the use of tension, conflict, intensity, energy and use of the space.

Practitioners use elements of theatre composition to organise components of a theatre production to create a deliberate effect, realising their aims and intentions and/or those of the creative production team.

Elements of theatre composition can be used to give structure to the interpretation or the way it is presented on stage in performance to an audience. These elements can also be used to encourage or lead the audience to engage in the work. They can be applied individually or in combination, in any theatre style, used within any production role and at any stage of the production process.

Audition Process 2022...

You will be provided with vacation copy of the play we are intending to produce in 2022: Black Comedy and an Audition Booklet.

If you intend to try out for an acting part you need to work on developing one of the audition pieces over the summer vacation for your audition presentation. In the first week of Term 1 we will establish how many auditions need to be held and these will be held in the second week of the Term (on a Wednesday afternoon).

PLEASE NOTE: Please be aware that the major rehearsal program for the production always takes place on Wednesday afternoons. If you have any VET commitments on Wednesday afternoons you will not be able to take on a major acting role in the production, but one of the minor roles would be more than possible. Also, if you can't commit to the rehearsal schedule, you will also be unable to take on a major acting role. NOTE: Some rehearsals are held in normal class time.

THE AUDITION DECISION.

Audition decisions are based on the demonstration of the following and **all audition decisions are final and discussions regarding decisions will not be entered into** (as is the case in any normal audition process).

1. The use of informed research.

You should do some research on the play that your chosen monologue comes from and this research should help inform your interpretation decisions.

2. The use of Acting skills.*

Memorisation, Voice (accent, vocalisation), movement (including stillness), gesture, focus, intention and belief

3. The creation of character.

Motivation, status and personal given circumstance

4. The creation of a context.

Time (historical setting), place/setting and cultures

5. The use of directorial decisions.

Blocking, incorporation and interpretation of stage directions, establishment and use of a theatrical style and genre (Comedic naturalism, Farce, Metatheatre or Heighten Naturalism etc), establishment of the actor-audience relationship

6. The use of production areas (other than acting - this will be handled by a brief Q&A) and may include a brief discussion of the possible use of: costume, properties and or set pieces.

**For each of the Audition pieces you will need to use a UK accent. In Black Comedy each character has a UK accent of differing types (could be Irish, Scottish or Welsh as well), so I need to see how you manage the use of an accent. It doesn't need to be perfect, just an attempt at this stage. You can do a Google search for accent tutorials.*

NOTIFICATION

Decisions regarding an offer of an acting part will be notified about a week after the auditions.



Vacation CourseWORK...

SCRIPT READING and INITIAL DRAMATURGY COURSEWORK

PLEASE ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING OVER THE VACATION.

This homework will be the first piece of CourseWORK for 2022 and will form the basis of some of initial discussion early in the Planning Stage of the production process. You will need to read the vacation copy of Black Comedy (hereafter called BC) and watch one of the Youtube versions over the break. You will need to return the vacation copies of the script early next year.

***SUGGESTION:** When doing this vacation homework try to do it in 25min blocks separated by 5min breaks, So for the readings, 25min of reading and note taking then break for 5min (get up walk around, that sort of thing), then do another cycle until the play and initial notes are finished. Give yourself a longer break before you tackle the finer details of the questions, but use the 25min + 5min Break cycle when dealing with the questions too.*

1. Thoroughly read through the provided vacation copy of the script.
2. Who is the playwright and what other theatre works has he written?
3. When was the play first written and who where the original actors?
4. Does the play have a distinctive Theatre Style/s? If so, what is it/are they and how is it/are they reflected in the script?
5. Do some research on the play's Theatre Style/s and outline what it is/they are.
6. Create a full character list and briefly describe each character.
7. What function does each of these characters have within the structure of the play?
8. Draw up a list of all sounds/effects that are directly referenced or may be implied in the play (indicate the script page number for these).
9. Outline how the Style/s of the play might impact and influence ideas for design (set, props, costume, make-up, lighting and sound) HINT: Have a close look at how this has been already done on stage.
10. Outline the contexts (time, place, setting and cultures) established in the play.

11. How might these contextual considerations influence ideas for design possibilities for the production on stage?

Terminology...

