

Assessment for Theatre Program 2016-17

Overview and Intentions

The primary objective for the Theatre Program this year has been to begin to establish methods and ways of assessing our productions. As high impact programs, University of Scranton Players Productions enable our students to practice their education, learn through doing, and take responsibility for their particular work on and off stage. Students are regularly collaborating with one another and with guest artists that are selected by the Theatre Program Director, Dr. Willenbrink.

Student involvement can be broken down into two areas: actors and production crew. The latter designation has numerous strata in it. Stage managers (Production Stage Manager and two Assistant Stage Managers per show); Run Crew (tasked with the operation of set pieces, props and furniture during a show's run, depending on the show, this will often overlap with the Stage Management); Board Operators (who run and assist in programming the lighting and sound boards); Wardrobe Crew (in charge of costuming and assisting the actors with their clothing); Lighting Crew (works with Lighting Designer to hang lighting instruments); and Props Crew, who work with the Scenic Designer and Director to find props for rehearsals and develop props which will be used during the run (this crew will often run props during the production as well). Actors, who are the most recognizable faces of the production, likewise, work with numerous members of the Production Team like the director and costume designer. In our productions, actors are required to fulfill ten crew hours, where they help the Technical Director, Dennis Berfield, in the construction of the set. Actors, depending on their skill set, may also help other areas like lighting, props, and costumes.

Our PLOs, which relate to productions are:

Ability to reach an audience effectively through at least one of the components of theatrical art (acting, directing, designing, playwriting, etc.)

Develop respect for the art and craft of theatre

Furthermore, since our productions are chosen by faculty, we also use the productions as ways to instruct our students about particular works. This past year is a case in point. We did two productions of plays which have had a profound impact on the history of dramatic literature — *The Birds* by Aristophanes and *Miss Julie* by August Strindberg.

This year's season and Production Teams included:

The Birds by Aristophanes

Adapted by Brian Reno Gabriel Vega Weissman

Directed by Gabriel Vega Weissman

Scenic Design by Grace Laubacher

Lighting Design by Dave Yezefski

Costume Design by Brooke Cohen

Sound Design by Conway Rowe

Leveling Up by Deborah Zoe Laufer

Directed by Jess Chayes

Scenic Design by Nick Benacerraf

Lighting Design by Dave Yezefski

Costume Design by Je Tellier
Sound Design by Conway Rowe

Miss Julie by August Strindberg
Directed by Michael O'Steen
Scenic Design by Je Tellier
Lighting Design by Dave Yezefski
Costume Design by Maggie McGregor
Sound Design by Conway Rowe

Mr. Burns, a Post Electric Play by Anne Washburn
Directed by José Zayas
Musical Direction by Kiley Lotz
Scenic Design by Susan Rogers
Lighting Design by Dave Yezefski
Costume Design by Je Tellier
Sound Design by Conway Rowe

Methods

To accomplish our assessment, we took three different approaches. Two are self-reported: surveys that we took during the course of the semester and papers from our Production Lab enrollees. The final was a juried evaluation of performances for *Miss Julie*.

Survey

During the course of our four show season, we did surveys of students involved in the show. The forms were filled out anonymously and we asked each to identify which Production Team member (director, designer, etc.) that they worked most closely with as well as if the students was cast or crew for the show. Each student was asked the same series of questions to gauge the growth of their knowledge over the course of the rehearsal and production process:

At the beginning of the process, I felt my knowledge of the play to be:

At the end of the process, I felt my knowledge of the play to be:

Production Lab Papers

As a part of the theatre major, students are required to fulfill 6 hours of production lab, which involves working as a part of a show and writing a paper after the experience. Students were asked to respond to the following as a part of their papers:

How do you feel that through your production lab responsibilities you learned to reach a theatre audience effectively? (For example through acting, directing, designing, playwriting, etc.)

Do you feel that through your production lab responsibilities you did reach that audience effectively? (For example through acting, directing, designing, playwriting, etc.)

How do you feel that through your production lab responsibilities (acting, directing, designing, playwriting, etc.) you developed a deeper understanding and respect for the art, the craft, and the theatre artists in The University Players theatre company? Speak

to the experience of working with your theater company members including the production staff, in preproduction, production (rehearsals and build), and during the production's run.

