

Popular Entertainment in the Long Eighteenth Century

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As recent research has embraced the multiplicity of dramatic forms included in an evening at the theatre in our period, how might we teach students about the “whole show” on the eighteenth-century stage? How might such knowledge enhance students’ understanding of drama and theatre history? These questions sprang from a panel that I organised with Diana Solomon at the 2010 ASECS meeting (“The Whole Show on the Eighteenth-Century Stage”) and discussions in our subsequent roundtables on teaching the drama and theatre of the period (2011, 2012) and prompted the idea for this course. Drama anthologies usually contain the most important mainpiece plays of the long eighteenth century, focusing on the “literary”, but what about the popular pantomimes, farces, satires, burlettas and other afterpieces that I tell my students in ENGL 370 Theatre History: The Long Eighteenth Century made up such a crucial part of the period’s entertainment scene? If it is indeed important to consider the “whole show” when evaluating eighteenth-century theatre, which works should we be examining? And if the revenue from the spectacular pantomimes performed at Christmas paid for the legitimate drama staged as mainpieces for the rest of the year, including Shakespeare, shouldn’t we then turn our attention to such forms in order to understand their appeal to an eighteenth-century audience? In order to develop a detailed and nuanced picture of the eighteenth-century stage, surely students need to consider the popular element of the theatre of the period, as well as its artistic achievement. It is important for students to realise, as scholars have now done, that these two facets of eighteenth-century theatre might not in fact be completely distinct.

Context

This proposal is for a new course currently being taught in the Department of English at McGill University in the Fall semester of 2012. It is taught by Fiona Ritchie, Assistant Professor of Drama and

Theatre, and was designed with assistance from Thomas Fish, a PhD candidate in English, who worked as my Research Assistant in the summer of 2012. One of Tom's tasks as my RA was to suggest primary and secondary texts that might work well for classroom use in this course, following a broad course outline written by me that suggested topics and types of entertainment to consider. I was delighted with the results of Tom's careful research in this area and am happy to share the course we developed with ASECS members.

ENGL 431 Studies in Drama is a course slot that can be used for an instructor to teach an advanced undergraduate seminar focused on any aspect of drama and theatre studies. It is frequently used by faculty to teach within their areas of specialisation, thereby offering undergraduates an insight into current academic research. The class meets twice a week for 80 minutes each time over 13 weeks. Students in McGill's Department of English can major in one of three areas: Literature, Cultural Studies or Drama and Theatre. This course is primarily aimed at Drama and Theatre majors but has also been designed to appeal to those majoring in Literature and Cultural Studies. It therefore somewhat uniquely brings together students from all three of the Department's streams in one classroom.

Topics

I initially envisaged a broad range of topics for this course that went beyond the strictly theatrical, including forms of entertainment such as public executions, scientific displays, asylum visits, coffee houses and so on. Tom was able to uncover a great deal of material on such forms, including panoramas (Robert Barker's *London from the Roof of the Albion Mills*, 1792-93), magic (Philip Astley's *Natural Magic*, 1785), quackery (depicted in prints by Hogarth and others) and chapmen (Leslie Shephard's 1978 study of how literature circulated alongside ambulatory popular entertainment forms). As a result of time constraints and to take into account the availability of texts, I decided to focus the course primarily on more theatrical types of entertainment, mainly those which appeared as afterpieces or were staged in illegitimate theatres. However, students will be encouraged to explore these other forms in their own research.

