

**EXPERIMENTAL PERFORMANCE LAB: *Points of Departure***



Photo courtesy of Florida State University School of Theatre

Instructor Leyla Modirzadeh  
ART/MUS/THE 277  
Tuesdays 1:50 PM – 5:10 PM

**COURSE OBJECTIVE:** Learning to experiment and devise by creating original solo or collaborative performance pieces using video, art, sound, music, movement, and text.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** A journal and/or portfolio based on weekly experiments, midterm meal, a final performance piece, and selected readings.

**READINGS:** Selections from *Moment Work: Tectonic Theater Project's Process of Devising Theater* by Moises Kaufman and Barbara Pitts McAdams

*The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, *Mythic Imagination and the Actor* by Marissa Chibas, and other texts.



Meng Jinghui's 2009 revival of Liao Yimei's "Rhinceros in Love"



Collidescope directed by Talvin Wilks and Ping Chong

## **COURSE CONTENT**

### Weeks One and Two: Myths of Origin

Explore heritage, roots, and the ones who came before.

Experiments: Bring in journals, photo albums, childhood artifacts, home movies, significant songs and music, anything that has helped to shape you and your identity. Re-create your favorite childhood place using sense memory. Conduct ancestor research, real or imagined. Research selected examples of contemporary experimental performances.

### Week Three: Correspondences (from Charles Baudelaire's poem "Correspondences")

Fill the creative well with incidental sounds and images (video, photography, etc.)

Experiments: Go into nature and connect at random with textures, movements, and sounds. Collect and record the sounds and images. Do the same exercise with the cultural world around you: your community, the rooms you inhabit, and your daily routine. Draw connections between the work done in "Myths of Origins" and recurring themes of what please and inspire you.

### Week Four: Universal Shapes

Create a personal system of symbols, movements, and shapes from dreams and memories.

Experiments: Locate the body in space using the five universal shapes (square, circle, triangle, equidistant cross, spiral). Explore emerging themes for your piece through improvisational movement, alone and in groups. Create a portfolio of personally important symbols and shapes that can be expressed visually and through movement.

### Week Five: Heterophony

Develop storylines, melodies, themes and variations for the performance piece. Use basic organizing elements found in nature: wind, fire, earth, water, or 7 transformative phases of alchemy, or the 5 senses, or create your own categories.

Experiments: Write out a narrative that incorporates favorite quotes, poems, and texts. Distill your major themes into a storyline that uses what you have worked on so far. Create a lexicon of repetitive sounds, movements, and images that support your main storyline. Develop a theatrical vocabulary that is unique to your piece.

### Week Six: Synesthesia

Create touchable stories and cross-sensory companion pieces.

Experiments: Transform your current storyline into a parallel storyline where sounds turn into corresponding colors, images into corresponding textures, etc. Retell the story lines for a blind or deaf audience. Create a tactile world for a child to follow.



Theodora Skipitares

### Week Seven: Midterm Meal

Put together a meal that expresses your developing piece.

Experiments: Bring in parts or the whole of your experimental meal. For example, see food clips of Blue Man Group, Judy Chicago's "The Dinner Party," read descriptions of Remedios Varo's surrealist dinners for inspiration.

## Week Eight: Putting It All Together

Refine your experiments into an outline for your piece. Set up collaborations.

Experiments: Brainstorm creative challenges for your piece (set, costumes, video projections, sound, collaborations, etc.). Identify the kind of help needed for your project. Identify the kind of help you can offer. Respond as a class with creative solutions for each challenge presented. Draw up a rehearsal schedule.



## Week Nine and Ten: Building the Performance

Review outlines for pieces. Feedback and individual notes given.

## Weeks Eleven and Twelve: Rehearsals

Practice rehearsal techniques. Refine and rediscover your piece.

## Weeks Thirteen and Fourteen: Dress and Technical Rehearsals

Learn how to conquer the object world and prepare for the public.

## Week Fifteen: Performance and Awards Ceremony!



Denver Center Theatre Company's *The Who's Tommy*