



ACTIVIST PROTAGONIST:

[performance with more positive impacts on communities and less negative impacts on the environment]

...perhaps the time has come for theatre artists to play true-life roles in changing the status quo rather than merely using what they do to comment on it...

LAWLER, 2008, p. 61

Eco-theatre at the grassroots is growing.

Cless, 1996

Senior Drama Sustainable Applied Performance Unit Plan

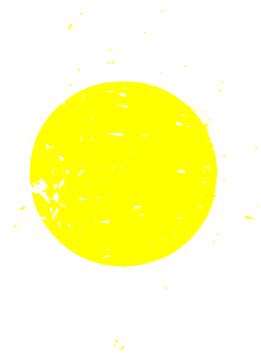
DRAFT FOR THE DRAMA AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE 2009

Produced by Offset Art | Nathan Stoneham & Daniel Last

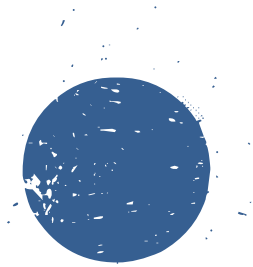
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Offset Art would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the` land on which this document was produced and their elders, past and present - the first artists, educators and environmental activists of Australia.



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It's time to re-prioritise what is taught and what is learnt in drama classrooms in Australian schools.

A third of the world is at war... 30 million people in Africa are HIV positive... One in five people live on less than \$1 a day" (Williams, 2004, cover)

Activist Protagonist investigates current global affairs through the study of sustainable theatre, eco-theatre and applied theatre. It encourages students to "*apply the theatre form as an aesthetic event to activate human consciousness in unique ways*" (Taylor, 2004, p.3). They do this by adopting environmentally sustainable practices to design and present performances that are transformative; transformative for the artists, the audience and also for people or environments in need that students and schools work together to support. The unit aligns closely with The Australian Government's *Educating for a Sustainable Future* document (ESF), which envisions Australian students as "*active, self-directed and collaborative learners and ethical and responsible citizens taking action for a sustainable future.*" (reference)

Activist Protagonist's content challenges students to think critically about the condition of our planet and theatre's potential power as a tool for transformative activism. It also introduces students to the benefits of civic engagement and grassroots action while promoting *new paradigms that focus on conservation and reduction.*

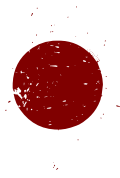
Critical thinkers are "actively engaged with life... [and] are self confident about their potential for changing aspects of their worlds, both as individuals and through collective action" (Brookfoeld, 1987, p.3).

Students become **artist activists:**

- Through training in performance practices that have minimal negative effects on the environment
- By creating and reflecting on performances concerned with environmental and/or social justice issues
- By engaging with communities to make positive change, and;
- By contributing to charity, aid agencies and/or human rights groups

Offset Art believes in the power of art to help change the world. We believe students can begin taking action now, and grow into lifelong learners, lifelong artists and lifelong activists that strive for a sustainable future for their children and grandchildren.

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Syllabus |

Activist Protagonist meets the requirements of the 2007 QLD senior drama syllabus, however the concept, content and assessment tasks can easily be adapted to suit the work programs of schools in other states.

Flexibility |

Please use this document as a guide only and adapt the learning experiences and tasks to suit the unique context of your school.

This document outlines a ten-week unit, however you may like to extend the unit for an entire semester to allow time to study in-depth a connected style such as Epic Theatre, Grotowski's Poor Theatre, Political Theatre, Street Theatre, Indigenous Performance or Contemporary Performance.

We recommend including in-school performances, community partnerships, artist-in-residence programs and/or guest speakers in this unit.

Diversity & Inclusivity |

Diversity is an asset in our classrooms. If teachers adopt genuinely inclusive practices in a climate of trust and cooperation, the unit is appropriate for students of any gender, sex, sexuality and ability from any type of family situation and/or cultural heritage. Learning support and/or special consideration may be required for some individuals.

