

Preliminary Web Course Description

*Please note: This is a preliminary web course description only. The department reserves the right to change without notice any information in this description. The final, binding course outline will be distributed in the first class of the semester.

School of English and Theatre Studies

Course Code: THST 3140	Course Title: Performance and the Past	Date of Offering: W'21
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Course Instructor: J. Schacker	Course Format: seminar
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Brief Course Synopsis:

A “canon” of fairy-tales pervades our contemporary popular culture, including film, animation, and television, and children’s literature. In this course we will explore the important place fairy-tale material has had in theatre history — focusing on the British tradition of the Christmas pantomime, from its roots in Italian commedia dell’arte to its (pre-pandemic) status as the financial backbone of England’s theatrical economy.

We will focus in particular on fairy-tale-themed pantomime of the 1800s, when many of the modern conventions for the form — spectacular stagecraft and scenography, cross-dressed roles, slapstick comedy, topical humour, meta-theatricality, as well as the dominant use of fairy-tale plots and figures — were codified. Our case studies will include pantomime versions of 3 tales derived from French *contes de fées* (tales of the fairies), “Cinderella,” “Puss in Boots,” and “Bluebeard,” and one based on a British story, “Jack and the Beanstalk.”

Critical readings will survey the very recent work that theatre scholars have produced on pantomime, and in-class discussions will frequently include excerpts from additional critical and historical texts. The overarching objective is to gain a nuanced understanding of the genre of the fairy tale -- and of pantomime as a form of fairy-tale theatre. Final projects will have a research component but will move beyond the traditional “research paper.” What creative inspiration can you draw from our exploration of performance in the past?

The content of this course is designed to complement that of THST*3500 (Performance and Praxis I), offered concurrently.

Methods of Evaluation and Weight:

Preliminary plan (check course outline at beginning of W21 semester for finalized descriptions of assignments)

Wordpress blog posts 20%

*weekly posts and responses

*includes a final reflection that is written at the end of the semester

Periodicals project 15%

*research that engages with coverage of theatre in 19th-century newspapers and magazines

Scrapbook project 15%

*research that focuses on one specific pantomime and integrates visual materials

Seminar participation 10%

Final project 40%

*grade includes a presentation of work-in-progress

*all projects will have a research component that engages primary and secondary materials

*options for creative work accompanied by a written rationale

Texts and/or Resources Required (e.g. Internet access, specific textbook title, lab kit, etc.)

Assigned readings will be linked through the course website, available either as e-texts or through the U of G's library's electronic reserves.

Students in the course will need reliable internet access and a computer with built-in or external camera and mic. Reliable access to a printer and scanner is recommended.

Prerequisite(s):

7.50 credits, including THST*1040

Information about mode of delivery (synchronous/asynchronous/other details):

This course will have weekly synchronous meetings for 1- 1.5 hours per week plus asynchronous components (short audio and video recordings; assigned readings; exchanges of ideas on a dedicated Wordpress site).