The course opens by considering the nature of the popular, encouraging students to develop a working definition of “popular entertainment” which we will continue to refine throughout the semester, as well as to interrogate the idea of the popular and the cultural connotations it holds. Popular entertainment forms are then introduced through a reading of Book VII of Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, which also opens up a discussion of the cultural anxieties and controversies surrounding such forms. The first popular entertainment texts studied are pantomimes, arguably the most important popular genre of the period. In this unit we consider the genre’s ability to critique topical issues as well as Garrick’s attempt to institutionalise this much-maligned theatrical form. The relationship between popular entertainment and the “legitimate” theatre is explored through Fielding’s *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, and Poole’s *Hamlet Travestie* allows us to examine the burlesquing of Shakespeare, the dramatist most frequently performed on the eighteenth-century stage. The genre of melodrama, which was to become so crucial to the nineteenth-century theatre, is introduced through Holcroft’s *A Tale of Mystery*, and we also consider early nineteenth-century “hippo-mania”, which Michael Gamer argues shifted the theatrical terrain of the period. Throughout the course, the licensing and censorship of the stage is a key issue. One class is devoted to the implications of the 1737 Licensing Act for popular entertainment and another examines the Parliamentary Enquiry into the State of the Drama of 1832 and its implications for popular entertainment in the early nineteenth century as a way of rounding off the course.

The secondary texts chosen to complement primary source readings are designed to allow broader theoretical issues to be introduced into the course where possible. For example, Matthew Kinservik argues that Foote used his play *The Capuchin* in order to combat charges that he was a sodomite, which allows us to consider eighteenth-century entertainment in the context of sexuality studies. Similarly, Bickerstaffe’s *The Padlock* is coupled with Julie Carlson’s article on the rise of Mungo to consider issues of race in eighteenth-century Britain, particularly with regard to abolitionism. Some time is allotted to an exploration of pleasure gardens and fairs, which allows for a reading of Peter Stallybrass and Allon White’s influential account of the politics of carnival.

Instructional methods

The class is capped at 30 students, which enables the instructor to employ student-centred learning strategies. The first half of the class is spent in presenting the day's texts and issues and eliciting responses to the readings from students in class discussion. I then break students into groups of about four and have them work on a task, for example answering specific questions about an historical document related to the performance of popular entertainment (such as Leigh Hunt's essay on the social function of pantomime), or analysing a particular thematic or structural issue in a primary text, before sharing their findings with the class. I find that such group work gives the shyer students an opportunity to contribute to discussion even if they are reticent about speaking in front of the whole class.

McGill's online learning management system, myCourses, is used to archive course materials (syllabus documents, assignments, handouts, Powerpoint presentations, etc), to provide resources for further research and to facilitate communication outside of the classroom. Perhaps its most important function is to provide discussion boards where students post their feedback on the student-led in-class performances of popular entertainment pieces (see below).

Assignments

Key to my approach to teaching eighteenth-century theatre is a drive to help students to understand that these pieces were designed to be performed as well as read. This is particularly crucial for the study of popular entertainment, since many of these genres, notably pantomime, were designed primarily or only as performance pieces and did not rely on printed texts. When scripts do exist, it is also important to try to reconstruct the event beyond what appears on the printed page. For example, what would the precise impact of the musical accompaniment to a melodrama have been? To this end, students engage in a practical assignment worth 35% of the final grade for the course in which they work with a partner to direct a short scene from one of the entertainments studied. The goal is to produce something like a performance essay, in which they argue a thesis about the piece in question. Rather than (or in addition to) producing an entertaining performance of the play, students are asked to think at all times about how

performance helps them better to understand the nature of eighteenth-century popular entertainment. The assignment is examined through substantial written work and other students in the class are required to respond to the performances they see. Full details of this assignment (and others) are included with this submission.

A research assignment has been designed in order to allow students to consider popular entertainment forms beyond the material covered in the course. Following a trip to McGill's rich holdings on eighteenth-century popular entertainment in its Rare Books Library (which contains, for example, a substantial puppet theatre collection, many chapbooks and editions of a variety of farces, burlettas and spectacles) and a workshop on research methods and resources, students will choose one text or form (for example public executions or Barker's panorama) to explore in detail and they will present their findings to the class in a poster session (in a smaller class I would use in-class presentations), arguing for the inclusion of their object of study next time the course is taught. If they choose, students may develop this research as they write their 15-page final paper for the course.