Resources |

The unit may be especially useful for under-resourced schools, since:

- non-conventional performance spaces are encouraged
- minimal props, costumes or technical equipment is required
- salvaging/recycling resources is appropriate to the fields of study
- minimal textbooks are required as most pre-texts are topical (i.e. current newspaper clippings)

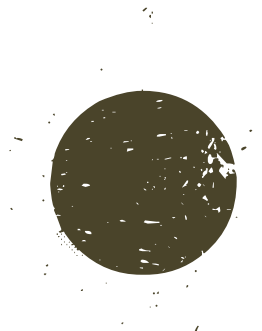
| Time in weeks | Unit Title and general objectives | Unit features incorporating fields of study and resources | Example learning experiences including affective | Example assessment tasks |
|---------------|--|--|---|---|
| 10 | Unit Title: Activist Protagonist General Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming • Presenting • Responding | <p>Fields of Study Focus on the conventions of eco-theatre</p> <p>Research and apply environmentally sustainable approaches to making performance</p> <p>Train in acting styles that value human energy over elaborate designs, special effects & mass entertainment i.e. poor theatre, epic theatre</p> <p>Investigate oppressions in Australia and the world through the study of Boal's theatre of the oppressed</p> <p>Exploration of art activism and how dramatic action can create dramatic meaning that stimulates change</p> <p>Find links in stage design between Poor theatre, Epic theatre, Guerilla theatre</p> <p>Deep learning and critical thinking about contemporary socio/cultural/environmental emergencies</p> <p>Drawing connections between heritage and contemporary perspectives to create contemporary works</p> | <p>Workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On ecotheatre conventions - to develop skills in voice and movement specific to the styles <p>Sustainable Theatre research & Brainstorm sessions</p> <p>Theatre of the oppressed activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forum Theatre sessions - Image theatre <p>Case studies of sustainable /eco theatre companies</p> <p>Student run design conference on minimalist stage designs</p> <p>Process dramas, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the boat drama - the border drama - the good woman of Setzuan drama <p>(process dramas by Offset Art – contact us for copies)</p> <p>Developing a production proposal/dramaturgical folio in the form of a festival application.</p> <p>Collaborative rehearsal period.</p> | <p>Forming: Students design a piece of ecotheatre about a current environmental or social justice concern that meets the specific requirements of an ecotheatre festival and present the concept in the form of a festival application. Individual, written Yr. 11 – 800-1000 words Yr. 12 – 1000-1200 words</p> <p><i>And/or</i></p> <p>Presenting: In small groups, students rehearse and perform a piece of ecotheatre in a mini festival setting, employing the conventions of the style and adopting the acting styles (from epic and poor theatre) studied in class. Group, practical Yr. 11 – mins Yr. 12 – mins</p> <p><i>And/or</i></p> <p>Responding: After viewing a piece of live theatre, students comment on how dramatic action managed to create dramatic meaning about a current environmental or social justice concern. Students should also identify the ways in which the performance adopted</p> |

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| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| | | <p>Develop rehearsal skills</p> <p>Resources </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newspaper clippings - News bulletins - Technology (CD/MP3 player, projector, laptop computer, video camera, digital camera) - Access to the internet and library resources - Games for actors and non-actors, Boal - Towards a poor theatre, Grotowski - Ecotheatre & sustainable theatre information by Offset Art (in development) | <p>Showcase of performances for a public audience at a mini eco-art festival</p> <p>Affective </p> | <p>environmentally sustainable practices and suggest ways to make the performance more sustainable.</p> <p>Individual, written or oral</p> <p>Yr. 11 – 800-1000 words</p> <p>Yr. 12 – 1000-1200 words</p> |
|--|--|--|--|---|

