Teacher Tool 204: Staging Shakespeare Outdoors the Actor's Perspective Study Guide

Study Guide for Theater 31: Staging Shakespeare Outdoors--The Actor's Perspective

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Staging Shakespeare Outdoors—The Actor's Perspective

Original Air Date: May 14, 2009
Grade Level: Grades 7-12

Program Description:
Ever wanted to know what it's like to be part of a professional theatre? To go inside the rehearsal space and ask actors, directors and technicians questions while they work? To find out about their creative process? To see how a theatre production comes to life? Ever wondered what new challenges and opportunities await you when you stage that production outdoors? You can find the answers to these questions and more when you view this archived program that takes you behind the scenes of the Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis' 2009 production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. See their outdoor performance space in the heart of St. Louis' urban oasis Forest Park, and meet the people involved in bringing this classic tale to life.

Live from the outdoor performance space of the Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis, program participants interacted with actors and director involved in the production. Tour the set and go both backstage and onstage to find out what it's like to perform a play under the stars. How does it change the characterization created by the actor? What about projection and gestures? Does it change how actors use costumes and props? What happens if it rains? What's it like to interact with an audience in an outdoor setting? Find the answers to these questions and more as you meet the actors working together to create an exciting and enriching experience for the audience attending.

Program Objectives:

1. The participant will explore the nature of the theatrical experience by participating both as an audience member and as a critical questioner.
2. The participant will interact with professional theatre performers, directors and designers.
3. The participant will tour an outdoor theatre stage and view scenes from a theatrical production.

Program Format:
The program consists of the following segments.

1. Welcome and Introduction—Will include introductions of guests and participating student groups.

II. Interaction with the Director and Fight Choreographer—Students asked questions of the director about the play, how it is being staged, what inspired the set and other technical elements.

III. Interaction with the Actors—Students asked questions of actors involved in the production. Topics of discussion included the play itself, what it's like to perform outdoors, how character is created, use of actor's tools such as voice and gesture, working with fellow cast members, performing Shakespeare versus other playwrights, how the set, costumes and other technical elements influence their performance.

IV. Closing Segment—Will include summary of major ideas learned and final questions from the students.

Featured National Standards:

NA 5-8.2 Acting by developing basic acting skills to portray characters who interact in improvised and scripted scenes

Students analyze descriptions, dialogue, and actions to discover, articulate, and justify character motivation and invent character behaviors based on the observation of interactions, ethical choices, and emotional responses of people

NA5-8.7 Analyzing, evaluating, and constructing meanings from improvised and scripted scenes and from theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions

Students articulate and support the meanings constructed from their and others' dramatic performances

Students use articulated criteria to describe, analyze, and constructively evaluate the perceived effectiveness of artistic choices found in dramatic performances

NA 9-12.2 Acting by developing, communicating, and sustaining characters in improvisations and informal or formal productions

Students analyze the physical, emotional, and social dimensions of characters found in dramatic texts from various genres and media

NA9-12.5 Researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices

Students identify and research cultural, historical, and symbolic clues in dramatic texts, and evaluate the validity and practicality of the information to assist in making artistic choices for informal and formal productions

NA9-12.7 Analyzing, critiquing, and constructing meanings from informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions

Students articulate and justify personal aesthetic criteria for critiquing dramatic texts and events that compare perceived artistic intent with the final aesthetic achievement

Students analyze and critique the whole and the parts of dramatic performances, taking into account the context, and constructively suggest alternative artistic choices

Program-Related Activity Suggestions:

1. To provide students background information on the play before viewing the program, utilize the plot summary and character information in Teacher Tool 205: The Merry Wives of Windsor Background Information that is also available on our Educate.Today website. Have students discuss the plot and characters, brainstorm how they might stage the play and play certain characters and consider the challenges and excitement of staging the play outdoors. The document was created by St. Louis Shakespeare Festival.

2. Give students the opportunity to learn more about Shakespearean comedy and the language in Shakespeare's plays with the information and activities included in Student Tool 43: On Shakespeare's Plays that is also available on our Educate.Today website. The document was created by St. Louis Shakespeare Festival.

3. Let students learn more about who Shakespeare was, when he lived and what his life was like through Student Tool 44: On Shakespeare and His Times also available on our Educate.Today website. The document was created by St. Louis Shakespeare Festival.

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