Juried Evaluations

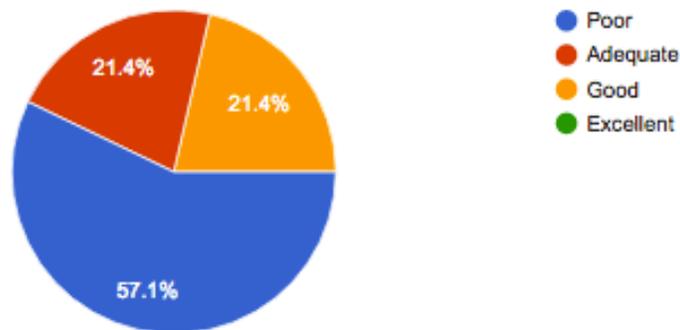
Finally, we evaluated the actors of *Miss Julie* with a juried evaluation. We chose this show because it was the only show directed by our faculty member, Michael O'Steen. *Miss Julie*, while having a small cast (3 principal actors), also featured a wide range of student actors—one first year, a junior, and senior. The jury was composed of Professor O'Steen, Dr. Hank Willenbrink, and Dr. Charles Gorden (Marywood University).

Results

The Birds

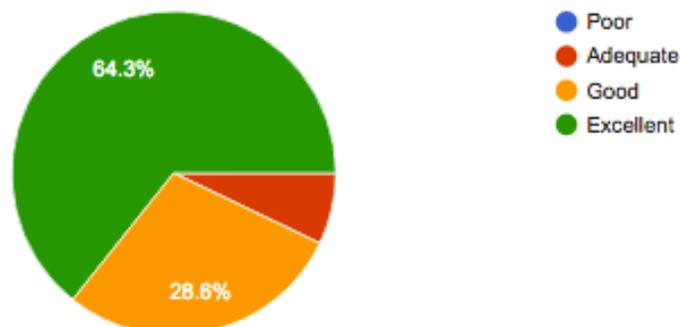
At the beginning of this process, I felt my knowledge of the play to be

14 responses



At the end of this process, I felt my knowledge of the play to be

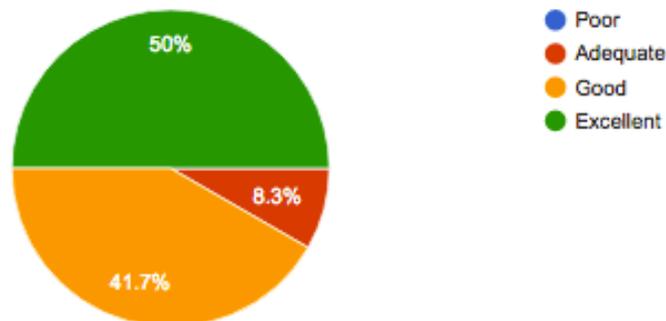
14 responses



Leveling Up

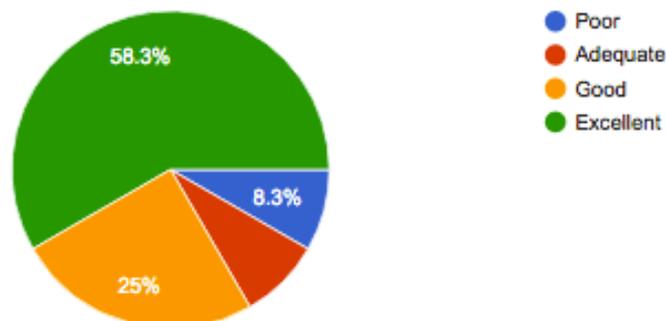
At the end of this process, I felt my knowledge of the play to be

12 responses



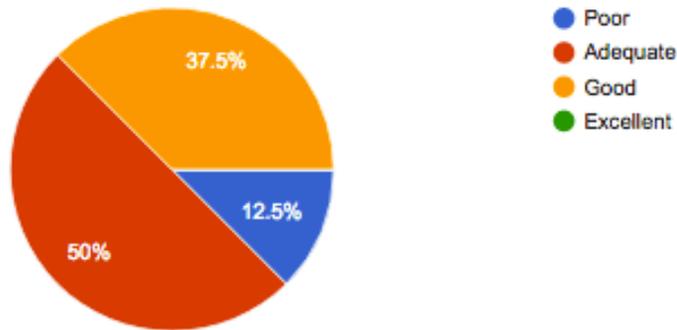
I would rate my experience with this production as

12 responses



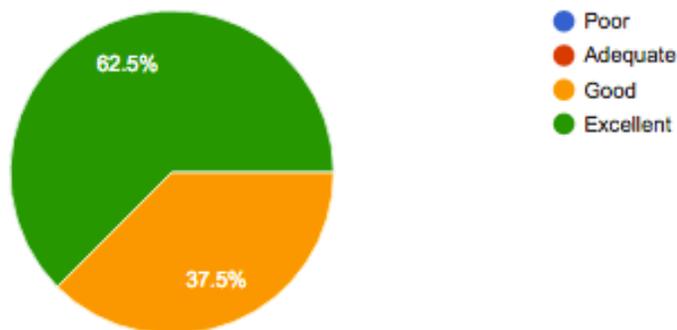
At the beginning of this process, I felt my knowledge of the play to be