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In short, this course aims to refine students' knowledge of eighteenth-century drama and theatre by developing their understanding of what an evening at the theatre entailed to take account of the types of entertainment offered in the afterpiece slot and those staged at "illegitimate" venues. In addition to exploring a wide variety of dramatic forms, students also consider the forces that shaped the period's theatre scene (such as stage legislation) and learn to critique the idea of the popular, whilst encountering a variety of methodological and theoretical approaches to the material studied. Student-centred learning strategies are employed to increase engagement and allow students to develop independently the skills needed to read these often ephemeral forms. The course also teaches the craft of research through its assignments and encourages students to pursue their own research questions. Finally, as befits a drama and theatre course, the directing assignment allows the class to explore the texts studied as performance pieces. This unique element of the course enriches student understanding of popular entertainment in the long eighteenth century.

ENGL 431 Studies in Drama: Popular Entertainment in the Long Eighteenth Century

Winter Term 2016

TR 11.35-12.55

Arts West 25 – please remove outdoor footwear before entering the classroom

Professor Ritchie

Office: Arts 325

Phone: 514-398-4400 extension 09995 (no voicemail)

Email: fiona.ritchie@mcgill.ca

Office hours: Tuesdays 1.30-3.30 pm, or by appointment

Prerequisite: none

Expected student preparation: students enrolled in this course will ideally already have taken ENGL 230 Introduction to Theatre Studies and/or some drama and theatre coursework at the 300 level (preferably ENGL 370 Theatre History: The Long Eighteenth Century)

Description

This course explores a variety of forms of popular entertainment in England in the long eighteenth century (c. 1725-1832). Traditional theatre flourished in this period but the division of the theatrical evening into mainpiece and afterpiece allowed new forms to develop beyond the conventional tragedies and comedies that were staged in the main slots. Afterpiece forms such as farce, satire, burletta, burlesque and most notably pantomime developed at this time and it was often unclear whether audience members paid to see the mainpiece or to experience the exciting new forms of entertainment that made up the second half of the evening. In the early nineteenth century, the growth of the “illegitimate” theatre scene gave rise to additional new types of entertainment, including melodrama, hippodrama and travesty. Popular entertainment was closely linked with the licensing and censorship of the eighteenth-century stage and we will explore how legislation influenced dramatic creativity. Throughout the course we will also interrogate the idea of the popular and the cultural connotations it holds. In addition to reading and discussing theatre history documents and play texts, students will also participate in practical workshops in which we will seek to understand these forms of popular entertainment through performance.

This course was co-designed with Tom Fish and won the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Innovative Course Design Prize in 2012.

Learning outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a wide-ranging knowledge of a variety of popular forms of theatre in the long eighteenth century.
- Understand the place of legislation and censorship in the development of the drama of the period.
- Critique the idea of the popular and analyse its place in theatre history.
- Consider the plays studied both as literary texts and as performance pieces
- Demonstrate familiarity with a wide range of historical sources and ability to read eighteenth-century texts (and typeface) fluently
- Effectively research and present topics related to the course orally, in performance and in writing

Course content

- The course will primarily examine the following types of popular entertainment and we will read representative texts from each genre: pantomime, burlesque, Shakespeare travesty, satire, farce, melodrama, burletta, hippodrama.
- We will also analyse discourses and critiques of the popular and consider legislation and censorship of the eighteenth-century stage.
- Emphasis will also be placed on conducting original research into our subject and some class time will be allotted to further this end. Students will be able to explore topics beyond the syllabus in their own research if they choose (e.g. coffee houses, panoramas, quackery, etc).
- An exploration of popular entertainment in performance is also a central component of this course.

Required texts

Note that this course is **reading intensive** (as is appropriate for the 400 level). Please plan accordingly.

- Primary texts will be provided in a coursepack available from the McGill University Bookstore.
- Secondary texts will be posted on MyCourses.

Please bring texts to class on the day they are assigned. Secondary texts may be brought electronically but you should do so on a device that is large enough to enable easy reading and navigation (i.e. a laptop or tablet, not a smartphone).

