BA (Hons)

Theatre Studies

Online

Sample Unit
TS400

The Role of the Audience
Sample Unit

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Every effort is made to correct any typographical errors. Module units are revised annually. Therefore, you are encouraged to inform the Online Learning office of any errors that they find.
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1.1. Module outline

Module Title: The Role of the Audience
Module Number: TS400
Level: 4

1.2 The purpose of this unit

This unit has been developed to enable you to sample some of the ways you will study on our online Theatre Studies programme. The BA (Hons) Degree as a whole is divided into modules of work each worth 20 academic credits, and each module is divided into three units. This sample unit would comprise a third of a module and involve a month’s work (10-12 hours a week).

This unit makes references to coursework, forums and other modules within the programme’s portfolio and aims to give you an idea of the kind of tasks we will set you. We encourage you to dip in to the material and test your own suitability for online learning. If you choose to join us you can include your work on this unit as part of your first coursework e-portfolio and be rewarded for your efforts.

1.3 The aims of the unit

- To introduce you to our learning materials and enable you to study a key topic in advance of beginning your studies;
- to develop your understanding of the role of the audience in theatre and performance of all kinds.

1.4 What do I have to do in this unit?

- Read, watch and interact with a variety of online and offline sources relating to some of the roles of the audience in performance;
- complete a series of tasks and exercises to test your understanding of key ideas.
1.5 Guidance

The symbol on the left indicates that your attention is being drawn to a specific skill. You will see this sign at various points in your modules. As a degree-level student you are required to reflect on how you learn and to develop new skills as well as build your knowledge. When prompted by this sign you will be required to take a short detour to think carefully about a specific skill whether this is technical, critical or presentational.

When you are enrolled on the programme you will keep a Coursework e-Portfolio for all tasks and sometimes you will be asked post your answers to the module Forum to share with others. For the purposes of this Sample Unit: *TS400 The Role of the Audience*, I encourage you to try to work through the tasks and gather your answers in sequence. It is good scholarly practice to always label responses clearly and add a date to show when you completed them. You are not expected to write at length but in sufficient detail to respond to the task and provide useful notes you can look back on. Remember, if you join the programme you can upload your responses to this unit to your study of TS401 Theatres at Work and receive credit for your efforts.

When you have finished the task continue reading. We will return to your list at the end of this unit.
2 THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

2.1 Introduction

At all levels of the Theatre Studies programme one of the key roles you will have to play is that of the audience member. This unit sets out to explore some of the ways we can examine this important role and aims to provide you with a foundation of a range of critical perspectives and introduce some key terms. As you may be considering enrolling on a theatre studies programme I might assume with some confidence that you have performed this role on many occasions in the past. Let’s begin with a simple task.

COURSEWORK TASK 1

Compile a list of the events you have recently attended where you have been part of an audience.

- Try to identify what your role has been on each occasion.
- How did performing the role change your behaviour for the duration of the event?

It might be that your list of roles includes being a member of an audience at plays and perhaps other formal events such as concerts or even films. Similarly, when we think of performing a ‘role’ as an audience we might rightly generalise that this role requires us to watch, to listen and respond in a concentrated way. We are required to pay attention at a level that extends beyond ‘daily’ behaviour\(^1\). So far, so good, but, these sorts of behaviours might be just as appropriate if we were part of an “audience” in a range of different situations such as part of a church congregation, a street rally, a carnival, political hustings and so on, and each of these events might be regarded as requiring us to perform a specific role.

In this unit we are going to explore some of the elements of the role of the audience member that we often take for granted. There are untold volumes of scholarly books and articles crammed with complex theories about the different ways we engage with theatre from the audience member’s perspective and in TS400 I will attempt to sketch some of the main ideas and introduce key terminology which will re-emerge with regularity in later modules on the programme.

\(^1\) ‘Daily’ is a term used by Eugenio Barba to distinguish action in performance from everyday behaviour. The performer’s behaviour, by contrast, is ‘extra daily’.
SKILL: CRITICAL RESEARCH

This section is going to draw attention to ways of looking at the same topic (the role of the audience member) by borrowing insights drawn from different critical methodologies. In your Modules, key words will often be highlighted in bold and you are encouraged to build new terminology into your vocabulary and consider a range of ways it might be used. If we are going to examine some critical methodologies we need to begin by noting that a methodology is not the same thing as a method – although these words are sometimes used interchangeably. Where a method might describe the ways and means of undertaking something (e.g. observing, participating and listening are all methods of engagement) a methodology describes the logics and theories that inform such methods: in this example, these would be theories about different ways of observing, participating and listening.

However, the aim of this section is not to dig deeply into the theories surrounding the roles of the audience member but to establish a foundation on which you can build your understanding of the topic as your studies develop. As we move through a range of critical approaches, try to bear the methodological frames in mind as you read. Let’s begin with some fundamentals.

2.2 The audience member as social participant

When we assume the part of the audience member we immediately begin to rehearse particular ways of behaving demanded by the role. Even by using the word ‘rehearse’ here I have engaged with a concept which has a fundamental role in theatre-making per se: the verb ‘to rehearse’ means not simply to practice but to repeat or recite; and, in a social sense, it applies as much to the role of the audience member as it does the performer. I want to examine some of the ways the audience member negotiates the territory of the theatre and assumes a definite ‘role’ in the creation of meaning. In this first section we will draw on one or two ideas from the methodological field of sociology to frame our enquiries. Sociology is a human science which examines how behaviour emerges from communities of practice so it is particularly useful for examining collaborative activities such as spectating.

On agreeing to spectate we begin by acknowledging a demarcation between the space to be occupied by the audience and that which is designated for what we are about to watch. We repeat (rehearse) this enquiry whenever we agree to become part of an audience. In many conventional buildings the physical space will help give clues to our understanding of the kind of event we are about to watch and our role within it. Perhaps there will be places to sit which have been arranged around an open space or, as in the case of immersive performance, a space for spectators to gather. The provision of seating is often anticipated but it is by no means a requirement. Let’s problematise this issue.
Examine the images below. How do they compare and contrast?

