

Call for Papers

The Department of English, University of Calcutta, invites papers from faculty, scholars and students for presentation in the seminar titled *'This green plot shall be our stage': Theatre in Classroom, Campus and Beyond* to be held on 6th and 7th March 2019, at the College Street Campus (Asutosh Siksha Prangan). Around twenty (20) papers will be selected for presentation on both the days of the seminar on the basis of the abstract, sent to us, written in MS Word with a maximum limit of 400 words. The abstracts vis-à-vis the papers should follow the argument as implored in the concept note. The selection will be made on the basis of the originality of thought, argument and appropriateness of the methodological approach applied. Concerned presenters of the selected papers will be given 15 minutes to make their presentation.

The abstracts should be sent to either of/ both the following email addresses with the deadline.

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Title and Concept Note of the Seminar:

"This green plot shall be our stage": Theatre in Classroom, Campus and Beyond

Given that the classroom vis-à-vis the academic space adds another layer of meaning, as part of the process of the journey from 'work' to 'text', the act of 'reading' drama in an academic space is even more elusive and replete with the possibility of slippage. Even on a surface level, unlike the reading of poems, essays or novels, which primarily entails the decoding of the written ciphers, that of a play can never emulate the condition of a performance, supposed to contain the 'complete meaning'. Roma Gill's strong recommendation for the performance of plays inside the classroom, in Oxford School Shakespeare Volume, sounds problematic as recreating a theatrical space through the agency of the learners leads to a 'meaning' much different from what was perhaps intended, developed and disseminated by a performance outside it. The subject of the audience, amenable to this entire process of meaning making, is never reiterated when the learners produce a classroom performance.

Performance in academic space is however not restricted only to this Hermeneutic level. The performance of plays in academic space has larger and multidimensional implication. Primarily conceived as platform for ordering organizational skill, as a form of entertainment during a yearly festival or a reunion and also a community rite, performance of a play, in an academic space, passing through the ritualistic processes of rehearsals, exposes the subjects involved to the milieu of the external reality, bleak, utopic and fantastic in nature.

But historically examined, the correlation between theatre/drama and the academic space started neither as a form of entertainment nor so much for a hermeneutic rational. The Humanist model of enhancing the language skill, the skill of oration, memory and the knowledge of the classical world through performance of classical plays in schools and universities would be an example of how early modern education system resorted to theatre for academic purposes. The first known performance of Greek drama in England is a production of Aristophanes' *Wealth*, at St John's College, Cambridge, in 1535–1536. This model of learning through performance, couple with a larger colonialist/imperialist project is replicated in early nineteenth century India/Bengal. Play reading and performances of plays, particularly the Shakespearean ones were accepted academic practice in Hindu College found in 1816.

Despite such early instance of performance in the academia theatre is yet to assert a definite identity in the academic space. The early attempt to incorporate the discourse of theatre in the academic space wanes gradually with the rise and popularity of the Nineteenth Century Romantic Aesthetic theory leading to the notions of authorial intention and a belief in a sacrosanct unalterable printed text which is of course product of the printing technology of the bourgeois ideology. Such understanding had often delimited the academic institutions, especially the departments of literature, to discuss theatre only in terms of a printed edition.

With the collapse of many ontological assumptions like a stable human mind, empire, author and so on World War II onwards the symbiosis of theatre and academics veered towards a different direction. Concurrently with the rise of Performance Studies, which reexamined theatre as an extension of dance, music and ritual, initiated by Richard Schechner and Victor Turner in 1960s and 70s, theatre departments evolved in universities in order to underline the aspects of acting, set, props, costumes, make up, light and other elements of performance.

However, whether the pedagogy and the practice of the departments of theatre and literature should affect each other is a matter of debate and discussion which the proposed seminar will try to consider along with considering the growth and development of the study of literature and theatre in relation to politics, ideology and culture. The seminar will also try to explore, not just the reception of theatre in the academic space, but also how the 'reading' and discussions of other cultural texts in academic institutions in turn define and shape the world stage.

Important dates:

Last date for the submission of the abstract: 25th January 2019

Notification for selected papers: 7th February 2019

Last date of Registration: 1st March 2019

Modes and payments of Registration:

Selected presenters and interested participants should register themselves at the Dept. of English before the last date.

Registration Fees:

Faculty and Scholars: Rs. 800/-

Students: Rs. 400/-

*For joint papers both the presenters should make separate registration.

**Registration fee will include Seminar Kit, access to plenary session, lunch and tea on both days.