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AUTHOR Peterson, Eric E.
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ABSTRACT

Defining readers theatre as a form of aesthetic communication that encompasses ensemble or group oral interpretation including dramatic production of literature, this annotated bibliography emphasizes traditional theory and practice. The 34-item bibliography cites material from the following types of sources and topics: (1) books and journals; (2) description and application; (3) text and adaptation; (4) performance and production; (5) criticism and evaluation; and (6) bibliography. (SKC)

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READERS THEATRE

An Annotated Bibliography

Prepared by

Eric E. Peterson
University of Maine at Orono

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Readers Theatre is a form of aesthetic communication which describes ensemble or group oral interpretation. Most definitions identify Readers Theatre as the dramatic production of literature. Thus the term "Readers Theatre" covers a wide range of dramatic practices from theatre to choral speaking. Rather than document these numerous influences, the following bibliography emphasizes traditional theory and practice by citing representative sources grouped into six categories: books and journals, description and application, text and adaptation, performance and production, criticism and evaluation, and bibliographies. These categories should be considered a guide for the researcher and practitioner and are not intended to be exhaustive or mutually exclusive.

Entries followed by ERIC EJ numbers are articles indexed in Current Index to Journals in Education. These articles can be obtained from your librarian; in most cases, reprints can also be purchased from University Microfilms International, Article Reprint Service, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

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Books and Journals

Bennet, Gordon C. Readers Theatre Comes to Church. Richmond, VA: J. Knox, 1972.

Introduction to the use of Readers Theatre in church worship services, classes, workshops, and seminars. The basic principles and procedures of selecting and preparing materials for production and staging are supplemented with eleven sample scripts.

Breen, Robert S. Chamber Theatre. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978.

Description of a technique for staging fiction which retains literature's narrative elements. The originator of Chamber Theatre provides a theoretical orientation to the analysis of literature, a discussion of staging practices, and excerpts from five sample scripts.

Coger, Leslie Irene and Melvin R. White. Readers Theatre Handbook: A Dramatic Approach to Literature. 3rd. ed. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1982.

A basic source. Introduces Readers Theatre and describes the process of selection, adaptation, and production. Descriptions of productions and sample scripts illustrate a variety of approaches to literature. Includes a ten-page selected, annotated bibliography.

Haas, Richard. Theatres of Interpretation. Ann Arbor, MI: Roberts-Burton, 1976.

A thought-provoking and sometimes playful consideration of the scripting process: from selection, analysis, conventions, and adaptation through rehearsal, production, and criticism. Discussion and sample scripts illustrate the use of drama, narrative, and compiled scripts.

Kleinau, Marion L. and Janet Larsen McHughes. Theatres for Literature: A Practical Aesthetics for Group Interpretation. Sherman Oaks, CA: Alfred, 1980.

An integrated, comprehensive approach to Interpreters Theatre, from analysis to scripting to production. Emphasis is upon showing how to create and produce scripts rather than in providing ready-made scripts. Also examines special audiences and social contexts for Interpreters Theatre.

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Literature in Performance: A Journal of Literary and Performing Art.

Regularly publishes articles on readers theatre, (such as the 1982 symposium on "Media and the Performance of Literature"), production records, interviews, performance reviews, and bibliographies of print and non-print resources.

Long, Beverly Whitaker, Lee Hudson, and Phillis Rienstra Jeffrey. Group Performance of Literature. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1977.

A description of basic principles and approaches to prose, poetry, nonfiction, and children's literature. Primary emphasis is upon consideration of specific group performance productions and sample scripts.

Maclay, Joanna Hawkins. Readers Theatre: Toward a Grammar of Practice. New York: Random House, 1971.

Explores principles of selection, casting, directing, designing, and performing that feature literary texts. A sample script illustrates problems encountered by the director and the application of aesthetic principles.

Pickering, Jerry V. Readers Theatre. Encino, CA: Dickenson, 1975.

Introduction to educational and professional Readers Theatre, and exploration of selection, adaptation, script analysis, and production. Includes three sample scripts and a listing of literary sources.

Readers Theatre News. Available from the Institute for Readers Theatre, P.O. Box 17193, San Diego, CA 92117.

While no longer published, back issues contain articles, interviews, and bibliographies of readers theatre research, productions, recordings, and scripts.

Thompson, David W., ed. Performance of Literature in Historical Perspectives. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983.