A  B  C

These images depict places to sit and draw attention to ways in which the seating itself might be seen to choreograph particular behaviours. To conjure up a picture of an auditorium, for example, might amount to visualising rows or groups of seats facing a space – sometimes open, sometimes raised, sometimes furnished, sometimes hidden behind a curtain. It is important to remember that these characteristics are not the necessary ingredients of all theatre but simply conventions which we have grown to take for granted. Remember, seated in such an auditorium (note that the term ‘auditorium’ literally means ‘place for hearing’ – no allusion to watching or seeing) – it is likely that there will be others doing the same. In addition, the role of audience member is regularly recognised as a social activity.

While these questions seem to have obvious answers that we generally take as givens, it is important to note that each enquiry refers to ways our experience in theatre is shaped by the physical space, our designated place within that space and the understandings we bring to the role of audience member. As human beings we are corporeally constructed and engineered to experience the world through our frontality: we have eyes on one side of our head only, and ocular rotation (without involving the neck) is limited to around 120 degrees – try it! What is the result? I want to suggest that being seated serves to control our gaze by encouraging all occupants to share a point of focus.

Sitting not only limits physical movement and ensures against the strain of standing for long periods, it also enforces a mode of behaviour. For a wild animal, any kind of physical repose presents a danger. The diagram above shows that the deer’s field of vision is much wider than that of a human allowing the animal to save energy by remaining relatively static and still be aware of potential predators. To some degree, we might acknowledge collective
repose as an agreement of amnesty, temporary cessation or even accord. Like meercats, humans gathered in groups can relax to rest while others keep watch. Sociologist Norbert Elias, writing in 1939, explored the ways collective behaviours shaped early society. He argued that eating, for example, – particularly with utensils – fostered the development of civilisation by encouraging social norms and agreements. In agreeing to behave in particular ways we are conforming to what Elias described as a chain of mutual dependence.”² Let's think about the concept of compliance in relation to our role as audience member.

**Coursework Task 2**

Sit in a chair and imagine you are seated in an auditorium. Drawing on your memory and your imagination speculate on answers to the following questions:

- What might the provision of seating imply for me as a spectator?
- How might it designate the boundaries of my physical and personal space for the duration of the event?
- Once sat, am I expected to remain in place for the duration? Why?
- Does the presence of seating imply passivity or even relaxation?
- How does being seated reinforce my role as observer?
- How does being seated serve to preserve a divide between my world (the world of the spectator) and the world of the performer?
- Is the seating arranged in a particular pattern? What might this imply?
- Is this area lit? What might this imply?

It is important to note that in exploring the role of the audience member we need to consider our part in the event: we will all be required to perform certain regularised behaviours which we learned over time from our acculturated (socially acquired) experiences – just as we have learned how to perform in other roles. Ponder for a moment on the expectations for behaviour in a library, at a party, at an interview or in a church. Consider how you are required to assume certain behaviours eating at home and how (and, more importantly, why) this might differ from your expected behaviour in an up-market restaurant or formal gathering.

In his writing on the *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* in 1959 sociologist Irving Goffman used the language of theatre to describe ways we adjust our daily behaviour to perform range of social roles in order to achieve cultural currency. While we are not going to take a detour into Goffman’s theory at this juncture it is important to

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² For a summary of Elias’ work: [http://culturalstudiesnow.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/norbert-elias-civilizing-process.html](http://culturalstudiesnow.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/norbert-elias-civilizing-process.html).
recognise that in taking on the role of the Audience member we are engaging in practiced behaviours which are designed to frame and give **cultural capital** to our **social role** in particular ways; attending theatre as a spectator is no different; it is both a social event and event which requires us to observe specific social codes. Of course, some of these behaviours will differ depending on what sort of performance we are attending, and the specific cultural codes at work. Behaviour at a comedy club will differ from that at a gala performance or a pantomime. These codes are not innate but acquired over time by our engagement in the everyday. These are **conventional codes** built from a shared understanding of signs.

**Coursework Task 3**

Think of the last time you went to the theatre:

- How did you work out when to take your seat?
- How do you know where to sit?
- How were you expected to behave during the performance?
- If the seating area was plunged into darkness at any point what did this signify?
- How did you know when what you are watching had finished?

A key extension of these questions might be “how did you *learn* these ways of behaving?”

Make notes on these questions.

Clearly recognising specific **conventions** allows us to proffer answers to these questions. Imagine you are attending a play at a traditional Western theatre and having taken your seat you are suddenly plunged into darkness. It is likely that you will conclude that the performance is about to begin rather than that you have been struck blind or that the venue is experiencing a sudden power cut. While this might sound obvious it is important to remember that you have *learned* to interpret the event through these sorts of conventions and this has important implications for how you understand and interpret what you see and hear. Imagine how much you would need to explain to an alien from another planet attending the theatre for the first time! Consider too, that awkward feeling when you are in new social circumstances and not sure of how to behave. Learning to perform the role of the audience member from a range of perspectives widens our experience. It also changes the experience of the performer.

However, since not all modes of performance will draw on the same sorts of conventions we need to look more fully at how our learned expectations, and
acquired understandings shape our roles as audience members. So far we have given no consideration to how what we might see, hear and experience will allow us to make meaning from it – or indeed how our own performance (as audience member) might contribute to or alter the meaning of it. In addition, we have not troubled the term ‘audience’ in any great detail, or ‘performance, or ‘theatre’ – or considered how the term ‘audience member’ might differ from that of spectator, viewer, bystander, voyeur and so on. It is likely that you will have performed each of these roles too on many occasions and as you move through the Theatre Studies programme you will have many opportunities to delve into some of these issues in more depth. However, for now we are going to move on to examining some of the ways we interpret and contextualise our experiences.

2.3 Audience member as interpreter

As we move into this next section we will be drawing on additional methodologies. For example, there are a range of theories which are sometimes broadly grouped under the term Reception Theory which developed out of literary theory in the early 20th century.3 At the point we pick up the theory it had started to collide with structuralist theories which anticipate that behaviour of all kinds can be traced back to the existence of overarching social, cultural and political systems and structures. In other words, that there is a definable framework for behaviour which can be applied to all groups. As these sorts of theories developed they began to acknowledge that the role of the spectator and performer differ from culture to culture and that different sorts of performance conventions operate in each case.

