NYU Steinhardt
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development

MUSIC & PERFORMING ARTS PROFESSIONS
PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL THEATRE
Presents

PLAYS from the
PROVINCETOWN PLAYERS

Aria da Capo
by Edna St. Vincent Millay
Fog
by Eugene O'Neill
Trifles
by Susan Glaspell
with additional material created by Joe Salvatore and the company

CAST:
Rebecca Branscom
Tyler Grimes
Augustus Jacobson
Robert Keith
Chris Lindsey
Emily Mansfield
Heidi Schoenenberger
Rachel Whorton

DIRECTOR: Joe Salvatore
DRAMATURG: Jenni Werner
SCENIC DESIGN: Andy Hall
LIGHTING DESIGN: Emily Stork
 Costume Design: Traci DiGesu
SOUND DESIGN/COMPOSER: Benjamin Johnson
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR: Randy Susevich
PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER: Talia Krispel

February 25-26 and March 3-5, 2011 at 8:00PM
February 27 and March 6, 2011 at 3:00PM

The Provincetown Playhouse, 133 MacDougal Street
ADMISSION: $15 General, $5 Students and Seniors

NYU Ticket Central
A Division of NYU Campus Services
WWW.NYU.EDU/TICKETCENTRAL/CALENDAR
212.998.3101 or 866.818.9818
866 LAGUARDIA PLACE AT WASHINGTON SQUARE
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
Dear Teachers,

Welcome to the Program in Educational Theatre’s production of *Plays from the Provincetown Playhouse* at New York University.

Part of NYU’s educational mission is to bring theatre to children of all ages, cultures, and economic backgrounds. We strive to expand students’ knowledge while providing a welcoming atmosphere in our theatre. In order to enhance your theatrical experience and broaden students’ understanding, we urge you to examine our guide and classroom activities. As your classroom embarks on a discovery of the theatrical legacy of the Provincetown, we invite you to immerse yourself in the realm of theatre.

This production has been developed for a middle and high school aged audience. Please feel free to use the information in this Educational Guide to enhance your knowledge of the performance and create discussion afterwards. If you would like a Teaching Artist to guide you through these activities or facilitate a complimentary lesson, please email us to set up an appointment. Each lesson looks at possible activities based on the themes presented. You and your students can examine these themes and talk about your discoveries.

Please feel free to contact our program anytime with questions, comments, or suggestions as to how to apply this guide to your teaching. You can call us at: (212) 998-5868 or email ed.theatre@nyu.edu.

Philip Taylor, PhD
Director
Program in Educational Theatre

Amissa Miller
Super Adjunct
Editor, Resource Guide
Program in Educational Theatre
# Table of Contents

Director’s Note........................................................................................................Page 4
Learning Standards for NY State.................................................................Page 6
Theatre Etiquette.................................................................................................Page 7
In Their Own Words..........................................................................................Page 8
Pre-Performance Lesson #1: Uncovering Historical Context.................Page 10
Pre-Performance Lesson #2: Creating Original Characters...............Page 12
Questions to Consider During the Performance........................................Page 14
Post-Performance Lesson #1: Working with Personal Source Material.....Page 16
Post-Performance Lesson #2: Free Writing and Collective Response Poem....Page 18
Sources................................................................................................................Page 20
In preparation to direct the three plays featured in *Plays from the Provincetown Players*, I needed to come up with a concept that would allow me to unify three seemingly disparate one-act plays. While each one is a gem on its own, presented together they can become a bit more unwieldy.

Part of what has fascinated me about the controversy surrounding the renovation and reconstruction of the Provincetown Playhouse has been the opposition of many community members to structural change within the theatre. History tells us that the original building was a stable, then a bottle factory, and then finally a theatre when in 1918 George “Jig” Cram Cook rented the space and renovated it to be suitable for performances by the Provincetown Players.

To address the community members’ concerns, NYU agreed to maintain the integrity of the four walls of the original structure, but the interior would be gutted and redesigned to reflect the needs of a modern, 21st century theatre-making process. However, at one point during the demolition of the interior and the adjacent building, a large section of the theatre’s north wall was adversely affected. Some say that NYU was trying to demolish the building. I know from having worked in this space before the renovation/reconstruction and working in it now that the more likely reason was that the wall itself was extremely delicate and had actually been weakened in prior renovations, long before NYU even owned the property.