| Week | Lesson 1 | Lesson 2 | Lesson 3 |
|------|---|--|--|
| 1 | World Gallery News paper drama | Debrief of world gallery Introduction to Applied theatre Image theatre | Introduction to forum theatre using pre-made antimodel |
| 2 | Exploration of world issue no. 1 through process drama. I.e. the asylum seeker issue, the boat drama | Creation of anti-model for forum theatre | Forum |
| 3 | Exploration of world issue no. 2 i.e. climate change through Invisible/legislative theatre pieces about climate change. | Eco-theatre conventions workshop 1, create: ACTIVSIM STUNTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE | Environmentally Friendly choices in theatre brainstorm & research. Find negative impacts the theatre has on the environment. See sustainable theatre handout. |
| 4 | Library lesson. Case studies of sustainable theatre companies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kilter - Shotgun Players in Berkeley, Calif. (first U.S. theatre to rely 100 percent on solar power. - Offset Art | Eco theatre conventions Workshop 2 | Grotowski Actor training |
| 5 | Hand out assessment 1. Task briefing. | Design Conference Brecht, Grotowski, Guerilla And how it is eco-friendly | Model the assessment task – part A As a class, make a piece performance about a current global affair which has a low negative environmental impact, incorporates eco theatre conventions and Grotowski’s actor techniques. |
| 6 | Model the assessment task part B | Grotowski actor training intensive 2 | Own time on assessment 1. |

| | | | |
|----|---|--|-----------------|
| | Writing the application. | | |
| 7 | Assessment 1 due. | Assessment 2 Task briefing. Hand out task sheet. | Concept pitch |
| 8 | Rehearsal period with revision sessions, work-in-progress showings, feedback, consultancy time, | | |
| 9 | Rehearsal period with revision sessions, work-in-progress showings, feedback, consultancy time, | | |
| 10 | Assess group presenting tasks | | showcase |



SAMPLE TASK SHEETS:

SAMPLE TASK SHEET 1 - FORMING

| | | | |
|---------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| Student Name | | Task Number | |
| Unit | ACTIVIST PROTAGONIST | Class | |
| Unit Focus | Ecotheatre, sustainable theatre, applied theatre | Teacher | |
| Objective | Forming | Due Date | |
| Context | Production proposal for festival application | Teacher's Signature | |
| Conditions | Individual, Visual text with written support | Weighting | |

Task: Design a piece of ecotheatre that responds to the following festival application callout:

WANTED: Performances for Eco-art festival!

Eco-art festival is looking for volunteers to perform or facilitate performance based community projects based on current environmental or social justice concerns.

Performances must be environmentally sustainable.

The festival can provide \$100 to cover the cost of your project, and will donate \$100 to a charity, aid agency or human rights group of your choice.

Include in your application:

- The title of your piece and a one line summary of the performance/project
- Answers to the following questions:
 1. What is your performance/ performance project about and **why** is this topic important?
 2. **Describe the dramatic action** of your performance / performance project and how you plan to use the conventions of eco-theatre to engage the community
- **Sketches of any design elements or performance sites** i.e. set, costumes, props and/or specific sites with captions that outline how the design choices are environmentally friendly and how they contribute to the dramatic meaning of your performance / performance project (keep in mind your budget!)
- A **promotional image** for your performance/project
- Note the charity / aid agency / human rights group you would like the festival to donate to.

Conditions: Individual, Visual text with written support

- Satisfy all requirements of the festival callout
- Reference ideas when necessary
- One draft allowed
- Three weeks in class and at home time

Length:

Yr. 11 – 800-1000 words plus accompanying images & sketches
 Yr. 12 – 1000-1200 words plus accompanying images & sketches

Criteria – Forming

- Demonstration of knowledge and understanding of the dramatic languages and dramatic perspectives to communicate with a position about dramatic meaning and action
- Analysis and evaluation of dramatic action by interpreting dramatic meaning
- Use of drama terminology, referencing and language conventions

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SAMPLE TASK SHEET 2 – PRESENTING

| | | | |
|---------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| Student Name | | Task Number | |
| Unit | A ● T I V I S T P ● O T A G ● O N I S T | Class | |
| Unit Focus | Ecotheatre, sustainable theatre, applied theatre | Teacher | |
| Objective | Group Devised Presenting | Due Date | |
| Context | Ecotheatre performance at mini-festival, street theatre | Teacher's Signature | |
| Conditions | Group Devised, Presenting piece with support documentation | Weighting | |

Task

In a small group (2-3) you are to collaboratively devise and perform a piece of EcoTheatre at an upcoming guerilla eco-art festival. To ensure minimal negative environmental effects your performance is to be a street theatre performance and adhere to the conventions of EcoTheatre.

