What is Theatre?
What is Theatre

• Comes from the Greek word Theatron
  • “seeing place”

• The word theatre can be used to describe many different things.
  • The architecture or place where theatre is seen.
  • A movie theatre.
  • Theatre of war.
  • Operating theatre.

• The architecture of theatre has evolved greatly over time beginning with Classical theatre.

• Besides the architecture theatre is…….
Theatre Architecture
A Collaborative Art

• Theatre is a thing and a happening.
• Theatre is a collaborative art form with dozens of people specializing in different skills coming together to put on a production.
• Troupe
  • A group or company of actors who have come together to perform and put on plays.
• Early Troupes include
  • Lord Chamberlains Men (Queen Elizabeth I)/ The Kings Men (King James I)
    • William Shakespeare
  • Theatre Illustre, La Troupe de Moliere
    • founded by Moliere (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin)
Theatre as an Occupation

- Not only does theatre represent a structure but also a job or passion.
- Life in theatre involves long hours and stressful situations.
  - Rehearsals usually are 4-6 weeks.
- To put on a production, several different crafts are necessary. Both on stage and off.
The Jobs of Theatre
The Jobs of Theatre

- Producing
  - Financial backing
  - Top boss.
- Directing
  - Interpretation of the script.
  - Works primarily with the actors.
- Acting
  - Character development.
  - Brings the story to life.
- Designing
  - Creates the world for the actors to exist in.
  - All necessary drawings needed to execute the design.
- Building/Electricians
  - Responsible for building all design element.
  - Responsible for hanging all lighting equipment.
- Crewing
  - Responsible for all backstage jobs during the run of the production.
  - This includes scenery, props and electricians.
- Playwriting
  - Creates the story.
  - Character development.
- Management
  - Includes stage manager and house manager.
The Jobs of Theatre

- Not every production is the same, people will take on multiple roles.
- Through history, the function and jobs of theatre have changed greatly.
- Aeschylus and Moliere both directed, acted and wrote their own plays.
- Shakespeare was not only the owner of Lord Chamberlain’s Men but also an actor and playwright.
Theatre vs. Play
Theatre vs. Play

- Theatre is the occupation, or structure
- The play is what is being done or performed.
  - Play is also used to describe what we do. We play.
  - Theatre can be related to playing rooted back to Greek theatre.
    - Festival of Dionysius
    - Roman sporting events.
  - To play as a child could be related to dressing up and pretending to be someone else.
- The difference between the two is also clear.
  - Theatre evokes and inspires us. It educates and improves us.
  - Theatre is an art.
What Is Art?
Art

• Simply stated art is
  • Something observed.
  • A reflection of life.
  • An extension of how we think, feel and live our lives.
  • A means to express ourselves.

• Three categories of art
  • Literary
  • Visual
  • Performing
Theatre as an Art
Theatre as an Art

- Education
- Imagination
- To enhance and bring life to an idea.
- To present a specific viewpoint and purpose to something.
- Theatre like all the performing arts require an interpreter and creator.

The Performing Arts Vs. Literary and Visual Arts.

- All different forms of art are selective.
  - Reading a book vs. looking at a painting.
  - Listening to music.
  - Watching a Shakespearean play.
Why Do We Attend Theatre?
Reasons to Attend Theatre

- The exchange between the actor and the audience.
  - The special connection that is made.
- Theatre is the foundation of all forms of drama.
  - Comedy and tragedy were established by the Greeks.
  - Every time we see a performance, it is connected to history in some way.
- The ability of theatre to incorporate profound and provocative material about the human condition.
The Unique Quality of Theatre
The Unique Quality of Theatre

• The impersonation of a character is a very important aspect of theatre. This is one reason it stands alone from other art forms.

• To separate the actor from the character, the Greeks would use masks to inform the audience that the actor was impersonating a character.

• Masks have been used in several cultures throughout time.

• Theatre is a living breathing art.
Performance and Theatre

- Theatre is performance.

- Actors interact with each other in the presence of the audience.
  - Presentational: The actor directly acknowledges the audience.
    - Bertolt Brecht appealed directly to the audience.
    - Epic Theatre
    - Making sure the audience feels detached from the action.
  - Representational: The actor does not acknowledge the audience. A story is being unveiled as the audience watches. They engage without presence.

- Theatre is a live performance.
Live Performance

- The audience effects the actors, and the actors effect the audience. They are all breathing the same air.
- Relationships between audience members develop.
  - They are separate going in, but once in the theatre they experience the show as a group. The audience grows together. They share the experience.
- Film and television does not have this unique quality.
  - The audience is separated and disengaged.
  - Our attention span wanders.
  - This is why theatre has not disappeared from society.
- Instant action. The play unfolds immediately in front of the audience. All mistakes are witnessed by the audience. This is the excitement of live performance.
Scripted Performance

• Theatre is rehearsed prior to performance.
  • The script has been prepared and the actor has rehearsed.
  • What other types of live performance exist?
  • How are they different?

• The script is an imperfect record.
  • Every production differs, multiple versions of the same script exist.

• The script helps us tell our history and gives insight to our past.
Conclusion

- Theatre is a production, a combination of multiple elements to help tell a story and educate an audience. All of these elements will be discussed in class.
- The heart of theatre is the relationship between the audience and the performer.
- This is why we attend theatre.