Regardless of what side one chooses to believe in that argument, the more important concept for me lies with dramatic possibilities of a wall collapsing and what might lie beneath and within that collapse. I became interested in the idea of what might have been buried under the wall or even encased in the wall. Could the Provincetown Players have left artifacts behind, and what would happen if someone found those artifacts? How could I use an incident like this as the catalyst for performing these three one-act plays?
We haven’t included a collapsed wall in our production, but I have asked the scenic designer, Andy Hall, to take us backwards in recent time, to a moment when an imagined Provincetown Playhouse is being renovated. In our initial discussions about scenic possibilities, I realized that all three plays have an element of discovery, and that many of the characters ultimately come to see what’s present in their own worlds through these discoveries. Similarly, I think that in the renovated Provincetown Playhouse, even though it has structurally changed, we can still “see” what’s here: the legacies of Edna St. Vincent Millay, Eugene O’Neill, Susan Glaspell and many others who’ve worked here over the last century. Legacy doesn’t disappear when a physical structure changes, or as one of the characters in our original play states, “Legacy is more than physical.”

Our journey to discover these legacies has taken us through an exciting exploration of Aria da Capo, Fog, and Trifles, as well as several other pieces of writing by and about the three playwrights, the playhouse, and the Provincetown Players. We have included many of our discoveries in the devised sections of our script, so as the performance unfolds, you will notice historical facts, important quotations, and other fictional writings woven into the experience. It is with great excitement that we share our research findings with you through this performance.

Joe Salvatore, director and playwright

The Provincetown Theater façade in the 1930s
Learning Standards for the Arts in New York State

Standard 1: Creating, Performing and Participating in the Arts
Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) and participate in various roles in the arts.

Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources
Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles.

Standard 3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art
Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.

Standard 4: Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts
Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic work.

Learning Standards for Language Arts in New York State

Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.

Standard 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression. Students will read and listen to oral, written, and electronically produced texts and performances, relate texts and performances to their own lives, and develop an understanding of the diverse social, historical, and cultural dimensions the texts and performances represent. As speakers and writers, students will use oral and written language for self-expression and artistic creation.
Standard 3: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation. As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information, and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will present, in oral and written language and from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information, and issues.

Standard 4: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction. Students will use oral and written language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to enrich their understanding of people and their views.

Theatre Etiquette

It is essential that students understand that the experience of going to the theatre requires a certain kind of interaction between audience members and the cast of a show. There are some important ground rules that we must address in order to assure that the show goes on successfully.

We ask that all audience members:

1) Be respectful to the performers by not talking to others during the show.

2) Stay seated during the performance.

3) Turn off all cell phones.

4) Refrain from eating and drinking in the theatre.

5) Remember that photography and video are not allowed in the theatre.

6) Feel free to laugh, cry, and applaud when appropriate.

7) Enjoy the show!
The following quotations from Susan Glaspell, Eugene O’Neill, and Edna St. Vincent Millay have been pulled from a variety of sources, and the playwrights speak these words as part of their conversations throughout the production. In some cases the quotations have been edited slightly for ease of speaking, as we discovered in rehearsal that sometimes what a person has written is not always easy to speak in a natural way. We found these quotations to be particularly inspiring, which is why we have chosen to include them in the production and in this curriculum guide.

On women and being a woman
Women do sometimes have to lie about their age. You need not be pretty, but you must be bright, vivacious, interesting. You are not expected to spend your life buried in an encyclopedia, but . . . be able to talk with intelligence and wit. When the man does come into view, you must stand ready to cope with him on his own grounds rather than docilely and demurely wait for him to fill your ear with pretty nothings.

--- Susan Glaspell

I am like the flowers in the hot-house, a forced production...How would it feel to be free? And to be a free thinker?

--- Susan Glaspell

A woman poet is not at all different from a man poet. She should write from the same kind of life, from the same kind of experience, and should be judged by the same standards. If she is unable to do this, then she should stop writing. A poet is a poet. What you produce, what you create must stand on its own feet, regardless of your sex. We are supposed to have won all the battles for our rights to be individuals, but in the arts women are still put in a class by themselves, and I resent it.