8 responses



At the end of this process, I felt my knowledge of the play to be

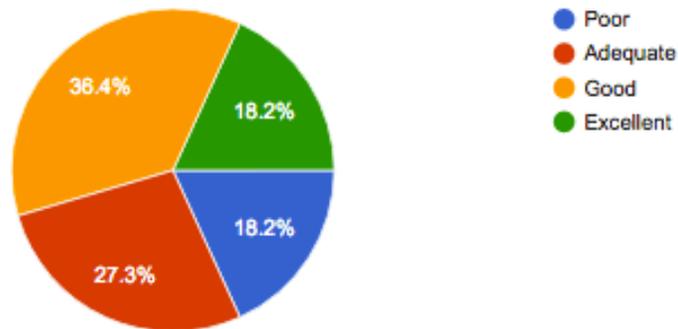
8 responses



Mr. Burns

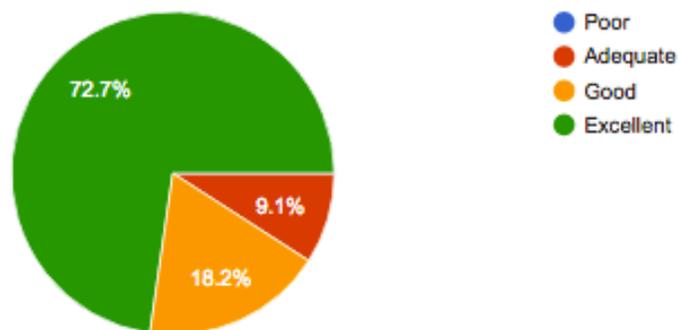
At the beginning of this process, I felt my knowledge of the play to be

11 responses



At the end of this process, I felt my knowledge of the play to be

11 responses



Selected Responses from Production Lab Papers:

Student #1: Lighting Crew for *Miss Julie*

"I also learned how the use of color can assist in setting the mood for a scene, in telling the audience what time of day it was, even what time of year, depending on the quality, focus and color of the lights being used. The use of lighting also helped inform the audience as to where their attention should be focused."

"I feel like I did developed [*sic*] a deeper understanding and respect for the art, the craft, and the theatre artist in the The University of Scranton Players Theatre Company particularly for this performance."

Student #2: Stage Manager for *Miss Julie*

"[I]t is important for the stage manager to have the trust of the cast and crew. If something goes wrong it is on the stage manager's back. They have to find a way to fix it or get someone who can."

"Stage managers are messengers. Not only between different production departments, but a messenger of the story to the audience."

Student #3: Wardrobe Crew for *Mr. Burns*

"I have worked wardrobe for several shows with The University of Scranton Players, but one of the main reasons I keep working in that area is because I am constantly learning new ways to tell a story to the audience."

"In act 3, the robes the characters wore were made of curtains. I remember when I was told to steam them, Janice specifically wanted me to leave the bottom of each robe a little wrinkled because she wanted the audience to know they were curtains. It's always a great feeling when someone notices the little things like this, and one of my family members who saw the show actually did notice that they were made of curtains. Also, an audience member came up to Janice and complimented her on the jacket that Nick was wearing in act 1. I'm always to happy when I hear that an audience member notices the small technical details that help tell the story."

Student #4: Lighting Board Operator for *Miss Julie*

"I was very impressed with the amount of thought and effort that was put into each look. The changes from to cue to cue were almost always incredibly subtle as characters would move around and the change in lighting would not be noticeable until they were deep into conversation. Also it would take me a long time to realize that one of the light cues was to go from night to day, but once I did I was blown away by how cool that is. The change is so subtle over the course of the entire play, always going on in the background, but once Miss Julie goes to the window and sees that it is now daylight you realize that how this has been going on without you ever thinking about it. From this I learned that lighting could still be effective even when the audience is not realizing it."

Student #5: Props Crew for *Mr. Burns*

"My experience working on he [*sic*] props crew on such an abstract helped me to realize exactly how many small things go into creating the world that the play is in. Reaching an audience through props helps to keep the audience in the world of the show. I didn't realize just how important the detail that goes into each prop. If one thing is not in the same realm it can throw

everything else off, unless the choice is made purposely. Deep thought and research has to go into the creation and manipulation of every prop. Like with many design aspects of theater some aspects may not be noticed specifically by the audience, but if they are wrong for the show they can stick out like a sore thumb and working on props for this show highlighted this detail.

Juried Evaluation

We developed a rubric over the 2015-16 academic year to evaluate onstage actors. Attached are the evaluations from our three jurists in graph form.

Plans for Future Assessment

We are continuing to hone how we are assessing productions. Here is a list of what we would like to incorporate in future assessments.

1. Developing methods to assess the work of our production crew during the build process.
2. Developing methods to assess work done by students who work as assistants to Production Team members, like assistant directors, assistant designers, etc.
3. Developing methods by which to measure growth of students from year to year including with development of their creative imagination and respect for the art and craft of theatre.