

THEA 301 Company

Trimester 1 2012

5 March to 4 July 2012

30 Points



Summerfolk by Maxim Gorky, Nova Gorica, Slovenia, director Paolo Magelli (2008)

TRIMESTER DATES

Teaching dates:	5 March to 8 June 2012
Mid-trimester break:	6 to 22 April 2012
Performance:	5 to 9 June 2012
Study week:	11 to 15 June 2012

WITHDRAWAL DATES

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

NAMES AND CONTACT DETAILS

Course Coordinator	David O'Donnell	david.odonnell@vuw.ac.nz	463 6828	FT77/Room 303
Teaching Staff	James Davenport	james.davenport@vuw.ac.nz	463 6842	FT77/Room 310
	Rachel Lenart	rachel.lenart@vuw.ac.nz	463 6826	FT83/Room 401
Technical Staff	Nick Zwart	nick.zwart@vuw.ac.nz	463 8950	FT77/Room 203
Course Administrator	Cathy McCullagh	cathy.mccullagh@vuw.ac.nz	463 5359	FT83/Room 202

- Staff Office Hours are posted on Blackboard, and we are also available by appointment.

CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

Lectures

Tuesday and Thursday 3.10pm – 6pm AS225 102

Rehearsals

Rehearsal times outside class hours will be finalised when casting is complete, but will generally be 2 to 3 evenings during the week, and daytime on Saturdays. Rehearsals will take place in 225 Aro Street or Studio 77, unless otherwise advised. Please note that we will also be rehearsing in the second week of the mid-trimester break

COURSE DELIVERY

THEA 301 seeks to explore dramatic performance through the creation of a theatre company. The students (and related staff) are this company and undertake all production tasks. All classes should be seen as a combination of seminar, workshop and rehearsal.

This is a practical study of the creative and technical aspects of theatre production, with an emphasis on performance skills, analysis of dramatic writing, stage dynamics, and design, leading to public performances of Maxim Gorky's *Summerfolk*. The play will be under the overall direction of David O'Donnell, but students will be expected to participate in decision-making as well as undertaking specific artistic assignments in stage management, choreography, music, publicity and performing.

PLEASE NOTE: This course is very practical in its teaching and learning. Students are expected to read widely and use the library as a research resource. Discoveries are to be shared among the company, and discussed in your analytical report on the production process. All parts of the course are to be undertaken in a spirit of co-operation. Each individual is part of the ensemble, which relies on mutual support from all.

IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU BE ON TIME FOR ALL CLASSES AND REHEARSALS.

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information will be announced in class, or posted on Blackboard and the courses notice board, 77FT, level 3. Considerable time, additional to that formally timetabled, will be spent on group and class production projects, including 3 workshops taking place over weekends.

If you are not going to use the Victoria email address set up for you, we strongly encourage you to set a forward from the Victoria email system to the email address you do use.

COURSE PRESCRIPTION

A practical study of the creative and technical aspects of theatre production leading to public performance of a full-length play. There will be an emphasis on acting skills, production roles, text analysis and stage dynamics. In 2012 the focus will be on early twentieth century Russian theatre, including rehearsal processes pioneered by Konstantin Stanislavsky at the Moscow Art Theatre, leading to a full-scale production of *Summerfolk* by Maxim Gorky.

COURSE CONTENT

At the turn of the last century, Russia produced some of the greatest theatre makers and texts in history. This was the era of Chekhov, Stanislavsky, Gorky, Meyerhold, Mayakovsky. In this course we will consider the questions

Why did so much of the world's great literature and drama come from Russia a hundred years ago?

Why was the pre-revolutionary Russian theatre so influential on everything that's happened in theatre since?

In order to explore the working methods of a theatre company, we will be mounting a production of Gorky's *Summerfolk* (1903) a naturalistic masterpiece set in an idyllic country holiday resort. Gorky's black, existentialist comedy dissects the complacency of the middle classes, and foreshadows the violence and chaos of the Russian Revolution. This is a play with a large number of roles, providing an excellent opportunity to create complex characterizations and explore ensemble performance.