--- Edna St. Vincent Millay

On Eugene O’Neill
Two Irishmen, one old and one young, had arrived and taken a shack just up the street. “Terry,” I said to the one not young, “haven’t you a play to read to us?” “No,” he said, “I don’t write, I just think, and sometimes talk. But Mr. O’Neill has got a whole trunk full of plays.” So Gene took Bound East for Cardiff from his trunk, and he stayed out in the dining-room while we read the play. He was not left alone in the dining room when the reading had finished. Then we knew what we were for.

--- Susan Glaspell
Eugene O’Neill on the sea
I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky!

--- from *Long Day’s Journey into Night*

Beauty and truth are manifest in the sea. Humanity is simply part of the picture.

On his own suicide attempt
I was dead, and death was nothing but a continuation of life as it had been when one left it. A wheel that turned endlessly round and round back to the same old situation. This was what purgatory was—or was it hell itself? My body was dead, but I was there too.

--- Eugene O’Neill

On writing *Trifles*
When I was a newspaper reporter out in Iowa, I was sent down-state to do a murder trial, and I never forgot going into the kitchen of a woman locked up in town. I had meant to do it as a short story, but the stage took it for its own. I did not know how to write a play, but my husband forced me to. So I went into the theatre, sat alone on one of our wooden benches without a back, and looked a long time at the bare little stage. I began to see a kitchen and the exact location of a stove, table, and stairs to a second floor. I could also see the men and women who would enter the space. Two or three men, I wasn’t sure which, but sure enough about the two women, who hung back, reluctant to enter that kitchen. That play was *Trifles.*

--- Susan Glaspell

On the Provincetown Players
That was what we meant by the Provincetown Players. A radiant moment, which may come into being when friends meet is itself a creation, and more than any one of us. That is a creation with consciousness itself. It may reverberate far.

--- Susan Glaspell
The façade of the newly renovated Provincetown Playhouse
Counterclockwise from top: Susan Glaspell, Eugene O’Neill and Edna St. Vincent Millay
Pre-Performance Lesson #1
Uncovering Historical Context

Your students will be better prepared to see the performance if they have some understanding of the Provincetown Playhouse, the Provincetown Players and the three playwrights whose plays are featured in the production. This activity will give students the opportunity to research these elements and share their findings with the class.

This activity involves uncovering more information about the Provincetown Players and the three playwrights: Susan Glaspell, Eugene O’Neill and Edna St. Vincent Millay. You may have students in your classroom that have some knowledge about the group or these writers already. These students may become group leaders in the following portion of the activity.

First split the class into three groups. One group will focus on the Provincetown Playhouse, one group will focus on the Provincetown Players, and the third group will focus on the playwrights (Susan Glaspell, Eugene O’Neill and Edna St. Vincent Millay). Each group will receive a set of questions that they will need to answer. Suggest that the larger group divide into smaller groups, with each small group tackling one of the questions. Give each group some sheets of newsprint and markers. The groups will need to record their findings for sharing with the entire class. Here are the questions for each of the three large groups:

The Provincetown Playhouse
- When did the Provincetown Playhouse present its first play?
- Where was the original Provincetown Playhouse and where did it move to?
- When did the newly renovated Provincetown reopen?

The Provincetown Players
- Who were the Provincetown Players and when did they form?
- How did the group get its name?
- What impact did the group have on the American theater?

The Playwrights: Susan Glaspell, Eugene O’Neill and Edna St. Vincent Millay
(Each of the smaller groups may focus on one playwright)
- What inspired this person to become a writer?
- What kind of writing is s/he most known for? What are some of this person’s most famous works?
- How was this playwright’s work similar to and/or different from other plays of the time?
Give the groups time in the library and/or time on the internet to research these areas for their assigned topic area. The purpose of this exercise is not to present a full report. Rather, the group is gathering raw data and information that might be used in a report. Give them a prescribed amount of time, like 20-25 minutes, and allow them to search. Some of your students may already know a lot about one of these areas, and that’s fine. That information should be included in their research. Make sure that the groups are recording the information on the newsprint as they gather it.

Once they have worked for the prescribed amount of time, have the smaller groups for each topic reassemble. The large group should then pick an area in the room to post their sheets of newsprint. Once all the newsprint has been posted, give the students ten minutes to do a gallery tour of the findings. They should walk from area to area, at their own pace, and examine the findings. As they are reading, they should note any questions that they have. After the gallery tour, allow the students in each group to field some questions from their classmates. Note questions that can’t be answered, as these may be answered by the performance or could be part of a future activity.

