

Unit 2 – Module One

Caribbean Theatre and the World

Concept/Topic – The Development of Caribbean Drama in Context (Part One)

Students would have already completed a brief survey of selected world dramas. It is important that world drama is completed first, so that the history of Caribbean drama will be based on a global foundation of theatre. Recognizing cultural differences is crucial for a thorough understanding of Caribbean Drama.

A brief history of world drama is attached that students may review before beginning this topic.

Specific Objectives/Learning Outcomes- This lesson offers students an opportunity to:

- Understand the development of Caribbean drama as a consequence of historical moments in the Caribbean and the world.
- Understand the development of Caribbean theatre as a construct of its peculiar cultural, historical and social contexts.

Required Materials –

- “Studies in West Indian Literature” by Kenneth Ramchand.
- “The Cambridge Guide to African and Caribbean Theatre, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994” Banham, M., Hill, E. and Woodyard G, eds.

Set Induction –

There are many theories as to how theatre came into existence. The generally accepted concept is that theatre began as a result of people reenacting ancient religious rituals. In the West Indies of all the English-speaking territories, Belize can claim the oldest legacy of live theatre (The Theatre of Belize, 1973).

Many of the earliest Caribbean plays were based on European theatre that was brought down from plantation owners. It would take many years for Caribbean theatre to form its own identity and truly deal with the issues affecting former slaves and indentured laborers.

Step – By – Step Activities –

- Begin with a general discussion of the difficulties associated with establishing what is considered to be Caribbean theatre during the pre and post-colonial eras.
- Highlight the following points for discussion. Teachers may give the following information as a power point or whichever method they deem suitable.
 - ✓ After the conquests of Columbus, Spain found itself rejoicing in its golden age of theatre.
 - ✓ West Indian playwrights have not ignored the Spanish experience as seen in Walcott's "The Joker of Seville" (1974) which drew on the parang.
 - ✓ In Barbados in the year 1728 there was a record of the earliest play produced which was "The Royal Convert".
 - ✓ During the eighteenth century most plays were staged by the resident amateurs of each territory.
 - ✓ Early productions were staged in open air spaces, estate houses, courthouses etc
 - ✓ In the early nineteenth century, productions were often made up of a full-length play followed by a short farce.
 - ✓ Plays were often selected based on its relevance to the colonial audience.
 - ✓ Shakespeare was a frequent choice for plays.
 - ✓ Despite the difficulties associated with travelling, troupes often visited other islands.
 - ✓ Attorneys, Doctors and other educated professionals made up a large proportion of the earliest West Indian writers.
 - ✓ A crucial play that was the first Jamaican work to deal directly with the issues of Jamaican people was "A West India Scene". It was written at a crucial time when many plantation owners were resisting the approaching emancipation of slaves.
 - ✓ "The Bard of Trinidad" by Edward Lanza Joseph was a milestone in West Indian theatre. It was the first locally written West Indian play which highlighted the concerns of contemporary West Indian life.

Plan for Independent Practice –

Students should be encouraged to do independent reading and research using the suggested textbooks of this lesson plan.

Students can also interview a theatre historian/historian to gain more insight into theatre during the pre – slavery era.

A guest lecturer can also be invited to present, Zoom can be used as an effective tool.

Assessment/Evaluation-

Students can engage in a debate on how Caribbean Theatre compares to the rest of the world.

Closure-

In the next lesson we will take a closer look at pioneers of West Indian playwriting as well as Caribbean Cultural Forms.