To inform the production and to understand theoretical approaches to forming a theatre company we will study some major international theatre companies. In conceptualising the production, we will research the world of the play, and explore creative possibilities in all aspects of the production. We will study relevant performance techniques including chorus work, vocal work, physicality, characterisation, motivation, and the endowment of space and props. At the same time we will continue to train as a company (physically, vocally, imaginatively, visually) towards performance.

Major design tasks for the production will be completed by students in THEA 308 The Scenographic Imagination, with assistance from 301 students.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this course students should:

- Understand theatre as a collaborative creative process.
- Be able to analyse a script according to sound principles of dramaturgy.
- Have developed their performance skills and appreciation of performance as an art form.

- Have increased their technical theatre skills in the areas that surround performance (lighting, design, publicity etc.).
- Have developed sound research skills, and general knowledge of Western modernist theatre history and its related styles.
- Think critically about the politics of theatre-making.
- Be aware of the way critical approaches to theatre practice affect the interpretation of a text.

EXPECTED WORKLOAD

It is always difficult to precisely specify the workload of courses which have a high practical and creative content. The university anticipates that you should be able to devote about 20 hours per week to a 30 point course at 300-level. This means you should expect to spend an average of about 14 hours per week (apart from class time) in reading, preparation, thinking, writing and rehearsal. A substantial portion of this will be scheduled rehearsal time, and your research and writing time will need to take place in addition to that. The intensive practical nature of this course means that there will be periods during project and production work when these hours will be significantly increased.

YOU SHOULD THEREFORE TAKE SPECIAL CARE WITH YOUR TIME MANAGEMENT, making sure you balance your workload on this course with your work on other university courses. You should also take particular care with your general health and wellbeing.

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

NO THEATRE WORK OUTSIDE OF YOUR THEATRE COURSES SHOULD BE TAKEN ON WITHOUT DISCUSSION WITH THE COURSE CO-ORDINATOR BEFOREHAND.

READINGS

Gorky, Maxim. *Summerfolk*. Available from student notes. Cost \$10.70

Merlin, Bella. *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit*. London: Nick Hern, 2007. Cost \$34.95

Please bring the Playscript to all classes.

Recommended Reading:

Berry, Cicely. *The Actor and the Text*. London: Virgin, 1993.

Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. London: Penguin, 1968.

Stanislavski, Constantin. *An Actor Prepares*. London: Eyre Methuen, 1980.

All undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer from 13 February to 16 March 2012, while postgraduate textbooks and student notes will be available from the top floor of vicbooks in the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. After week two of the trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from vicbooks on Level 4 of the Student Union Building. You can order textbooks and student notes online at www.vicbooks.co.nz or can email an order or enquiry to enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz. Books can be couriered to you or they can be picked up from the shop. You will be contacted when they are available.

ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

Assessment for this course is internal. More detailed handouts with guidelines on completion and marking criteria for each assignment will be given out in class.

1) Seminar

10 minute presentation on an aspect of the play's social or artistic context (topics to be discussed).

To be presented in class on 3 or 5 April 20%

2) Essay

1500 word essay on a theatre company (topics to be provided)

Due 5 p.m. Fri 4 May 30%

3) Analytical Report

1500 word analytical report on the production process.

Due 5 p.m. Mon 18 June 30%

4) **Artistic contribution to *Summerfolk*, attendance and overall commitment.** A roll will be taken in all classes and rehearsals. Comments from Jim Davenport and Rachel Lenart will be taken into consideration.

Awarded in the week beginning Mon 18 June 20%

Relationship between Assessment and Course Objectives

Assessment has been structured to allow you to respond to the course material in a variety of ways:

- The seminar (Assignment 1) allows you to develop your skills in researching the world of the play from the perspective of a theatre practitioner. It also gives the opportunity to develop skills as a

presenter in a real-life production context. By sharing the results of individual research, the group as a whole will develop collective knowledge of the world of the play which will inform the artistic choices made in rehearsal.