The concept of ‘reception’ is a rather slippery term and recent theatre-critical writing around the topic prefers the terms ‘audience theory’ or even ‘spectator theory.’ Why is this? I need to take a little detour to answer this. The first point to emphasise at this juncture is one that is likely to challenge some of the ideas that you were taught at school – and which continue to pervade many generalised assumptions of what particular books, plays and even productions are ‘about.’ Regardless of the vast sea of literary studies that provide interpretations and accounts of what particular plays, novels or poems might mean, contemporary thinking challenges such claims by asserting that there is no meaning in a play text, novel, poem or a performance which can be directly ‘received’ by the reader or the audience. There is no intrinsic meaning in the marks on the paper or in the words spoken on a stage or indeed the action witnessed – unless, of course we understand the signs. We will take a closer look at this by considering text (the written word) which has been afforded significant importance over the millennia simply by the fact that it is something that

3 Reception Theory emerged in the 1960s as a development of literary criticism's Reader-Response Theory. Importantly at this time, critical writing was beginning to acknowledge the collaborative act of meaning-making in literature and theatre.
creates a record that can be shared or disseminated. Plays are sometimes afforded almost ‘biblical’ significance – as if the ‘meaning’ is somehow locked into the text. Let’s try to test this assumption with a simple exercise.

Look at the following text. Can you read it? Try to read it aloud slowly and have a guess.

katse e lula mosemeng ea
tus miv zaum nyob rau hauv lev
noho te ngeru i runga i te whāriki
ndi mphaka anakhala pa mphasa

Most of us could attempt to pronounce the words as we have access to some of the codes. For example, if you are able to read this unit you clearly have access to the alphabet; you recognise that the text reads from left to right and that individual words are separated by a space. Like the social behaviours we discussed above, the words we use to describe things are simply conventions we have learned. Try again with the following:

ឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆ
кіт сидів на килимі
החתול ישב על המזרן
d پيشو په پوزی ناست

Many of us will recognise that this text is written in different alphabets or see some familiarity in the broad style of some of the scripts. However, unless you are a polyglot it is unlikely that you will be able to read all of the texts or recognise that some of them are written to be read from left to right. Theory asserts that the marks on the page that comprise any text are simply that: marks on a page. The only ‘meaning’ they have is what they might signify to someone who happens to have learned the code. In this sense, the audience member will only gain levels of understanding from the codes they can recognise whether these are spoken, written, gestural, proxemic, visual, social and so on. Before we move on to explore this further, let’s unlock the mystery of the texts above.

The first text was not a single passage of four lines but in fact the same phrase in four different languages. Did you spot this? Why? Why not? Try to answer.

Here’s the text again with the language revealed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>katse e lula mosemeng ea</td>
<td>Sesotho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tus miv zaum nyob rau hauv lev</td>
<td>Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noho te ngeru i runga i te whāriki</td>
<td>Maori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ndi mphaka anakhala pa mphasa</td>
<td>Chichewa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second set of texts show the same phrase again in different scripts (both Hebrew and Pashto read from right to left).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆឆ</td>
<td>Khmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>кіт сидів на килимі</td>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>התחתול ישב על המזרן</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>د پیشو په پوزی ناست</td>
<td>Pashto</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would be much easier for us to grasp the meaning of the text if it was written in a more familiar code so here is the same text in English:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the cat sat on the mat</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meaning-making is relatively simple when you know the code!

**Coursework Task 4**

Meaning varies not only from once era to another (diachonically or over time) but also across cultures (synchronically or at the same point in time). Different societies respond to particular signs in different ways. Have a look at the diagram below and see how many meanings you might be able to interpret for each one.4

![Diagram of hand gestures]

Answers to follow!

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These hand gestures are simple visual signs (albeit with widely different cultural meanings) but before meaning can be generated from a performance which is significantly more complex, the audience member will need to draw on multiple sign systems to interpret what is seen, heard and experienced in performance as well as note how these potential meanings change across the duration of the performance.

There are a number of Reception Theories that describe how theatre generates potential meaning and these methodologies do not always arrive at the same conclusions. One theory describes meaning as generated from a process of ‘concretisation’ where the spectator decodes from the signs available and encodes by filling in the gaps. In this model, the audience member is a co-producer of meaning. However, it is important to note that not all members of the audience will read the signs in the same way – even if we share some of the codes – and in addition, the agreed meaning of words will shift over time. For example, for many, the strict fundamentalist readings of religious texts have shifted to achieve currency (value and purpose) for later generations. The text retains the same lexical form but its currency has evolved as it is interpreted in different ways. The same can be said of the ways we engage with theatre. Some reception theories suggest that audiences often share an ‘horizon of expectations’ brought into play by elements such as awareness of genre, form and style while other theories position the director as the ‘model reader’ whose artistic decision-making works to ensure the majority of the audience will interpret the performance collaboratively. The important point to make here is that as an audience member you do not ‘receive’ meaning but are required to work very hard indeed to generate it from the codes you recognise – and from the shifting values of the world you occupy.

Have a look at the image below. Are you aware of what is happening here? What elements do you recognise?

Figure: Modern performance at ancient theatre at Syracuse
On one level we can explore the idea of an horizon of expectations as applying to a ‘community of interpreters.’ An ancient Greek audience, for example, would recognise theatre as part of a religious rite and be aware of both their civic duty in attending the event and the spiritual importance of engagement in it. The gathered crowd would recognise the prophetic nature of the chorus of actors as well as function of the cast (made up of just two or three actors) dressed in masks and presenting a range of characters from well-known myths and legends.

It is likely that the crowd assembled for the photograph above would be aware of the kind of performance they had chosen to attend in the ruins of the ancient theatre at Syracuse. Many would have understood the theatrical conventions of the performance in its historical contexts, some might have been aware of the particular play being performed and indeed the historical and cultural significance of such performances. However, the modern audience member depicted here would also be aware of, and sensitive to, the currency of things within they see and hear within their own temporal moment rather than share the encounter as the ancient audiences did.

