

Registration Number:

Date & Session

**ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE, BENGALURU -27**

**B.A THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES –VI SEMESTER**

**SEMESTER EXAMINATION: MAY 2024**

**TS 6223 – Aspects of Production**

**(For current batch students only)**

**Time: 2 Hours Max Marks: 60**

**This paper contains THREE printed pages and FOUR parts**

**Part A**

1. **Read the opening scene from Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*.**

The Wingfield apartment is in the rear of the building, one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living-units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centres of lower-middle-class population and are symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society to avoid fluidity and differentiation and to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism. The apartment faces an alley and is entered by a fire-escape, a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth, for all of these huge buildings are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation. The fire-escape is included in the set - that is, the landing of it and steps descending from it.

The scene is memory and is therefore non-realistic. Memory takes a lot of poetic licence. It omits some details; others are exaggerated, according to the emotional value of the articles it touches, for memory is seated predominantly in the heart. The interior is therefore rather dim and poetic. At the rise of the curtain, the audience is faced with the dark, grim rear wall of the Wingfield tenement. This building, which runs parallel to the footlights, is flanked on both sides by dark, narrow alleys which run into murky canyons of tangled clothes-lines, garbage cans, and the sinister lattice-work of neighbouring fire-escapes. It is up and down these alleys that exterior entrances and exits are made, during the play.

At the end of Tom's opening commentary, the dark tenement wall slowly reveals (by means of a transparency) the interior of the ground floor Wingfield apartment. Downstage is the living-room, which also serves as a sleeping-room for Laura, the sofa is unfolding to make her bed. Upstage, centre, and divided by a wide arch or second proscenium with transparent faded portières (or second curtain), is the dining-room. In an old fashioned what-not in the living-room are seen scores of transparent glass animals. A blown-up photograph of the father hangs on the wall of the living-room, facing the audience, to the left of the archway. It is the face of a very handsome young man in a doughboy's First World War cap.

He is gallantly smiling, ineluctably smiling, as if to say 'I will be smiling forever'. The audience hears and sees the opening scene in the dining-room through both the transparent fourth wall of the building and the transparent gauze portières of the dining-room arch. It is during this revealing scene that the fourth wall slowly ascends out of sight. This transparent exterior wall is not brought down again until the very end of the play, during Tom' s final speech. The narrator is an undisguised convention of the play. He takes whatever licence with dramatic convention is convenient to his purpose.

TOM enters dressed as a merchant sailor from alley, stage left, and strolls across the front of the stage to the fire-escape. There he stops and lights a cigarette. He addresses the audience.

TOM: Yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion. To begin with, I turn back time. I reverse it to that quaint period, the thirties, when the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind. Their eyes had failed them or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy. In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion. In Spain there was Guernica. Here there were disturbances of labour, sometimes pretty violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Saint Louis...

This is the social background of the play. [MUSIC] The play is memory. Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic. In memory everything seems to happen to music. That explains the fiddle in the wings. I am the narrator of the play, and also a character in it. The other characters are my mother Amanda, my sister Laura and a gentleman caller who appears in the final scenes. He is the most realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world of reality that we were somehow set apart from. But since I have a poet's weakness for symbols, I am using this character also as a symbol; he is the long-delayed but always expected something that we live for. There is a fifth character in the play who doesn't appear except in this larger-than life-size photograph over the mantel. This is our father who left us a long time ago. He was a telephone man who fell in love with long distances; he gave up his job with the telephone company and skipped the light fantastic out of town...The last we heard of him was a picture postcard from Mazatlan, on the Pacific coast of Mexico, containing a message of two words - 'Hello - Good-bye!' and no address. I think the rest of the play will explain itself ...

1. **Answer the following questions in FIVE sentences each. (3x5=15)**

1. Tom announces that the play is a ‘memory play’. What possibilities or challenges with scenography are introduced through this revelation?
2. Comment on the manner and language in which Tennesse Williams chooses to put down his stage directions in this opening scene.
3. Attempt to draw and label a map of this stage and briefly discuss a soundscape for this scene.

**Part B**

1. **Answer the following questions in 150-200 words. (3x10=30)**

1. How do you understand the word ‘poor’ in Grotowski’s “poor theatre”? Use instances from productions that you are familiar with to explain this.
2. Discuss the performer/spectator relations in the “picture-frame stage” or the Western proscenium vis-à-vis any other model of theatre space.
3. What is the role of blocking in a production? Do you think it helps audience engage emotionally with the scene in a certain way?

**Part C**

1. **Answer the following question in about 200 to 250 words. (15 marks)**
2. Peter Brook in *The Empty Space*, writes "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged". How do you respond to this understanding of scenography and space in theatre? Justify your response with suitable examples.

\*\*\*\*