Once students see the plays, they may want to go back and revisit this activity in more depth. The initial work on this lesson could also turn into a larger research project that deals with American literature, history, and social studies.

The Provincetown Playhouse exterior
Pre-Performance Lesson Plan #2
Creating Original Characters

In this activity, students will experience the process of creating characters from scratch, using the same devising model employed by the actors in Plays from the Provincetown Players. These characters will be unique individuals who exist in the context of an adventurous journey.

Begin with a group discussion of the idea of the typical adventure story. Ask the students to brainstorm examples that they know from books, films, television shows or any other medium where characters go on an adventure. What motivates a person to go on an adventure? List their responses on large post-it paper.

Next, ask your students to generate a list of some of the typical character types (or, stock characters) that we often see in stories that involve an adventure. Examples include stock characters like the “hero/ine” (a leader who may or may not want that title), the “brain” (one who answers questions, solves puzzles and/or has valuable information) and the “joker” (one who lightens the mood, particularly when things get scary or difficult during the adventure). List their responses on large post-it paper.

Explain to your students that they will now have the opportunity to create an original character who is about to embark on an adventure. Give each student a large piece of paper and a marker, and ask them to complete the following tasks and answer the following questions, keeping in mind the ideas and stock characters they’ve just discussed.

- Think about how you want this person to be different from you – how do you want her/him to be different, how do you know s/he is different?

- Think about attributes about yourself that you want to bring into this character – what about you do you want to play within this character? These attributes can be physical, emotional, mental, etc.

- What is the character’s favorite color?

- Favorite food?
Relationship status?

What do you know about family background, history?

Where will the character be and what would the character like to be doing in 10 years?

What is the character’s greatest dream? Worst nightmare?

Political affiliation?

Age of character?

Where does the character come from? Where is home?

What is the character’s secret that no one else knows?

Give the character a name.

After this exercise, break your class up into small groups (3-4 students per group). Each student will introduce her/his character to the other members of the group, selecting the most important information to share from the previous exercise. As a group, they will have about 15 minutes to generate a short improvisational scene in which their characters find themselves on an adventure together. Ask the students to determine three important pieces of information: the location of their scene, the relationships between their characters and the activity that they are doing as they embark on this adventure. They will then share their scenes with the class.

After completing this activity, students should have a better understanding of the process of devising original characters and improvising original scenes. They will view the performance through this lens, knowing that they have used the same model as the actors onstage.
The following are questions to consider during the performance:

1. What is the first thing that you notice as you enter the theatre? How does your relationship to the theatre change as the performance begins to unfold?

2. What contemporary character do you identify with the most in the performance? Why? How is this character similar to you? How is the character different from you?

3. How are the actors differentiating between characters when they play more than one role in the production?

4. What is the purpose of the sound in this performance? What is the difference between when the sound designer uses music and when the sound designer uses sound effects?

5. What does the scenic design represent? What do the costumes represent? Why do you think the designers chose these colors and shapes for the designs? How do scenic elements and costumes change throughout the performance?

Students in rehearsal for *Plays from the Provincetown Players*
6. How does the lighting design affect the mood of the performance? Can you tell when the lighting is changing or are the changes very subtle? How does the lighting help contribute to your understanding of the different environments for each play?

7. Can you articulate a theme or message for each of the three plays? Is there a theme or message for the overall performance? What is it and how do you know what it is?

8. How does the presence of the playwrights on stage throughout the performance affect your understanding of the plays? Why do you think the playwrights have been included? What do they represent?

9. How are the styles of the three plays different? How are they similar? How does the style of the contemporary scenes compare to the style of the three plays?

10. What parts of the performance are you enjoying the most? Why? What parts of the performance are you finding confusing? How would you clarify these sections? What suggestions do you have for the production team (director, actors, and designers)?

Students in rehearsal for *Plays from the Provincetown Players*
Post-Performance Lesson #1
Working with Personal Source Material

A few days before you plan to do this activity, assign your students the following task:

*Imagine that you have been asked to leave behind an object in a box, much like the objects in the box that was discovered by the characters in Plays from the Provincetown Players. Please bring in at least one object or image that relates to a discovery that you’ve made. Do not bring in something that is fragile or valuable. Also, be prepared to discuss the discovery and why you’ve chosen this particular object or image.*

If students need an example, they might think about a photo, a postcard, or some kind of souvenir. The idea is that the object or the image prompts some kind of story that they can share with the group.

