**PFA 102. DRAMA AND THEATRE**

We can consider the techniques of performance criticism in three parts: preliminary work, production analysis, and organizing a response.

**Preliminary**

The preliminary work of performance criticism begins before the audience member arrives at the theatre and continues to the opening of the curtain. The preliminary work includes considering:

* The art of theatre itself
* The nature of the work itself
* The program distributed to the audience
* The clues offered by the theatre’s physical surroundings

**The art of theatre itself**

Analyzing a performance, means that one must know enough to do so- have enough knowledge of the art of the theatre. It means knowing the role of each theatre artist. This will enhance the ability to understand a performance. Understanding the role of the theatre audience in performance- that it can affect performance and so has some responsibility to “work” with actors in creating the event- suggests a need to consider responses as a part of the critique of performance.

For one to have a general knowledge of the art of the theatre- to be able to do a critical analysis of a performance, requires attending theatrical performances, taking courses in theatre arts, and reading books about theatre are probably the best sources for this kind of general knowledge. By attending plays and reading about theatre, a person becomes a more knowledgeable member of an audience and so is better equipped to engage in performance criticism.

**The work itself**

An audience member should take the time to learn something about the material to be performed before arriving at the theatre. Some people like to read a play before seeing it, others prefer simply to learn something about it through reviews and advertisements .From whatever source, audience members should arrive at the theatre with a general idea of what they are going to see- because expectations will affect the way a performance is perceived.

Learning enough about a play to know what to expect in the theatre is a responsibility of an audience member. Reading reviews or studying a poster can help.

**The Program distributed to the audience.**

An audience member should read the program before the play begins. It almost always indicates the place or places where the action will unfold and introduces the characters who will appear on stage, giving their names and major relationships. Programs often include a synopsis of the play’s major action, highlighting the most important moments and thereby suggesting where the audience’s attention should focus. Sometimes in the program there will be notes written by the director, designer, or literary manager. Such notes may be especially helpful, for they sometimes point to the major issues with which the play grapples or explain the director’s special point of view in staging this play.

**The physical surroundings**

An audience member will be repaid for spending a few minutes looking around the theatre and listening to sounds, because theatre artists will often try to establish a proper mood for a play even before it begins, Country or Western music in the background probably reveals something important about the production and sets a mood. Lighting may be used to establish mood, and scenery (where visible) may suggest things like time, place, and social class.

The purpose of preliminary work is to become prepared for the moment when the performance itself begins. The more prepared for the performance, the better able the audience is to follow the performance as it moves at its own rate through time.

**PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS**

The goal of performance analysis is not merely a statement like “I really liked that” or “I was bored.” Rather, the audience member needs to be able to explain the reasons behind such responses. These reasons usually have to do with the selection of the play, the appropriateness and skill of the actors, the suitability of the visual elements, and so on.

To analyze a performance, an audience member must do two things at once: participate in the performance (entering into the action, empathizing with the characters, and so on): and watch the performance-participating and observing simultaneously.

Part of learning to maintain a dual view is understanding how the performance appeals through both the play and the specific performance of that play. The play’s central values in performance are its story, characters, and ideas. The performance central values (the way by which the story, characters, and ideas come to the audience ) are its language, music, and spectacle, as revealed through the acting, scenery, costumes ,lighting and sound.