

The 2017 Reader's Theatre

On 28 May 2017, students of the “Rhetorical Skills: Theory & Practice” course took part in the annual Reader’s Theatre, where they presented scenes from a variety of genres including comedy, tragedy, parody and drama.

The course helps students gain experience in public speaking and widens their general knowledge in the field of rhetoric. Throughout the course students become familiar with a wide range of famous speeches, plays and more in all shapes and forms, such as eulogies, Nobel prize speeches, influential speeches and the remarkable Shakespearean plays.

Taught Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals and devices from the very beginning of the course, the students acquired a strong foundation and understanding on how to detect powerful and effective speeches, giving them tools to pass this knowledge on to the next generation.

I believe I speak on behalf of everyone who took part in the Reader’s Theatre by defining it as a one-of-a-kind experience that we will always look back on. I am very proud of everyone who took part, myself included. Given the applause, laughs and smiles during the performance, I think we gave an entertaining and interesting performance to the English Department. I enjoyed rehearsing and performing with my fellow classmates. I would like to thank Dr. Nancy Peled for her guidance and critique throughout our rehearsals. Like others, I am looking forward to next year's Reader’s Theatre.

Kesia Mitchell, first-year student

June, 2017

The Pleasure of Expressive Reading

Kesia’s introduction to this year’s event reveals how empowered the students feel once they have taken the course, proving Elisheva right in her inspiration to introduce the Rhetorical Skills course into the curriculum. For teachers to attract and hold their students’ attention, they must know how to read expressively, which suggests reading with proper enunciation, intonation, speed and voice projection. The course offers many advantages: through repeated exposure to texts, it improves fluency and reading comprehension, which in turn builds confidence in the ability to read in front of an audience. By looking up words for full comprehension and re-reading a text repeatedly, the students inevitably widen their vocabulary so that even their writing benefits from the engagement. Students and lecturers alike agree that the involvement in the course and the preparations for the annual Reader’s Theatre afford long-term gains, and Nancy Peled, who teaches the course, deserves our profuse thanks.

This year’s Reader’s Theatre provided the same excitement and pleasure as in previous years. Proof of the students’ newly acquired confidence, they waited before their performance without anxiety and performed greatly both while introducing pieces read by others and while reading their own texts. The selection of photos actually highlights the students’ accomplishment and enjoyment.



Addi, Dorit, Nomi and Rotem rehearse their positions just before the beginning of the event.



The whole class happily relaxed before their performance

Bat Rosenberg and Danielle Malka read "Gray Matter," Jeanette Farr's one-act play, in which two strangers – Marge, a 66-year-old white woman and Russel, a 21-year-old black man – meet by chance in a police station waiting room. They begin to talk, and in the course of their conversation, learn about racial profiling, trust, and sharing. Bat's and Danielle's body language matched their intonation and they gave the feeling that they had lived the part throughout their lives.



Bat as Russel and Danielle as Marge



Michal and Mor introducing the next piece, as an example of the many other announcers

Nitsan Shaked, Aniko Dekel, & Hadas Cohen read an extract from Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*, one of his famous trilogy about Oedipus, the former king of Thebes, who unknowingly murders his father and marries his own mother, Queen Jocasta. Oedipus' sons, Eteocles and Polynices, fight for the control of the kingdom, causing a civil war. When both brothers die, Creon (Antigone's uncle) becomes the official ruler of Thebes and he decrees capital punishment as the penalty for anyone burying Polynices, a penalty Antigone faces willingly. At the beginning of the play, she even tries to persuade her sister Ismene to help her defy Creon and bury their brother's corpse.



Nitsan as Creon



Aniko as Ismene and Hadas as Antigone

Thereafter Manar Mansour & Muna Abu Baker read Somerset Maugham's humorous short story "The Luncheon," in which a woman secures a fancy meal at one of the most expensive restaurants in Paris by exploiting a young author, the narrator of the story, by pretending an interest in his writing. The story depicts early twentieth-century society through the calculating character of the woman, on the one hand, and the foolish vanity of the man, on the other, at a time when appearances and conventions mattered more than reality.



Manar as the lady and above as the writer in the dialogue



Muna as the narrator

Addi Arazy, Nomi Klein, Dorit Kaganovich & Rotem Cohen read "Thursday," an extract from Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the first in a trilogy which tells the story of Arthur Dent, and his adventures as the sole survivor of the earth's demolition. The narrative follows his misadventures when

rescued from Earth's destruction by Ford Prefect, a human-like alien writer for the eccentric, electronic travel guide *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.



Nomi as Dent and Rotem as Ford



Dorit and Addi as the narrators

Shany Nidam & Maria Zaytsev then read Walter Wykes' *The Salmon Tribunal*, a play about two women who face off over a shared lover, a scenario they played before. Only this time, they have swapped roles: the mistress has become the wife and the ex-wife has become the mistress. In colloquial language full of threats and strong feelings, they perform in front of the audience who must judge the situation as in a court trial.



Maria as the ex-wife turned lover and Shany as the ex-lover turned wife

Kesia Mitchell, Michal Feygin, Mor Marom & Vicky Nadtochayev performed Jane Yolen's "Sleeping Ugly, her light, bright and entertaining twist on the Brothers Grimm 's classic fairy tale "Sleeping Beauty." Beautiful in appearance, Princess Miserella has an ugly character, contrary to Plain Jane.



Mor as Plain Jane, Michal as Princess Miserella and Kesia as the fairy godmother



Vicky as the narrator

Bian Daher & David Efrat read an extract from Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, a tribute to the prominent Shakespearean play *Hamlet*, in which he portrays Hamlet's story through the eyes of two minor characters from Shakespeare's original play. Positioning the two as heroes, with only brief appearances of Shakespeare's original main characters, Stoppard's tragic, comic, and absurdist version of the story calls fate, free will, art, reality and the very constructs of theatre into question.



Bian as Guildenstern and David as Rosencrantz

Merav Ben Meir & Moran Regev read *The King and I*, the fifth musical by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II based on Margaret Landon's novel *Anna and the King of Siam*, derived from the memoirs of Anna Leonowens, from the time she spent with King Mongkut of Siam. *The King and I* tells the moving story of Anna, an American governess, who tries to help an Eastern king to come to terms with the modern world.



Moran as the King of Siam and Merav as Anna

Allowing the performers to test their progress, the event provided welcome entertainment just before the end of the academic year. The evident enjoyment of the audience on its own must have convinced the students of their accomplishment, justifying their arduous work. The Dean of the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Dr. Hadas Hirsch, who attended the whole performance, paid the students a well-earned compliment by expressing awe at their achievement. All present shared her opinion. Congratulations to Nancy and her students!

Photos and adapted text by Danielle Schaub