World theatre traditions

IB DP Theatre research presentation full package

World theatre traditions

- research an unfamiliar theatre tradition as a system of convention, **context**, function and **aesthetics**;
- combine **academic research** with practical exploration in your own body;
- treat the tradition and its community with respect and honesty;

World theatre traditions (2)

- plan a 15-minute presentation that shows before it explains;
- study three traditions in depth: Noh, **Kathakali** and **Peking opera**.

Researching a tradition

- **academic research** : books and articles by scholars, interviews with practitioners, recordings of performances, all cited properly;
- **practical research** : learning the convention in your own body, in workshops, with a teacher or from careful study of recordings, and documenting your attempts on video.
- Name the practitioners, teachers and scholars you learned from.

Researching a tradition (2)

- Find out what outsiders may learn and perform, and what is closed to them, such as parts of a sacred ritual.
- Avoid **cultural appropriation** : taking a convention out of its **context** and using it as decoration.
- Never present the tradition as "exotic", "primitive" or "strange". It has its own history and logic.
- Say honestly what you could not learn from outside the community, and why.

The presentation craft

- rehearse with a clock: the 15 minutes is a maximum, and the examiner stops watching after it;
- let the demonstration carry the analysis: **show**, then say what the showing proved;
- speak to the camera as a real audience, not from a script on your knees;

The presentation craft (2)

- show your sources on screen when you use them, and list them all at the end.
- Description: "Noh actors move very slowly."
- Analysis: "The sliding walk keeps the head level, so the mask never bobs; because the mask is fixed, the actor shows emotion by tilting it slightly up to 'brighten' it or down to 'cloud' it, and a bobbing head would destroy that control. The walk serves the mask."

The tradition kits (chosen examples)

- **Noh** (Japan).
- Noh was developed in the 14th century by the actor Kan'ami and his son Zeami, under the patronage of the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu.
- Zeami wrote treatises on acting that are still studied, including *Fūshikaden* (early 15th century).
- The stage is a square of polished cypress wood with a roof, a painted pine tree on the back wall and a long bridge, the ***hashigakari*** , on which actors enter from another world.

Sources for this lesson

- International Baccalaureate, *Theatre guide* (first assessment 2024).
- B. Brecht, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" (1936), in J. Willett (ed.), *Brecht on Theatre* (1964).
- Zeami, *On the Art of the Nō Drama*, trans. J. T. Rimer and Y. Masakazu (1984).

Sources for this lesson (2)

- P. Zarrilli, *__Kathakali__ Dance-Drama: Where Gods and Demons Come to Play* (2000).
- UNESCO, *Nôgaku theatre*, Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (2008).

Common errors

- Presenting only **academic research**, with no practical exploration of the convention.
- Describing the whole tradition in general terms instead of focusing on one convention.
- Lecturing with photographs instead of showing the convention first.

Common errors (2)

- Calling a tradition "exotic" or "strange", or using it as decoration without its **context**.
- Hiding failed attempts, which are the best evidence of **practical research**.
- Going over 15 minutes, or forgetting the list of sources.

Key terms

- **Research presentation**: a recorded individual presentation of at most 15 minutes on an unfamiliar theatre tradition.
- **Convention**: a distinctive performance practice of a tradition, such as a mask, a walk or a make-up code.
- **Social function**: what a performance does in its community, such as worship, celebration or mourning.

Key terms (2)

- **Practical research**: learning a convention in your own body and documenting the attempts.
- **Cultural appropriation**: using a convention from another culture out of **context**, without understanding or respect.
- **Hashigakari**: the long bridge on which actors enter the Noh stage.

Check yourself

- 1.
- What are the time limit and the two kinds of research required in the **research presentation**? 2.
- Name the four parts of a tradition's system that you should research. 3.
- Why is a filmed failed attempt useful evidence? 4.