Additional course materials

MyCourses will be used for the following purposes:

- to post the course syllabus and other important documents;

- to post secondary source materials;
- to archive course materials (Powerpoint presentations, handouts, etc) and to facilitate out of class learning;
- to provide suggestions for supplementary readings and resources (designed to help with research for assignments);
- to facilitate communication and discussion outside of class;
- to facilitate the practical workshops.

Classroom

We will meet in Arts West 25, which has flexible seating to allow us to conduct group work and, most importantly, performance work. However, the use of this space relies on your cooperation. Please arrive promptly and configure the classroom in accordance with the day's activities (i.e. set out desks and chairs if it's a regular class or clear the floor of furniture if it's a performance workshop). **Outdoor shoes must be removed.**

Format of class

Lecture, discussion, group work, performance work, individual research.

Assessment:

Full details of each written assignment will be distributed separately.

Participation **10%**

- thorough preparation for each class
- contribution to class discussion
- commitment to the performance workshops
- feedback on the performance workshops on MyCourses

Research project **20%**

- due by **11.30** on **Tuesday 8 March**
- paper of 1,000-1,500 words
- short presentation in class on due date

Performance presentation (in pairs) **30%**

- preparation of a rationale (approx. 1,250 words) and script in advance of the workshop
- directing a rehearsal and performance of a 5-minute scene from one of the texts studied with the aim of researching some aspect of popular entertainment
- reflection (approx. 750 words)

Final paper **40%**

- paper of 3,000 words on a topic of your choice related to the course material

- optional: paper proposal and bibliography due by **17.00 on Friday 1 April** – if you submit a proposal by this date I will give you feedback within a week
- paper due by **17.00 on Friday 15 April**

Assignment submission

- Please submit all assignments as Word documents (or .rtf files). I will provide feedback using the Track Changes and Comments features in Word.
- The written work for the performance presentation should be submitted by email to fiona.ritchie@mcgill.ca. The research project and final paper should be submitted through the assignments tool in MyCourses.
- It is the student's responsibility to check that s/he has uploaded the correct file and that the file submitted is readable (i.e. not corrupt). File submission errors will not be accepted as excuses.
- Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments.

Extensions

In general, extensions are only granted in the following circumstances:

- 1) In advance of the due date (except for unforeseen circumstances, e.g. an accident).
- 2) When supporting documentation (e.g. a medical note) is provided.

I retain the right not to grade late assignments that have not been granted an extension.

If you are experiencing difficulties completing work for this course I urge you to come and talk to me as soon as possible. Waiting until the end of the semester usually means that it is too late for me to refer you to appropriate resources to help you.

Expectations and responsibilities

Most of the learning for this course takes place in the classroom, particularly through class discussion, group work and performance. Furthermore, the performance workshops rely on all members of the class knowing and being comfortable with each other. It is therefore imperative that you attend class regularly and participate fully. You must satisfactorily complete the participation portion of assessment in order to pass the course.

Policies

Copyright

© Instructor generated course materials (e.g., handouts, Powerpoint slides, notes, lists of resources, etc) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without the explicit permission of the instructor. Classes must not be recorded without the instructor's permission. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

Academic integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. All students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. Please consult the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Language

Developing and demonstrating oral and written proficiency in the English language are integral components and objectives of this course.

Students with disabilities

The University accommodates students with disabilities through the Office for Students with Disabilities (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/osd/>) in consultation with the English Department. Please speak with me about special arrangements you might require for exams, assignments or instruction.