Your performance piece is to be a response to a contemporary socio/cultural/environmental emergency.

In order to shape your dramatic action and create dramatic meaning the performances should also explore the some of the following **elements of drama, situation, relationship, focus, mood, tension, space, time, place, symbol, voice and movement.**

To add to the aesthetic element of the performance students should incorporate some of the following **conventions of EcoTheatre rough style, episodic structure, audience contact, documentary reference, activist protagonist.**

A collection will be set up for your performance and any funds raised will be donated to an aid agency that supports those affected by your chosen socio/cultural/environmental emergency.

Conditions: Devised Group practical

- Work in progress and feedback date:
- Three weeks in class and at home time
- Audience: unknown public
- Polished performance
- Documentation of performance structure and 200 word rationale to be submitted on performance day

- Groups: 2-3 students

Length

- Yr. 11 – 4-6 minutes per student
Yr. 12 – 6-8 minutes per student

Criteria – Presenting

- Selection and use of dramatic languages informed by the dramatic perspectives to demonstrate an understanding of the purpose and function of drama
- Communication of action and intended meaning to an audience
- Demonstration of planned and rehearsed skills of performance

SAMPLE TASK SHEET 3 - RESPONDING

| | | | |
|---------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| Student Name | | Task Number | |
| Unit | A ● T I V I S T P R O T A G O N I S T | Class | |
| Unit Focus | Ecotheatre, sustainable theatre, applied theatre | Teacher | |
| Objective | Responding | Due Date | |
| Context | Production proposal for festival application | Teacher's Signature | |
| Conditions | Individual, Visual text with written support | Weighting | |

Task

After viewing _____, you are to write a review of the performance to be published on an ecotheatre blog. Identify the key theme/s or issue/s and discuss how successfully these were explored through the dramatic perspective (contemporary ecotheatre) and the dramatic languages (elements of drama, skills of performance, styles and their conventions). Be sure to discuss your position on how the dramatic languages were manipulated within the performance to explore the key theme/s or issue/s and effect dramatic action and dramatic meaning. Identify what practices the production employed to have a minimal negative effect on the audience and a positive impact on the community. Make recommendations of how you think the production could have been more environmentally friendly, and more worthwhile for the community (local, domestic or international).

Conditions: Individual Written

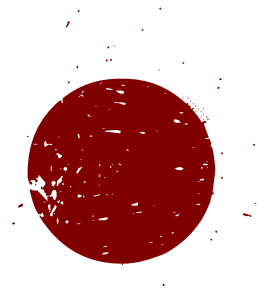
- Use aspects of the production/moments of performance to support your findings
- Write in essay style
- Reference ideas when necessary
- One draft allowed
- Three weeks in class and at home time

Length

Yr. 11 – 800-1000 words (or 4-6 minutes)
 Yr. 12 – 1000-1200 words (or 6-8 minutes)

Criteria – Responding

- Demonstration of knowledge and understanding of the dramatic languages and dramatic perspectives to communicate with a position about dramatic meaning and action
- Analysis and evaluation of dramatic action by interpreting dramatic meaning
- Use of drama terminology, referencing and language conventions



APPENDICES

1. Some tips for creating sustainable theatre
2. Some conventions of eco-theatre
3. Fav quotes from research & Links

SOME TIPS FOR CREATING SUSTAINABLE THEATRE

As theatre artists, we must reexamine our addiction to the cyclical destruction of valuable and often non-renewable resources.

(LAWLER, American Theatre Journal, 2008)

Lighting

1. Avoid stage lighting!
2. If lighting is used, be sure to:
 - Find the most energy efficient lights. (Some theatre lights lose 90% of their energy in heat, not light!)
 - Budget to offset the greenhouse gas emissions created by your use of lighting. Google carbon offsetting to find an organisation working to cool the planet
 - Request a renewable energy option from your electricity supplier
 - Install solar panels or wind turbines to create all of your venues' required energy

Travel

1. Encourage audiences to choose greener transport options. Why not offer discounts/rewards to audience members who walk, cycle or take public transport to your performance site?
2. Create a team of locals to cut down on fuel-reliant travel. Car pool!
3. Create a sustainable touring show – one where the team can carry everything the performance requires!