Figure: Painting by Denijs van Alsloot (1570-1628), Victoria and Albert Museum.

5 The term “horizon of expectations” is taken from the reader response theory of Hans Robert Jauss in the 1960s. The phrase “community of spectators” is a development from this by Stanley Fish, 1976.
An audience gathered to see a medieval mystery play would also be aware of the didactic nature of the event. For a largely illiterate population the acting out of scenes from the bible was both a celebration of shared beliefs and an underpinning of them as the fundament of their world view. They would have recognised the involvement of the guilds each taking on a story aligned to their craft and the way action took on different layers of meaning depending on whether it was performed on a raised space (sacred locus) or close to the audience (down stage) on the platea. While spectators of a Victorian melodrama might have taken a more secular view of theatre it still provided a means of upholding collective and political ideas of morality and social expectation. Characters would emerge as easily identifiable types or ‘stock characters’ split broadly between good and evil. The action would reveal a world thrown into chaos by a force for bad and unfold to stage the triumph of good over evil. Clearly, attending theatre also reinforced social order, class, and judgements of taste and value and gender stereotypes. In the style and manner of acting the audience would expect grand gestures, struck attitudes of shock, horror and lament.

Figure: Honoré Daumier, Melodrama, 1856-1860
It is important to remember too that the theatre building itself would also operate to reinforce agreed understandings. The affluent would occupy the boxes, stalls and lower galleries (strictly in accordance with their social standing) where they would be almost as brightly lit as the action on stage. Their role was to as much as to be seen to be attending as engaging in the performance. This was an opportunity to stage the social strata that shaped their society, with the wealthy dressed in their finery and the poor confined to the ‘gods’ at the very top of the theatre. There would even have been separate corridors for the classes to use so they did not have to mingle. Here the audience member was performing what was expected of their social status in both their costume (mode of dress) and the spaces they occupied.

In a theoretical sense, an horizon of expectations arguably sets up an interpretative grid or series of collectively shared but nonetheless discrete reference points against which the reader or observer will interpret and judge. However, the organisational centre of such interpretative grids will shift over time. What is acceptable for one generation (e.g. competing naked at sporting events, bear baiting, public executions, big game hunting, breast feeding in public, women driving cars and so on…) is not necessarily acceptable for another thus the centre shifts to accommodate change.

Such horizons of expectations are built from acculturated understandings, convention, education, belief, gender, age, historical contexts and so on. In addition, the individual audience member’s disposition (class, taste, daily behaviour) or habitus will shape their engagement.  

**Coursework Task 5**

Consider a form of theatre with which you are familiar (this can be either historical or contemporary) and identify the horizon of expectations relating to the following:

- the ascribed (designated) or appropriated (found) place, space and site of performance;
- the function of the event;
- the anticipated conventions of the performance itself and the sorts of action that might be witnessed;
- the historical contexts of the community of interpreters.

Post your answer to the Forum and your e-portfolio.

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6 Habitus is a term coined by Pierre Bourdieu to describe the ways “taste classifies and it classifies the classifier”.

In this section so far we have drawn on social and cultural studies to frame our enquiries. These broad theories of how understanding is forged by communities are useful frames for looking at ways groups of individuals can arrive at the same kinds of interpretation of an event. However, they do not tackle how meaning-making occurs at the micro level. We need to move on now to take a closer look as to how sign systems in performance might be seen to work.

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle was a biologist, and like many biologists was fond of classifying things. He divided signs into two types: **natural** signs and **conventional** signs. Natural signs include those that are freely occurring in nature such as the sounds of animals, seasonal change, weather, phases of the moon, medical symptoms, birth and death, and so on. These signs are broadly recognised across many cultures although they are not polysemic (the meaning of the sign is not shared in every case).

Conventional signs, on the other hand, are those which have been developed by means of cultural agreement. As in the examples of the languages explored above, agreement has been reached over a long period of time to employ particular sounds, markings or images in particular order to mean particular things. This kind of understanding might be described as operating **diachronically** or across time. An example of this can be seen in the variety of ways words were spelled in Elizabethan texts. It is not that the Elizabethans were poor at spelling but that literacy was not widespread and conventions were still forming. However, meaning-making also occurs through sign systems that work at the **same** time or **synchronously**. Let’s begin with a task to explore the ways these sign systems are constructed.

**Coursework Task 6**

In performance it is possible to suggest that there are a number of systems of potential meaning-making occurring both diachronically and synchronically. Consider which work diachronically and which work synchronically. Post your ideas to the Forum and make a note of what others have included. Include your answers in your Coursework Portfolio as usual.
In response to this task we are going to problematise a number of well-known frameworks for evaluating what occurs on stage. In 1968 Polish semiotician Tadeusz Kowzan drew up the following system of classification in theatre signification:

Tadeusz Kowzan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>signs</th>
<th>signification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. word</td>
<td>spoken text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. tone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. mime</td>
<td>expression of the body</td>
<td>act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. gesture</td>
<td>actor's external</td>
<td>visual signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. movement</td>
<td>appearance</td>
<td>space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. make-up</td>
<td></td>
<td>space and time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. hairstyle</td>
<td></td>
<td>visual signs - (actor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. costume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. props</td>
<td>appearance of the stage</td>
<td>outside the actor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. decor</td>
<td></td>
<td>visual signs - (outside the actor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. lighting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. music</td>
<td>inarticulate sounds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. sound effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Kowzan’s model, there are thirteen channels of meaning-making. Eight of these are assigned to the work of the actor and the remaining five described as outside the actor. Signs are broadly classified as either visual or auditory (auditive).