Religious observances

McGill's Policy for the Accommodation of Religious Observances recognises and respects the diversity of its members, including diversity of religious faiths and observances. For information on this policy, see http://www.mcgill.ca/secretariat/files/secretariat/religious_holy_days_policy_on_accommodation_of.pdf

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's or instructor's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

**ENGL 431 Studies in Drama:
Popular Entertainment in the Long Eighteenth Century**

COURSE SCHEDULE: WINTER 2016

Tuesday 12 January	Introduction
Thursday 14 January	The nature of the popular S: Kaplan, "The Aesthetics of the Popular Arts" S: Mayer, "Towards a Definition of the Popular Theatre" S: Shiach, "Changing Definitions of 'The Popular'"
Tuesday 19 January	Pantomime: Defining the genre P: Theobald, <i>Perseus and Andromeda</i> P: Downing, <i>The Tricks of Harlequin</i>
Thursday 21 January	Pantomime: Defining the genre S: O'Brien, " <i>Perseus and Andromeda</i> and the meaning of Eighteenth-Century pantomime" S: Martinez, "The Tricks of Lun"
Tuesday 26 January	PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP: Introduction <i>Perseus and Andromeda /The Tricks of Harlequin</i>
Thursday 28 January	Garrick and pantomime P: Garrick, <i>Harlequin's Invasion</i> P: Giffard, <i>Harlequin Student</i> S: O'Brien, "David Garrick and the institutionalization of English pantomime"
Tuesday 2 February	Fielding's burlesques P: Fielding, <i>The Tragedy of Tragedies</i> S: Armintor, "Fielding's Tom Thumb Plays"
Thursday 4 February	PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP: Garrick and pantomime
Tuesday 9 February	Licensing and censorship P: The 1737 Licensing Act S: Kinservik, "Reconsidering Theatrical Regulation in the Long Eighteenth Century"

Thursday 11 February	PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP: Fielding's burlesques
Tuesday 16 February	Satire and farce P: Foote, <i>The Minor</i> S: McNelly, "Methodism, Mimicry, and Samuel Foote's <i>The Minor</i> "
Thursday 18 February	Burletta P: Bickerstaff, <i>The Padlock</i> S: Carlson, "New Lows in Eighteenth-Century Theatre"
Tuesday 23 February	PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP: Satire and farce (Foote)
Thursday 25 February	Pleasure gardens and fairs P: Burney, extracts from <i>Evelina</i> P: Morley on Bartholomew Fair S: Borsay, "Pleasure Gardens and Urban Culture" S: Bratton, "Discourse of the Popular" (on Fairs) S: Stallybrass and White, "The Fair, the Pig, Authorship" (extracts)
Tuesday 1 March	No class (study break)
Thursday 3 March	No class (study break)
Tuesday 8 March	Research showcase
Thursday 10 March	Melodrama P: Holcroft, <i>A Tale of Mystery</i> S: Hoeveler, "The Temple of Morality"
Tuesday 15 March	Shakespeare travesties P: Poole, <i>Hamlet Travestie</i> S: Schoch, "New Readings for Unconventional Tragedians" S: Wells, "Shakespearian Burlesques" (extracts)
Thursday 17 March	PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP: Melodrama (Holcroft)
Tuesday 22 March	Hippodrama

	P: Lewis, <i>Timour the Tartar</i> P: Colman, <i>The Quadrupeds of Quedlinburgh</i> S: Gamer, "A Matter of Turf"
Thursday 24 March	Rare Books / Library visit
Tuesday 29 March	PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP: Shakespeare travesties (Poole)
Thursday 31 March	Paper proposal peer review
Tuesday 5 April	Asylums and executions P: Brown, "Bedlam" P: Ward, "A Visit to Bedlam" P: "Going to See a Man Hanged" S: Andrews et al, "Visiting [Bedlam]" S: Gatrell, "Death and the Scaffold Crowd"
Thursday 7 April	The Popular and the Illegitimate P: Wordsworth, <i>The Prelude</i> , Book 7 S: Taylor, "Wordsworth at the Theater" S: Moody, "Fine Word, Legitimate!"
Tuesday 12 April	The Parliamentary Inquiry into the State of the Drama of 1832 P: House of Commons Debate on the State of the Drama S: Ganzel, "Drama and the Law"
Thursday 14 April	Review session or additional office hours

This schedule is tentative and may be modified if necessary.

P = primary source
S = secondary source