Theatre Styles

Theatre styles are the traditions of theatre that are accepted as conventional and are particular to specific times, places, peoples and cultures. Theatre styles and their associated conventions are not static, constant or definitive but are indicative. A theatre style might indicate an historical period or political movement. In modern theatre it's understood that theatre styles are fluid and experimental and evolve in response to a range of contexts and purposes.

Examples of theatre styles: Greek/Roman theatre, Elizabethan or Shakespearian theatre, Comedic Farce, Heightened Naturalism, Naturalism, Social Realism, Metatheatre, Verbatim theatre, Poor theatre, Epic theatre, Absurdist theatre etc. Each of these has different sets of somewhat fluid codes and conventions relating to acting, direction and design etc.

Design possibilities

These are the possibilities that the script presents for the use and operation of specific Design Production Areas: Set, Properties, Costume, Make-up, Lighting and Sound.

References...

NOTE: All of these Youtube versions of the play are amateur pieces of theatre and all have their weaknesses and strengths

Youtube versions of the play: *these are worth a look at for the purposes of costume, set designs, properties and the levels of sight-humour used in the farce.*

Crucial Dates for Unit 3...

The dates below may alter due to a range of different circumstances. All alterations will be notified ahead of time where possible. Please refer to Compass 'Learning Tasks' and Google Classroom for updates and any altered dates.

Start of Orientation Program	Feb 1
Auditions	Feb 9
Acting Offers announced	Feb 18
Unit 1 and 2 refresher (<i>all day - if needed</i>)	Feb 16
Wed Rehearsals begin (1pm - 3pm)	Feb 23
Theatre Visit	Mar 2 (TBC) - Fun Home
SAC #1 - Outcome 3 - Analysis & Evaluation	Mar 11
SAC #2 - Outcome 2 Part 1- Interpreting a Script	Mar 25
End of Term 1	April 8
Set Construction begins	April 11
Vacation Rehearsals	Apr 20-21
Start of Term 2	April 26
SAC #2 - Outcome 2 Part 2 - Interpreting a Script	May 6
Weekend Rehearsals	May 21-22
Production Week	May 23-29
Opening Night	May 25
Closing Night	May 28
Set striking and storage	May 29
SAC #3 Outcome 1 - Journal & Evaluation	June 3
All Coursework due	June 10
Last day of Unit 3	June 10

Online facilities to be used in 2022...

In 2022 we will use Google Classroom, Google Chat and Google Drive as our main means of communication and information storage. You will access these through your standard @sssc.vic.edu.au login and password.

So early in 2022, we will take a little time in class for you all to become members of the new Theatre Studies Year 12 2022 Classroom and Chat Group.

We will also make use of the Trybooking online ticketing system when it comes to selling tickets to the Unit 3 Production. We have used this over the last two years and it has been very very successful. We may also establish a Production based Facebook Group.



Units 1-2 refresher...

It will be more than likely that we will have several students enrolled in Year 12 Theatre who have not done Year 11 Theatre Studies either here or at another school. Whilst having done Year 12 Theatre Studies is in no way a prerequisite for Year 12 Theatre Studies, it is nonetheless crucial that you start the year with some terminology, concepts and content under your belt.

I have therefore set aside a whole Wednesday in the first weeks of Term 1 to focus as a refresher for Units 1 and 2. If you haven't done these at the College or another school or you simply want to take a refresher and remind yourself of key material from Units 1 and 2 then please mark the date, time and location below in your calendars.



Wednesday Feb 16
10am - 2pm (with breaks)
Cottage Theatre

We will be looking at TERMINOLOGY, PRODUCTION ROLES and AREAS, THEATRE STYLES and CONVENTIONS, ELEMENTS OF THEATRE COMPOSITION, DRAMATURGY and RESEARCH, THEATRE TECHNOLOGY, SAFE and ETHICAL WORK PRACTICES.

Contacting Mark...

My preferred contact is via email (below). Once we get the Google Classroom and Google Chat Group up and running in early 2022, you will be able to contact me there. I normally check emails and Google Classroom/Chat during business hours Mon-Fri (8.30am - 4.30pm). I **am not contactable over the weekends unless I'm at school for rehearsals**. The College policy is that you are not to contact me via my private mobile number and I ask that you respect this. I have no objections to being contacted via Google Chat during normal school business hours for class related purposes (see below).

NOTE: I teach part-time at the College, so my preferred days for contact are Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

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