**Coursework Task 7**

Examine the table closely and then watch the first two minutes of this short clip from Tennessee William’s play *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Create a chart and undertake an analysis of the clip using Kowzan’s taxonomy and paying close attention to the relationship between signs and signification.
This clip is from a film rather than a stage production so the camera guides the eye and encourages focus on particular things in a particular order. It needs to be noted that in theatre the spectator has to focus on what they identify as most interesting or important at any one moment. Unlike the camera the human eye works in saccadic jumps, flicking back and forth across the action, zooming in and zooming out with great dexterity. Imagine how much more difficult Kowzan’s system would be to use in live theatre. Nonetheless, it is important to note that his attempts at defining how meaning-making might occur in theatre were a radical development from focussing on the literary merit of a dramatic text and the creativity and insight of the author. In Kowzan’s taxonomy recognition was being given to the craftsmanship of those on and around the stage space which, in earlier studies of theatre, were often taken for granted.

So, what might we regard as the potential shortcomings of Kowzan’s system?

- It prompts interpretation rather than recognition of the processes of signification.
- It assumes that all spectators will interpret codes in the same way.
- By separating out the relationship between the different sign systems in operation it assumes that meaning can be read in broad brush strokes – and in isolation.
- It assumes that all performance can be judged under one horizon of expectations – largely associated with the realist tradition and conventional Western performance models.
- It makes no space for any framing that might be imposed by a particular community of spectators.
- It makes no recognition of the singular habitus of the individual spectator or theatre as a social activity.
- It makes no recognition of the felt experience of theatre.
Your own response to this task will most likely have been influenced by whether you are familiar with the play and (can place the scene in context), and whether you are aware of the actors performing. Those who are familiar with the play and its famous cast will have access to additional frames of reference which might alter the kinds of responses given.

Subsequently, other models for critical evaluation of theatre have emerged which extend Kowzan’s ideas. While we are not going to explore these in this unit you might find the questionnaire designed by French semiotician Patrice Pavis provides further grounds for debate.

While we have established that something we see or hear during a performance can generate potential meaning, we need to take this further and examine the relationship between an object and the sign for it: between signifier and signified. Reflect back to the task with the various scripts and languages that we looked at earlier. Written languages are made up of marks which when placed in particular order become signifiers. For example:

/d/o/g/ is a lexical (written) signifier for a small mammal that looks something like the image below:

![Dog Image]

/d/o/g  =  
signifier = signified

There is no logical connection at all between the phonemes chosen (in English, in this case) to represent the signified. Indeed, there is no reason why a different set of letters could not have been used. Agreement on the signifier used (whether spoken or written) is conventional. Indeed, across the world the signified in the picture above (dog) might just as easily be understood as hund, chein, qen, suns, kelb, pies and so on – depending what has become the convention for a particular culture or community. In addition, there are many variations of this particular signified – all dogs are not identical to the silhouette image above! Similarly, how we learn to recognise the subtle differences between one four legged mammal and another, or between one person and another, is far more complex.

These ideas form the basis of a labyrinthine set of theories known as semiotics and you will revisit various associated concepts at various points in your study. In an early model developed by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (semiology) the

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7 There is a difference between semiotics and semiology. The first term is often aligned with the work of Charles Sanders Pierce and the latter with the work of Ferdinand de Saussure. See the end of this unit for some suggestions for wider reading.
key idea is largely generated from degrees of difference and ways we can measure this. For example, note how difference intervenes in how we understand the following groups of phonemes:

/d/o/g/ /d/i/g/ /b/o/g/ /d/o/t/ /b/a/g/ /l/o/g/

This approach to interpretation is based on a dyadic model of meaning-making (made of two parts) where there is an arbitrary link between the signifier (referent) and what is signified. However, in seeking meaning we are recognising difference in a range of ways. And, in bringing this all back to the audience member as interpreter, we need to recognise that “all that is on the stage is a sign” [Veltrusky, 1940] and that potential meaning occurs not through just what is seen and heard but how it is interpreted. When grammars of signs form they develop logical orders which a community of readers (spectators) who share the codes might recognise. These grammars follow rules that we can acquire and use in multiple ways. Some grammars of signs such as number and script are symbolic: there is no logical connection between the signifier and signified: the relationship is arbitrary. Of course, there are ideographic languages such as Mandarin where the word is literally a picture of what it describes but the marks on the page are still signifiers and the logics behind how they are formed are still largely conventional. Similarly, there are words that have been formed by onomatopoeic qualities such as splash, chirp, bang, gasp and so on but the means of recording these in writing remains conventional. While spoken language might have emerged from oral traditions the means of recording it is arbitrarily determined.

Visual signs, which dominate in theatre, do not follow a logical order or achieve a grammar but the audience member still seeks to infer meaning.

**Coursework Task 8**

Study the following pictures

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F

- can these be put in any order?
- what criteria are you employing to create order?
- what horizon of expectations is needed to create order?
- what elements do these objects have in common?
Here we are creating our own logics through minute degrees of classification and imposing meaning in relation to difference. In this example, scale plays a part in our interpretation here and so might symmetry and setting. But these elements do not explain fully how we generate meaning-potential or how the relationships between signs might operate. We also have to consider what these images connote (infer through negative or positive association) as well as what they denote (their literal meaning).

The audience member, however, will look to ways signifying systems combine on stage in order to determine potential meaning. Signs do not work in a single sequence but in clusters. The weaving together of potential meaning is a major part of the role of the audience and individuals will arrive at different conclusions.

Another approach to interpreting signs involves looking at how they work or function:

- **ICON** where meaning is signified by a thing or object
- **INDEX** a signifier that points to meaning
- **SYMBOL** a signifier which functions at an abstract level.

This is **triadic model** of meaning-making (made of three parts) was developed by Charles Sanders Pierce (pronounced ‘purse’) and allows a signifier to function in multiple ways simultaneously. Whereas de Saussure’s dyadic module acknowledged only arbitrary relations between signifier and signified and omitted to acknowledge the interpreter, Pierce’s model can be used to connect meaning from signs.

