

**THEA 449W  
Script & Performance Analysis  
Spring 2012  
Performance Analysis Report  
Katherine Hammond**



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### **What is a performance analysis?**

According to Patti Gillespie from the University of Maryland, textual analysis and performance analysis are linked, but they are different. Textual analysis examines only the art of the playwright; it discusses the writing decisions that are aimed at shaping the perception of the reader.

In our previous work in Script Analysis, we engaged purely in textual work. Now we are shifting into the next step of engaging with the work.

Performance analysis examines the arts of the other theatre makers as well. Just as the playwright does, each theatre artist is also making decisions.

- Directors create lead teams of artists to communicate certain ideas to and evoke certain responses from the audience.
- The actors build their performances through a series of decisions, each aimed at promoting a certain understanding and eliciting a specific response from the audience.
- Designers envision and then build their costumes and sets, their stage lighting and sound tracks, to communicate certain ideas to their audiences and to evoke certain kinds of responses from them.

Just as textual analysis requires an effort to remember that a playwright is trying to persuade the reader to a certain point of view about a series of events, a performance analysis requires us to remember that theatre artists have made decisions to create this performance as it is.

**The assignment follows on the next page.**

## Performance Analysis Report

**Purpose:** The purpose of this assignment is to enable you to identify and discuss how artistic elements and technical elements coalesce to create the world of the play within a professional (AEA) theatrical production.

### Proceed in the following manner:

Consider the following: As a theatre artist, you are always in search of the answer to why an audience responds positively to one production and negatively to another. This audience response might mean the difference between your theatre company having a 'next season' or not. This year, at the end of each season, you will need to report to your board on the success or failure of the final production, *The Fantasticks*. The performance analysis report you are about to write will determine whether or not the director is hired the next year.

In this performance analysis report, your job is to communicate the manner in which the production REVEALED the story, characters, ideas, and values of the play in order to create an artistic experience – or not. You will be examining the work of the director, the designers and the actors. In order to do your work thoroughly you need to support your report with evidence from the performance itself as well as from your outside research. Be sure to do all citations in MLA format.

It is now time to do the report of *The Fantasticks* for the Virginia Stage Company. It performs for three weeks at the Wells Theatre in downtown Norfolk, Virginia. Tickets are \$15 for students.

1. Make a reservation for the show. Good theatre etiquette dictates that you do not take notes during a performance; therefore, you must be prepared and very observant. You may wish to attend with a friend or a group from the class so that you all have the same experience to discuss.
2. Once you have made your reservation for the production, you should review the elements that you should be observing: lights, sets, sound costumes, media, orchestra/band, and performances. Remember, we have done this as free writing earlier this semester, so you should have some examples to which to refer.
- 3., Before attending *The Fantasticks* at the Virginia Stage Company, examine the material that might be available on the play itself such as performance history, previous reviews, and history of the time period in which the play was written. You may also want to review the plot of the play. Since you are assessing the decisions made by the production team of the show you are seeing, you will not need to read the original text, but knowing the plot might be useful.
4. Attend *The Fantasticks* at the Virginia Stage Company (an AEA LORT D Professional Theatre). Remember, do not take notes during the performance.
5. After the performance, write a 6-8 page report (excluding title page and works cited) to help the board determine whether the production was artistically successful and whether the director brought together the elements of the show into a cohesive world.
  - A. First and foremost, react to the piece that you saw. What was this a play about, what was the seed? Remember, the seed is not the plot.
  - B. Given Circumstances
    - i. Are the given circumstances of the production clear?

- ii. How do they relate to the given circumstances of the play itself?
- iii. How are these given circumstances made clear?
- C. What are the design elements of the production?
  - i. How do the set elements create the world and what does it look like?
  - ii. How do the lighting elements function in the world? What is the tone?
  - iii. Do the costumes seem to exist in the same world as the set?
  - iv. Do the musical elements (band & choreography) function as part of the narrative of the piece?
  - v. Did the director establish conventions that help create a coherent world?
  - vi. Is the story clearly related through the elements? Are the ideas clear? How do the elements of production enhance the play's dramatic structure?
- D. What is the style of the production?
  - i. How is that style achieved?
  - ii. How does the style affect the other elements?
  - iii. Do the performances enhance that style?
- E. Describe the performances in relation to the style.
  - i. Are the performances appropriate?
  - ii. Are the performances clear and accomplished?
  - iii. Are the characters interesting?
- F. Are the technical elements and performances all in the in the same world?
- G. What is the audience response, including your own?
- H. Would you recommend that this director be hired for another production?

6. Your report should be 6-8 pages long, double-spaced with an 11 or 12-point font that is easy to read. You should have a cover sheet and a works cited page that are not part of your page count. Be sure to include page numbers and staple the work. Your paper should have internal citations and it should follow MLA style.

7. This performance analysis report will be evaluated based on the rubric given to you with this assignment sheet. Please be sure to evaluate your work against the rubric before turning in your final draft.

8. Papers should be submitted through Blackboard by 5pm on April 17, 2012.