- The essay (Assignment 2) allows you to engage with the philosophical approaches and methods of major theatre companies, which will inform our training as a company and production work on the course. This should assist towards forming your own philosophy of what a theatre company should be.
- The analytical report (Assignment 3) provides an opportunity to make coherent and critical résumés of your creative input into the production, your research and your reading in the course. The report must be a thorough, creative and ANALYTICAL account of the process, drawing connections between theory and practice.
- The final mark allows for your artistic work in the production to be evaluated and acknowledged. It also acknowledges your professionalism and contributions in terms of attentiveness, imagination, attendance and commitment.

ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEETS

Assignment cover sheets and extension forms can be found on Blackboard or outside the Programme office. Remember to fill in your tutor's name.

EXTENSIONS AND PENALTIES

Extensions will be granted only in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Issues of workload do not constitute exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. If you require an extension, you must complete an extension request form (available on your course Blackboard site) prior to the assignment due date. This must be accompanied by relevant documentation (e.g. a doctor's certificate) where appropriate. Tutors cannot grant extensions.

Work submitted after the deadline will be penalised by a 2.5 percent deduction from your total mark per work day. Late work also receives only minimal comments from your marker.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To gain a pass in this course you must:

- Submit the written work specified for this course, on or by the specified dates (subject to such provisions as are stated for late submission of work).
- Attend all rehearsals, production meetings, technical rehearsals and performances, as arranged with the director.

CLASS REPRESENTATIVES

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

STATEMENT ON LEGIBILITY

You are expected to present work that meets appropriate standards. Work submitted during the course (i. e. work that is internally assessed) should be typed or prepared on a computer. Where handwritten work is required you are expected to write clearly. If this is deemed 'illegible', you will be given a photocopy of the work and asked to transcribe it to an acceptable standard (preferably typed) within a specified time frame.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

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

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

WHERE TO FIND MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

The following text must be included in all course outlines.

Find key dates, explanations of grades and other useful information at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study.

Find out how academic progress is monitored and how enrolment can be restricted at

www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress. Most statutes and policies are available at

www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy, except qualification statutes, which are available via the *Calendar* webpage at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx (See Section C).

Other useful information for students may be found at the website of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic.

School of English, Film, Theatre, & Media Studies
THEATRE PROGRAMME COURSE OUTLINE THEA 301

THEA 301 COURSE PROGRAMME

Wk	LECTURE (Tuesday 3.10 – 6pm)	LECTURE (Thursday 3.10 – 6pm)	OTHER EVENTS
1	6 MARCH Introduction/ What is a theatre company?/ The Russian theatre	8 MARCH <i>Summerfolk</i> Reading/Discussion	Reading: Merlin pp. 3-52
2	13 MARCH Mining the text: Given Circumstances; Beats	15 MARCH Mining the text: Objectives Subtext	Reading: Merlin pp. 56-113
3	20 MARCH Embodying the role: Truth; Observation; Imagination 5.15 Design presentation, Technical briefing (AR, J DAV)	22 MARCH Embodying the role: Action; tempo-rhythm; emotion	Reading: Merlin pp. 113-177 Auditions
4	27 MARCH Status Publicity class	29 MARCH Stage management class	Rehearsals begin
5	3 APRIL World of the play seminars	5 APRIL World of the play seminars	Rehearsals TBA
MID-TRIMESTER BREAK Friday 6 April – Sunday 22 April 2012 Monday 16 – Friday 20 REHEARSALS 9- 4pm			
6	24 APRIL Physical actions and rhythm	26 APRIL Chorus work	Reading: Merlin 177-244 Rehearsals TBA 28-29 April Weekend retreat
7	1 MAY Rehearsal	3 MAY Rehearsal	Rehearsals TBA Friday 4 May Assignment 2 due
8	8 MAY Rehearsal	10 MAY Rehearsal	Rehearsals TBA
9	15 MAY Rehearsal	17 MAY Rehearsal	Rehearsals TBA
10	22 MAY Rehearsal	24 MAY Rehearse on set	Rehearsals TBA

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11	29 MAY Rehearse on set	31 MAY Rehearse on set	Rehearsals TBA
10	5 JUNE Contingency	7 JUNE Finale	5 – 9 June Performances <i>Summerfolk</i> Monday 18 June Assignment 3 due