All Materials

- Use non-toxic paints, adhesives, dyes, etc.
- Salvage used resources rather than buying them new
- Avoid petrochemicals
- Handmake as much as possible
- Find locally made materials and the local waste market i.e. Brisbane's Reverse Garbage

Sets

- Design smart—design for the elements you need
- Design for disassembly (less glue, more screws)
- Reuse sets—plan season around the set, or plan future stagings of the work
- Stop using foam

Costumes

- More renting and thrift- shopping for costumes.
- Make mock-ups from thrift-shop sheets rather than new calico.
- Use sustainable fabrics such as hemp, bamboo, organic cotton, wool.
- Less or no bleaching fabrics
- Less or no hair dye.
- Buy only non-toxic makeup.
- Use only pump hairsprays.
- Dry clean less.

SOME CONVENTIONS OF ECO-THEATRE

Today, the dominant economic system depletes and degrades the ecological system. Therein lies the central theme of grassroots eco-theatre.

...in grassroots eco-theatre ordinary men and women in small towns or urban neighborhoods are the protagonists. The outcome is neither utopia nor dystopia but gritty reality combined with "down home" activism, in a community-based aesthetic which parallels that espoused by Boal for both his Forum Theatre and Invisible Theatre (see Paterson 1994; and Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz 1994). In form it is theatre that practices what it preaches, having an "economy of scale" in production values, yet with heightened theatricality capable of making large-scale connections in a manner similar to ecological thinking.

ROUGH STYLE:

Akin to Peter Brook's notions of "rough theatre" (Brook 1969), there is a simplicity and directness to these performances.

Production values tend toward sparsity or abstraction, so heavy emphasis is placed on the acting, singing, and movement of the live performers. There is economy of materials without economizing on human energy.

EPISODIC STRUCTURE:

The performances are usually organized in a series of short scenes, sometimes without a narrative line. In such fragmentary structures the audience must figure out themes by making connections between the discrete components-interconnectedness that appropriately mirrors an ecological system.

AUDIENCE CONTACT:

Generally, there is a strong involvement with the audience as community, and ample use of direct address, which sometimes implicates the audience, as in the eco-raps and parts of the eco-cabarets.

DOCUMENTARY REFERENCE:

The characters and stories are often based on real people and incidents, either directly. Almost always, interviews and/or group sessions with community representatives are key components in the creative process. Boesing's ensemble even interviewed random people on buses and in restaurants (1995).

ACTIVIST PROTAGONISTS:

The primary characters become or already are activists, engaged in tackling the environmental crises of their communities. The ending of each performance leaves the audience with a model for positive action, in line with Boal's methods, including his preference for multiple protagonists and a "protagonic" role for the audience (see Boal 1992).

FAV RESEARCH QUOTES

“it is applied theatre because the art form becomes a transformative agent that places the audience or participants in direct and immediate situations where they can witness, confront, and deconstruct aspects of their own and others’ actions. Applied theatre is committed to the power of the aesthetic form for raising awareness about how we are situated in this world and what we as individuals and as communities might do to make the world a better place.” (Taylor, 2003, p. xx)

Applied theatre opens up new perspectives, poses options, and anticipates change.

In today’s political and social climate, it is more important than ever to get theatre out of our heads and egos and into our total beings as a demonstration of human possibility and a stimulus for cultural transformation. In NWPL, we

STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In contrast, collaborative learning and social learning are strategies for engaging a small group of stakeholders and experts to work together through a complicated issue by exploring options, collecting data and learning about potential solutions (Daniels and Walker 2001; Keen, Brown and Dyball 2005; Sirianni and Friedland 2001). These strategies recognise that joint ownership of decisions creates collective responsibility for future directions (Andrews, Stevens and Wise 2002; Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000).

LINKS

eco/sustainable/green theatre:

The green theatre |

<http://www.thegreentheater.org/index.htm>

eco theatre |

<http://ecotheater.wordpress.com/how-to-go-green/>

companies for case studies:

earth matters on stage

<http://www.uoregon.edu/~ecodrama/welcome/>
kilter