Essays on readers theatre include: "From Academic to Social-Political Uses of Performance" by Kay Ellen Capo, "Group Performance in Academic Settings" by Joanna H. Maclay, and "Professional Group Performance of Nondramatic Literature in New York" by Mary France. Hopkins and Brent Bouldin.

Description and Application

King, Judy Yordon. "Chamber Theatre by Any Other Name . . . ?" Speech Teacher, 21 (1972), 193-196. ERIC EJ 064 232.

Chamber Theatre is distinguished from Readers Theatre by the way prose fiction is presented in performance. The use of narrator, point of view, past tense and epic mode differs from other forms of group interpretation.

Pearse, James Allen. "Montage: A Paradigm for Readers Theatre." Studies in Interpretation, Vol. 2. Ed. Esther M. Doyle and Virginia Hastings Floyd. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi N.V., 1977, pp. 297-307.

The virtual experience of Readers Theatre is analogous to montage. The persistence of vision in montage explains how dynamic characteristics create text, and the collision of images unites verbal and visual cues in the audience's imagination.

Ratliff, Gerald Lee. "Beginning Readers Theatre: A Primer for Classroom Performance." 1981, 47p. TRIP. Available from the Speech Communication Association, 5105 Backlick Road, Suite E, Annandale, VA 22003. \$3.00 prepaid. ERIC ED 206 036.

Description of basic readers theatre principles, conventions and techniques. Provides exercises and illustrations for high school and college classroom performances.

Sloyer, Shirlee. "Readers Theatre: Story Dramatization in the Classroom." 1982, 129 p. Available from National Council of the Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801. ERIC ED 217 494.

A comprehensive introduction to selecting, staging, and evaluating readers theatre for elementary school grades. Includes exercises, activities, model scripts, and a bibliography.

Winegarden, Alan D. "The Value of Readers Theatre: Claims, Programs, and Research." 1979, 39p. ERIC ED 182 793.

Exploration of claims and programs supporting Readers Theatre as an educational aid and as therapy. Includes a bibliography.

Text and Adaptation

Bowen, Elbert R. "Adapting the Novel for Production in Readers/Chamber Theatre." Studies in Interpretation. Vol. 2. Ed. Esther M. Doyle and Virginia Hastings Floyd. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi N.V., 1977, pp. 283-296.

Comparison of seven novels and their adaptations reveals quantitative differences: adaptations use a small portion of the literature, tend to retain more dialogue than narration, and may prune episodes and characters.

Miller, Cynthia A. "Concepts for Adapting and Directing a Readers Theatre Production: Symbolism, Synecdoche and Metonymy." Communication Education, 33 (1984), 343-350.

Application of theoretical concepts--symbolism, synecdoche, metonymy--to the adaptation and staging of readers theatre. Discussion of Sylvia Plath's novel, The Bell Jar, illustrates the utility of this approach.

Pearse, James A. "Beyond the Narrational Frame: Interpretation and Metafiction." The Quarterly Journal of Speech, 66 (1980), 73-84. ERIC EJ 221 222.

Description of metafiction's reformulation and manipulation of traditional narrative perspectives. The article explores several examples of metafiction to reveal performance possibilities.

Pelias, Ronald J. "The Use and Misuse of Multiple Casting in Group Performance." Western Journal of Speech Communication, 43 (1979), 224-230.

Adapters divide narrators and characters into multiple voices according to spatial/temporal distinctions, contrasting psychological traits, or narrative shifts in focus. The article examines potential problems and distortions that may occur in multiple casting.

Rienstra, Phillis. "Resurrecting the Past: Historical Documents as Materials for Readers Theatre." Speech Teacher, 21 (1972), 310-314. ERIC EJ 069 184.

The emergence of documents as literature in the Twentieth Century suggests a corpus of materials for Readers Theatre productions. The description of a production based upon the McCarthy Hearings illustrates possibilities for documentary Readers Theatre.

Sandifer, Charles M. "From Print to Rehearsal: A Study of Principles for Adapting Literature to Readers Theatre." Speech Teacher, 20 (1971), 115-120. ERIC EJ 037 412.

A survey of twenty-five authorities on Readers Theatre reveals several differences and agreements on principles of adaptation. The article suggests fundamental principles for selection of material, adaptation, cutting, and staging.

Performance and Production

Abel, Leslie Gillan and Robert M. Post. "Towards a Poor Readers Theatre." The Quarterly Journal of Speech, 59 (1973), 436-442.