Many designers, directors and actors alike, attempt to make it easy for the spectator to decipher coded systems by avoiding **redundancy**. In other words, they limit what the spectator sees/hears/experiences to only that which is essential. A bare stage, for example, has a **plasticity** that allows location to be fluid rather than **representational**. A single chair on stage might be seen as representing a chair in its most basic form. In this sense the chair is an icon. When brought together with other signs such as language, action or gesture, it can easily serve to indicate something else. A chair can play a throne, a scaffold, a barricade or even provide an index to a place or character. Everything on stage has the power to retain its **iconicity** and achieve indexicality (point to something). Similarly, an object can become a **symbol**. A crown retains its iconicity as a crown but it can also point to the status of the wearer as king/queen. Simultaneously, the crown can symbolise royalty or power or corruption. In this triadic system, signs can work in multiple ways to create synchronous layers of meaning that need to be woven together by the audience member. The very nature of theatre allows for all kinds of licence for meaning to ebb, flow and change direction.
### Coursework Exercise 9

Examine the chart below and try to fill in the gaps. I have completed the first as an example. Some have many potential answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Icon</th>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Icon" /></td>
<td>No entry allowed to the road ahead.</td>
<td>The road operates a one-way system / exit point for a private road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Icon" /></td>
<td>door</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Icon" /></td>
<td></td>
<td>bad luck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Icon" /></td>
<td>rain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Icon" /></td>
<td></td>
<td>happiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Icon" /></td>
<td>smoke</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is clear that there are no straightforward or correct answers here and that what something connotes for one person could denote something different for another. I have attempted to demonstrate that there are many ways a sign might unfold. Note, some of the signs above are conventional (the traffic sign, the warning sign, the printer icon) others are natural (smoke, rain), some symbolic (happiness, bad luck) – some can be both iconic and indexical (printer icon, toilet sign – albeit in a stylised way).

So, does this mean that here will be no accord over meaning? One theatre semiotician Anne Urbersfeld, describes meaning-making in the theatre as involving a constellation of signs. Potential meaning is constantly being modified by additional
signifiers, the order in which they are placed and the patterns they form for us as individuals. Theatre distils the world on stage to its minimum requirement for function. Actors, directors and designers arrive at shared agreement on ways of strengthening a particular interpretation and avoiding redundancy. The theatre can draw on the immediacy of images, sounds in a combination of ways to trigger connections between events. Any play text that might form part of theatre’s universe of signs is only one source of meaning-potential and subject to ways it might be interpreted, performed, staged and decoded.

It is worth drawing briefly on a theory from neuroscience to illustrate just how hard the audience member has to work while engaging with a performance.

Neuroscience calculates that every second our senses take in over 11 million informational bits at the highest bandwidth:

- Eyes 10,000,000
- Ears 100,000
- Skin 1,000,000
- Taste 1,000
- Smell 100,000

Of these bits only 10 – 30 receive a conscious experience and these have to be sifted and ordered before meaning-making can occur. Of the 11 million we receive per second we concentrate on less than 7.\(^8\) In addition, the act of spectating involves concentration in a state of high alert. The level of active absorption required by the audience member far outstrips that required for daily activity. Nonetheless, what we choose to prioritise will depend on our contexts. Take a look at the gallery of images below. What do you see?

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If perception is selective, how might we apply this to the theatre experience?
2.4 Audience member as celebrant

The theories we have explored so far are based on ways meaning can be understood through signification. There are other theories about the role of the audience member which examine the ways we experience theatre. To begin this investigation we need to consider the relationship the audience member has with the actor.

In the *Republic*, ancient Greek philosopher Plato condemns impersonation (*mimesis*) of all kinds as dangerous. He argues that mankind is but a copy of his/her ideal (spiritual) form and subject to spurious imitation through painting, sculpture and mimicry. In Plato’s opinion, the actor’s ability to feign can, in turn, be regarded as both wondrous and dangerous. The actor becomes simultaneously *pharmakeus* (magician) and *pharmakon* (scapegoat); both a representative of society (in the world of the play) and a social outcast (in the world of the spectator). We can note the caution with which actors have been regarded historically as a perpetuation of this trope. While successful contemporary actors are lionised—often for their fame rather than their craft or skill—acting and the arts more generally, are frequently afforded lower status in education and rarely appear on the Government’s list of economic priorities.

Theories of theatre *phenomenology*, which deal with the singular, experiential nature of engaging in performance, argue that the spectator licences the actor to stand in for him in the world of the play and the act is both public and private. The corporeality of theatre where identification and understanding is expressed as much through the body as through the conventional codes of language encourages the audience member to identify through the psychological and sensory participation. It would follow then, that the immediacy of the theatre event as experience, in which time is always in the present, enables not mere passive identification with character as self, but a virtual experience. The spectator becomes involved in decision-making in tandem with the actor, drawing on his own lived experience to satisfy his own response to events. We will all experience performance from our own ontological perspective—the perspective from which we personally see and experience the world. In philosophy, *ontology* is the study of being. It could be argued that all creatures (with a degree of sentience) have an *ontological perspective* of the world which is formed by the type of creature they are, their goal in being, their understandings of the world, physical scale, mode of perambulation and general physiological make-up. A fly’s ontological perspective would be different from that of a snail and different again from that of a rabbit, a fifty year old Bedouin traveller or a nine year old Victorian waif. Each would see and experience the world in a different way, governed by their corporeal composition, prerogatives, perspectives and the environment in which they exist. Our own perspectives are unique to us and provide us with particular ways of seeing and understanding the world.
Theatre is often a collaborative experience and one in which the spectator agrees to collude. The audience member is contracted to engage in the event. From a phenomenological perspective we often begin by recognising ourselves in the actor at the most basic level, as one of the same ‘kind’ as ourselves. As individual spectators, regardless of our proximity to the stage, our collaborative contract positions each of us at the centre of the space. Without actors, the stage space can be scrutinised in much the same way as an installation or work of art – and there is a finite amount we can absorb or work with. Enter the actor and the dynamics of the space take on new dimensions. Previously we might have placed ourselves at the centre of the mise en scene responding to the environment as it affected us. On the entrance of an actor the position of focus immediately shifts and the actor becomes the centre of the world in front of us as we accept the world on stage through his/her eyes. We have split ourselves in two: we focus on the action from our ontological perspective as spectators (often sat in the private territory of our auditorium seat) and absorb and respond to the environment through the actor’s signs. We are both observer and participant. While the sociologist sees theatre as a communal engagement, the psychoanalytical theorist might see it as a private encounter aligned to voyeurism. Nonetheless, in some performances, particularly those where the audience member is visible to other members of the audience, or where the actor directly addresses the spectator, the phenomenological encounter widens further. We acknowledge the ways others are engaging to events on stage and register our collective responses both visible and audible. We are at once united by our shared recognitions and set apart by our own singular beliefs and experiences. This point draws attention to our epistemological position.