On the day that you have designated for the students to bring in their objects or images, have a place where all the pieces can be placed. Ideally, your goal should be to create an installation collage of sorts. A long piece of butcher paper on the floor, or a couple of large tables will work well. One at a time, have each student place her/his image into the collage. By the time the collage is finished, you should have a revealing piece of art that tells the group something about the journeys that they consider valuable and/or memorable.

Invite the class to gather around the collage and to observe the piece as a whole. What do they see? Now ask them to view the collage paying close attention to all of the individual pieces. What do they see now? What is missing from the collage? What kinds of discoveries can be inferred from the collage? What discoveries, if any, have been shared by more than one individual? This final question is the most important question for the group to consider, and it might be helpful to record the group’s responses somewhere in the room.

Have students break into small groups of four or five and ask them to use movement to visually represent a shared discovery that they see from the collage. Let them know that their movement pieces must follow these parameters:
The discovery must CAREFULLY and RESPECTFULLY utilize one of the images or objects from the collage.

The conditions before the discovery must be clear to the audience.

The moment of discovery must be made clear to the audience.

While the moment of discovery must be clear to the audience, it might not be literal. It could be helpful to model this for the class or to identify examples of this from *Plays from the Provincetown Players*.

Once the groups understand the parameters for the project, give them about ten minutes to work on the exercise. After the working period, have the groups share in pairs, and ask the viewing group to provide three useful suggestions to the presenting group. These suggestions should be constructive and valuable as ways to clarify the piece. Once the revision period is complete, the groups should switch roles and repeat the sharing process. Then have each group give its piece a title, and have all groups share with the entire class.

After completing this activity, your students should have a better understanding of the process of using personal source material to create original work. It will also allow them to think of their own personal objects as potential artifacts for future generations to discover. Even though the objects and images that students used in the creation process might not have been their own, they may have seen or experienced their objects from the collage in a new and thought-provoking way as a result of another group’s work.
This activity invites students to respond to a central theme explored in *Plays from the Provincetown Players*: the impact of history on both our present and our future. Begin by posting the following lines on a chalkboard, whiteboard or large post-it paper:

*I saw and heard and knew at last  
The How and Why of all things, past,  
And present, and forevermore.*

Ask your students to recall these lines from the performance, generating responses to how the characters in the play discovered them and what impact these lines had on their journey throughout the play. Explain to your students that these lines come from the poem “Renascence,” by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Just as these lines, found on top of a box of artifacts discovered by the young people in the play, were the impetus for a discovery, your students will use them as an impetus for an internal discovery.

Explain to your students that these lines will be their prompt for a writing exercise exploring their relationship with history. Ask them to reflect on their interpretation of the lines and how the theme might connect to their own lives. Allow students about 15 minutes to write. Encourage them to embrace the concept of “free writing,” which means that they allow themselves to write continuously without stopping. Tell them that they can write in whatever form makes sense to them individually: sentences, bullet points, poetry, song lyrics, etc.

Once they’ve finished writing, ask each student to pick one sentence or line that they’d like to share with the group. Hand each student a strip of paper, and ask them to write their line or sentence on the strip. Collect all the strips of paper, mix them up, and allow each student to pick one. Have the students read the lines out loud one by one. Facilitate a brief discussion about what they’ve just heard from their fellow writers. What connections can they draw between the lines? Are there striking similarities and/or differences between the lines? What words or images came up frequently? Are there words or images that they expected to hear but didn’t?
Now explain to your students that they will use these lines to create their own collective response poem. Create an open space on a table or on the floor, and spread out a large sheet of paper. Each student will get one piece of tape. One by one, ask each student to tape her/his line on the sheet in relation to another line. Remind them that they are creating this poem collectively, which means that they must decide how and where their individual line fits into the larger work. Each student may move ONE previously placed line if s/he feels that it helps to give their line the most meaningful context.

Once all of the lines have been placed, have the group review their poem. If they have revisions that are agreed upon by the group, they may move lines as needed. When the poem is complete, hang it up for display in the classroom.
Additional material for the script is drawn from the following sources:


Bryan, Patricia and Tom Wolf. www.midnightassassin.com


Sources