Description of Jerzy Grotowski's approach to theatre and its application to Readers Theatre. A Poor Readers Theatre emphasizes the interrelationship of close attention to the literary text, the interpreter, and the audience.

Hirschfeld-Medalia, Adeline. "Stylized Movement in Interpreters Theatre." Communication Education, 25 (1976), 111-120. ERIC EJ 137 855.

Proposes a system of training which combines movement and musical accompaniment with the spoken word. Discussion of criteria for training and explication of sources such as Grotowski, Laban, Tai Chi, and mime.

Illinois Speech and Theatre Journal, 26 (Fall, 1972). ERIC ED 071 129.

Special issue on oral interpretation and Readers Theatre. Includes: "Teaching Oral Interpretation to Children Through Readers Theatre," by Margaret Parret; "Interpreters Theatre in the Secondary Curriculum," by Leslie Irene Cogger; "Chamber Theatre," by Robert Breen; and "Acting and Interpretation: Suggestions for Comparison," by Marion Kleinau and Janet Larsen McHughes.

Miller, Pamela Cook and Joan M. Gibson. "Self Reference in Interpretive Performance." Central States Speech Journal, 30 (1979), 332-341.

Language's ability for self reference can be used as a vehicle for artistic expression. The use of self reference in speaker, time, space, and movement suggests possibilities for presentational staging and understanding oral interpretation.

Schneider, Raymond. "The Visible Metaphor." Communication Education, 25 (1976), 121-126. ERIC EJ 137 856.

The symbolic treatment of literature yields a unique stage image or ritual that is a visible metaphor. Illustrated by a production of D. H. Lawrence's "The Horse Dealer's Daughter."

Taft-Kaufman, Jill. "Creative Collaboration: The Rehearsal Process in Chamber Theatre." Communication Education, 32 (1983), 428-434. ERIC ED 212 008.

Improvisational exercises and performer collaboration in rehearsal can enrich both the performers' understanding and the resulting performance.

Valentine, K. B. "Readers Theatre Productions of Combined Arts: The Pre-Raphaelite Paradigm." Western Journal of Speech Communication, 41 (1977), 98-109. ERIC EJ 16D 294.

Exploration of the relation of art and literature exemplified by artists ranging from William Morris to Christina Rossetti. After identifying ideological, subject, and stylistic correspondences, the author suggests a program and provides an annotated bibliography of sources on media.

Criticism and Evaluation

Brooks, Keith and Josh Crane. "Semantic Agreement in Readers Theatre." Western Speech, 38 (1974), 124-132.

An investigation of cast and audience consensus on the perceived meaning of interpreted literature. The use of a semantic differential indicates that skilled, well-directed performers presenting well-chosen, unified scripts were most able to involve audiences.

Dalan, Nonna Childress. "Audience Response to Use of Offstage Focus and Onstage Focus in Readers Theatre." Speech Monographs, 38 (1971), 74-77. ERIC EJ 035 968.

Experimental study of audience comprehension and aesthetic response to offstage and onstage focus. Results of a semantic differential indicate that the choice of focus does not affect audience comprehension.

Frandsen, Kenneth D., James R. Rockey, and Marion Kleinau. "Changes in the Factorial Composition of a Semantic Differential as a Function of Differences in Readers Theatre Production." Speech Monographs, 32 (1965), 112-118.

Explores the possibility of measuring responses to productions by means of a general semantic differential utilizing five dimensions: evaluation (general), potency, activity, content evaluation, and intent evaluation. Discussion of problems and reservations in applying a semantic differential to readers theatre.

Sturges, Christine A. "The Effect of a Narrator's Presence on Audience Response to Character in the Staging of Narrative Literature." Speech Teacher, 24 (1975), 46-52. ERIC EJ 11D 774.

An experiment with high school students reveals that a narrator's presence affects student response to character, the complexity of character relationship, the social distance between character and audience, and the acceptance of character reliability.

Bibliographies

Hunt, Susan A. "Readers Theater Bibliography: Supplement and Up-Date." Central States Speech Journal, 27 (1976), 320-321. A longer version appears in Readers Theatre News, 4 (Fall, 1976), 10-11 and 16.

Supplements earlier Clark S. Marlton bibliographies in Central States Speech Journal, 12 (1961), 134-137; and 17 (1966), 33-39.