**Epistemology** is a term which describes the theory of knowledge and the ways we, as individuals, afford value to knowledge and evidence. Our beliefs and understandings will also shape the way we engage with what we experience on stage. We may hold strong views on political or religious topics, we might have experienced the trauma of war, disaster, poverty, family loss, we might be well-educated, be parents, grandparents or ourselves be a child for whom many experiences are still novel. This topic will be explored more fully in later modules but to draw these ideas together I want you to undertake a particularly challenging task. Clearly it is not possible to generate the same sorts of conditions described above using a video clip but we can begin to apply some of these ideas in broad terms.
Coursework Task 10

Watch the following short film on YouTube taken from a WWII reenactment at Rockford, USA [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymDxOQO1xqc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymDxOQO1xqc).

In your e-portfolio make notes on the following questions.

1. From an ontological perspective where are you positioned? Do you see the event from a particular angle? What clues can you list to support your answer?

2. How did you view the participants? As
   - human bodies?
   - social actors (representatives of a social group or body)?
   - psychologised individuals?
   - political activists?
   - representations of a particular culture or process?
   - individuals or a group?
   - several of these?

Here are some clues to the ways my own assumptions were formed:

1. The clip begins with the camera following what appears to be a group of armed soldiers engaged in combat. We (as observers of the recording) share in the implied danger of the scenario at a fictional level via the camera operator who is “safely positioned” behind the building on the right of the screen.

2. Had we not been aware that the clip was a re-enactment it is likely we would have soon reached this assumption – not least from acknowledging the presence of a large crowd lined up to watch the event.

3. The relaxed bodily tension of the spectators and their spasmodic laughter at the casualties occurring suggests that, as a group, they remain outside of the world of the action itself and, perhaps, engaging with what they see from a different attitudinal perspective to that of the men enacting the scene who appear to be in the roles of soldiers in combat.

4. We, on the other hand, are “present” in the event through the action of the camera operator. We also gain a sense of her/his individual participation as the camera lurches and wobbles as s/he runs or sweeps from one point of interest to the next. There is no smooth zooming in and out associated with film fiction where the camera’s presence is invisible to the actors and largely voyeuristic.

5. In this clip, the camera operator – and we too, as invisible spectators, are both a part of and apart from the action itself. While live camera operators might have captured scenes of genuine WWII combat I can only suppose that they would have done so at a reasonable distance. The operator in this
clip runs alongside the action, like a fly-on-the-wall journalist. Nonetheless, s/he is not invisible within the action and indeed seems partisan – staying within the apparent safety of the shelter of the building and soldiers from one army rather than trying to capture the action from both sides.

6. The re-enactors accept the camera operator’s presence. For them, we might speculate, h/she is also in combat or her/his value in the action transcends the present in order to record of the re-enactment.

7. Evidently there are specific roles being played as one re-enactor barks orders at a “sergeant” and the others wait for instructions. At this point we do not see who they are fighting but can hear “shots” (although arguably, and ironically, the popgun-like sound of the blanks reinforces the fictional nature of the event rather than adds to any sense of authenticity).

8. Members of the “opposing army” emerge from behind the building and raise their guns to fire before being “shot down”. Of course, they are not shot down at all, only enacting the process. Everyone present including the crowd, appears to accept the duality of “reality” such an event imposes. The satisfaction of participation in such an event is not lost either; those playing corpses appear to take pleasure in their ability to remain inert as their bodies are rolled over and they hold their focus as if their eyes were fixed and dilated. They seem only too aware of the presence of the camera. Of course, this last point is pure speculation.

9. As we follow the camera operator towards the fallen men and another is shot down, the camera operator hovers over them to get a closer view of the combat as the strap of the camera lurches into view. The fictional world of the re-enactment is fractured for a moment as one of the “wounded” soldiers begins to laugh; falling out of role on hearing that his oppressor’s rifle does not work.

10. Finally, we follow the camera operator’s trail as s/he pursues the group along a tree-lined path where the camera’s lurching between the tree tops and the pathway provides a sense of her/his own physical presence and body movements in the process. The action ends with what appears to be some sort of indecision over the fate of the “prisoner”.

In a broad sense, the film clip captures three groups: those enacting a combat situation; those watching them enact that situation (thus accepting the role of spectators), and a camera operator whose presence is made apparent through the composition of the recording. What I found in watching this was that while the presence of the camera was ‘bracketed’ from the ‘fiction’ by both spectators and enactors the clip itself seems to endow the operator with a clear sense of role within the event through which we, as spectators (at yet another remove) employ as a means to witness the event on a range of levels.

Of course, the camera operator controls our role by selecting what we see and how we see it but her/his own body movements are clearly impressed on the narrative; we see the trailing camera strap at various points and note the way the re-enactors look directly at the lens. In this way, we do not lose the individual even though we
recognise that in practical terms it is likely that her/his role at this event was simply to make a recording which might be replayed at a later date to indulge the costumed re-enactors’ desire to observe themselves engaging in the event.

**Coursework Task 11**

Now watch the following short clip of [WW2 footage](#). As you do so, try to frame what you are seeing against the reenactment explored in Part 1. You might want to watch the first clip again before answering the next questions.

3. Which (if any) of the following statements might describe your **epistemological** perspectives?
   - war games indoctrinate and incite cultural hatred
   - war games are a harmless social activity
   - re-enactment is a means of making history tangible through theatre
   - seeking authenticity in re-enacting has a range of distinct purposes
   - re-enactment is a cultural necessity – it goes back to the Greek roots about learning from watching

4. Find ‘evidence’ in the two clips to argue something for each and every one of these statements (both for and against).

