Performing Arts 001
Perceiving the Performing Arts
Spring 2009

Tu/Th 9:40 – 11:10 A.M.

Prof. Rebecca Engle (Theatre) 631-4159
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LeFevre 6
Office Hours: T/W/F 11:30-12:30 and by Appt.

LeFevre 2
By Appt. only

Syfy Hall 220
Office Hours: MWF 12:30-1:30 and by Appt.

Perceiving the Performing Arts, an Introduction
In this course we will be discussing the ways we perceive music, dance and theatre – both collectively, as members of an audience, and as individuals. Your teachers will help you develop tools with which you can expand your perceptions of how these art forms work. You will be exposed to specific examples of each art so you can explore your perceptions while attending an event and then discuss and write about them afterwards. Class activities and discussions will help you discover the essential ingredients unique to each art form, as well as those aesthetic elements they hold in common as performing arts.

Major Course Outcomes
By the end of the semester, students in this course will:

a. have attended numerous performances featuring both classical and cutting-edge music, dance and theatre.

b. know and use appropriately the basic technical terms applied to music, dance and theatre.

c. have acknowledged and built on the insights of other students during discussion, especially those whose perspectives differ from their own.

d) be able to discuss and write about music, dance and theatre with more informed insight and depth.

Course Objectives and Calendar
The Performing Arts Department has designed this introductory course to stimulate and challenge majors, minors, and non-majors alike. We hope the information and insights you take away from it will help you experience greater pleasure and understanding whenever you attend dance, theatre or music performances in the future.

The assignments and discussions in this course will also sharpen your critical thinking and communication skills. Because the development of these skills prepares you for many other college courses, Perceiving the Arts may be used to fulfill the College’s Area A requirement. This course is also a prerequisite for several upper-division Performing Arts courses on the history or theory of
music, dance and theatre. The course is team-taught by three professors, a choreographer, director, and composer, and divided into four sections:

1. INTRODUCTION (Feb. 10-17): During the first three class periods we will identify the key elements, or building-blocks, from which music, dance and theatre are constructed. We will also raise general questions that apply to all the arts.

2. THEATRE (Feb. 19 – March 12): Prof. Engle will offer an introduction to theatre with a special focus on Sara Ruhl’s brand new play, *In the Next Room*.

3. MUSIC (March 17-Apr. 2): Prof. Rokeach will help students learn the “language” of instrumental music, and prepare the class for the San Francisco Symphony’s performance of Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto No. 4* and the world premiere of Steve Gerber’s *In a Dark Time*.

4. DANCE (Apr. 14- May 13) Prof. Barragan will help students learn the “language” of physical movement and guide their exploration into the choreographer’s creative process. The class will attend a performance at Stanford University of one of the most important dance ensembles in the world, The José Limon Dance Company.

May 15: Preparing for Final Exam

**Key Course Requirements**

1. **Reading and Listening/Viewing Assignments**

   - Although this course does not use a textbook, each teacher will provide handouts during his or her segment of the semester.
   - Complete these assignments before class-time, read *actively*, as you do for Collegiate Seminar. Find connections, pose questions, highlight significant or puzzling passages.
   - You will also be assigned to study audio or video recordings. These “texts” can teach you as much as about performance as any essay or article. Again, make note of powerful moments or images, and come to class ready to share with your classmates. Part of your final grade will be based on the quality of your participation.

2. **Mandatory Performances**

   The following live performances are essential to your learning experience in this course. Check your calendars and reserve the following dates now:

   - “In the Next Room” a new comedy by Sara Ruhl; Sunday, March 8  2 P. M. at Berkeley Repertory Theatre
   - The Tilden Trio, consisting of members of the San Francisco Symphony, will play music of Ravel and other master composers, Sunday, March 15; SMC Chapel  2 P. M.
   - The San Francisco Symphony conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy
     Our own world-class symphony will perform the world-premiere of Steven Gerber’s *In a Dark Time*, William Walton’s dramatic Belshazzar’s Feast, and one of the great masterpieces of classical music, Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto No. 4*. Wednesday, March 25, 8 P. M. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco.
• “Sweeney Todd” by Stephen Sondheim; SMC student Performing Arts Dept. production; your choice of performances: April 16-16 and 22-25, 8 P.M., April 26, 2 P.M. LeFevre Theater.

• The Saint Mary’s College Dance Company, directed by CatherineMarie Davalos, your choice of performances: May 7-9, 8 P.M.

YOUR CHOICE OF ANY TWO:
• The SMC NightinGaels, directed by Mark Tuning, Wed. May 13, 1 p.m., or May 14, 8 P.M., SMC Chapel

• The SMC Chamber Musicians, directed by Martin Rokeach, featuring classical repertoire performed by student musicians; Mon. May. 11, Noon or 8 P. M., SMC Chapel

• The SMC Jazz Band, directed by John Maltester; Thur. April 30, 8 P. M.

AND FOR EXTRA-CREDIT:
• The House on Mango Street, performed by New York actors from American Place Theatre; Tuesday, Feb. 24, 8 P.M., Soda Center; Student Admission $2.00

These events have been selected especially to fit our goals in this course. Given their unique character, no alternate or make-up events may be substituted if you miss one. Be sure to see the appropriate section teacher well in advance if you anticipate a schedule conflict you really can’t avoid. It may be possible to attend the same event on an alternate night. It will, however, be your responsibility to buy a new ticket, which is likely to cost more than the original. No refunds are possible, though you may be able to sell your unused ticket to a classmate or friend.

The cost of these tickets (except for “Works in the Works”) has been covered by your lab fee, collected automatically by the Business Office.

3. Tests and Essays

• Each section of the course will be assessed by some combination of exam, quiz, and writing assignment.
• There will be a comprehensive final exam

4. Attendance/Punctuality

• Given this course’s pace, scope and unusual design, faithful attendance is critical to your success this semester.
• You will be allowed a TOTAL of two absences (not two per teacher) this semester; further absences -- for any reason -- will rapidly lower your overall course grade.
• The required performances are considered class-time. MISSING A MANDATORY OUT-CLASS-PERFORMANCE WILL BE COUNTED AS THREE ABSENCES.
• Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. A pattern of late arrivals or early departures will also be considered absence and penalized accordingly.

Basis for Final Grade
Dance Section 25%
Theatre Section 25%
Music Section 25%
Final Exam 18%
Quality Participation 7%

A Final Word . . .

As this course is an introduction, there are three qualities you should bring to bear on our work. First, approach the class with an open mind and heart. Rather than seeking to confirm your previous thoughts and feelings about art forms, see what you can discover about how they work. Second, be an active – not passive – member of the class. Let your curiosity propel you through the material; seek out the things that interest you, that catch your attention, that perplex you, and come to class with questions, comments, and concerns that you wish discussed. The more actively you’re involved in each week’s discussions, the more you’ll benefit from what the course has to offer. Third, give yourself over to the pleasures of the theatre, the music, and the dance we will experience. The arts are not only a matter of intellect, but also of sensory experiences, emotional depths and nonverbal ways of understanding that can be fun and stimulating to delve into. Instead of playing it safe, surrender yourself to the power of the arts for these fourteen weeks. You’ll be amazed at what you discover.