I am not going to give a detailed response to this task as you will have gathered your own clues and formulated your own answers. However, the purpose of this exercise is to emphasise that our **ontological** perspectives of the world help fashion out felt experience of the event and our **epistemological** views are crafted by the knowledge we have and opinions we hold on these topics. In attempting to undertake a critical evaluation of ways a performance might rehearse a particular epistemological stance we cannot generalise on behalf of an audience as a whole so it is necessary to seek evidence from the performance itself.

**Coursework Task 12**

Work back through this unit and create a list of the various ways the audience member engages with performance.

Now return to the first Task and reflect on how your work on this topic might change the answers you gave.
2.5 Conclusions

We have also examined the role of the audience member from a range of perspectives and taken a brief look at some of the methodologies that we might draw on to frame our enquiries. We began by looking at the audience member as a social actor and the ways sociological frames might be employed to explore the ways our horizons of expectations and temporal contexts colour our expectations. We moved on to look at some of the ways the audience member might interpret performance by means of recognising systems of signs and used perspectives from cultural theory to investigate the topic. In contrast to this we considered how the audience member engages with the theatre as phenomenal experience and simultaneously frames the theatre event within their beliefs and understandings.

In this unit we attempted to frame our studies using different critical frames and examine – albeit briefly – the ways different sorts of theoretical lenses reveal the role of the audience member. It is important to adopt these critical behaviours, which is not to say that you should approach your studies with a suspicious mind, but rather with an inquisitive one; asking always what is the substance and what is the relevance of what I am seeing?

In the modules entitled Theatres at Work you will undertake the study of a professional working theatre near to where you are located. The work we have done in this unit will assume a spatial and geographic focus in order to narrow down and blow open the role of the audience member. As you look at specific examples of performance wherever they might be in the world, you will have an opportunity to really engage in a practical, primary and experiential sense with the variety of performance that is available to you.

Meaning-making in performance is a central thread of the Theatre Studies programme and one you will encounter in ever-more complex ways throughout your studies. In TS403, for example, you will explore meaning-making again in relation to the ways plays are crafted and meaning is shaped by a playwright’s choices and reshaped by the interpretation of the creative team in production. As you explore how plays are crafted you will explore how the ideas of a writer can help shape the ways audiences engage. In TS404 you will explore the role of the critical audience through a series of case studies and examine signification from the perspectives of the actor, director and designer. In TS405 and TS406 signification is considered in relation to interpretation, the coded body, culture and ideology.

For answers to Coursework Task 4* please see below:
A. Europe and North America: OK
    Mediterranean region, Russia, Brazil, Turkey: An office signal, sexual insult, gay man
    Tunisia, France, Belgium: Zero; worthless
    Japan: Money, coins

B. Western countries: One: Excuse me!; As God is my witness; No! (to children) OK

C. Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Malta: Up yours!
   USA: Two
   Germany: Victory
   France: Peace
   Ancient Rome: Julius Caesar ordering five boors

D. Europe: Three
    Catholic countries: A blessing

E. Europe: Two
    Britain, Australia, New Zealand: One
    USA: Welcome!
    Japan: An insult

F. Western countries: Four
    Japan: An insult

G. Western countries: Number 5
    Everywhere: Stop!
    Greece and Turkey: Go to hell!

H. Mediterranean: Small penis
    Bail: Bad
    Japan: Woman
    South America: Thin
    France: You can't fool me!

I. Mediterranean: Your wife is being unfaithful
    Malta and Italy: Protection against the Evil Eye (when pointed)
    South America: Protection against bad luck (when rotated)
    USA: Texas University Logo, Texas Longhorn Football Team

J. Greece: Go to hell!
    The West: Two

K. Ancient Rome: Up yours!
    USA: Screw you!

L. Europe: Down
    Australia: Sit on this! (upward jerk)
    Widespread: Hitchhike, Good, OK
    Greece: Up yours! (thrust forward)
    Japan: Maa, fuu

M. Hawaii: 'Hang loose`
    Holland: Do you want a drink?

N. USA: I love you

O. The West: Ten, I surrender
    Greece: Up yours -- twice!
    Widespread: I'm telling the truth

  [Accessed: 3.11.17].
FOR REFERENCE

SKILL: ANNOTATING A BIBLIOGRAPHY

You might want to develop your understanding of some of the theories we have introduced in this unit. To provide some suggestions I have listed a few titles and annotated these to specify clearly what their use might be. When developing a plan or indicating your wider research in your e-portfolio, annotation is helpful in both explaining the rationale behind your choices and in demonstrating your awareness of the sorts of approaches employed by the book and the author’s slant on the topic.

Barry, Peter (1991) *Beginning Theory: an Introduction to Cultural and Literary Theory (Beginnings).* Manchester: MUP.
Barry outlines the key ideas of a range of critical fields including Reader Response Theory, Structuralism, Post-structuralism, Feminism, Narratology, Post-colonial theory and so on. The newer editions have a range of additional sections but earlier editions can be purchased very cheaply. While Barry writes about literature rather than theatre it is simply a case of making the intellectual leap across to the three-dimensional world of theatre.

While Esslin was writing three decades ago, his easy-to-read short book provides a useful introduction to theories of signs. There is a very useful chapter on the concepts of icon, index and symbol which will extend the ideas explored in this unit. There are also useful sections on the structure and textual organisation of plays in relation to signification and a chapter on the role of the audience in meaning-making.

This book provides a useful primer for exploring sign-systems in performance. The volume is divided in to two sections: the first deals with text and the second with performance. Older editions of this book can be purchased very cheaply and it provides a valuable sourcebook for a range of modules on the programme.

McCauley’s book examines the concept of space in performance from a range of angles. She takes the reader through theories of physical space, energised space,
space and performance structure, objects in performance, space in the written text and the spectator in space. This well-written book provides a practical guide to examining space in performance as well as a comprehensive but clearly written exploration of the theories that inform the field.