



MULTI - ARTS TEEN REVIEWERS AND CRITICS FALL 2022

This Fall Multi-Arts TRaC tackled performances and exhibits across various mediums such as dance, theater, and illustration. We held vibrant discussions both related to the art we saw and also to current events. We made observations not only on the art, but the environments in which the art was held. A common question of ours seemed to be “In Hudson Yards, of all places?” Surrounded by glass towers on all sides, we discussed the ethicality of an only partially true play about the notorious highway-building racist, Robert Moses.

- *Madeline C.*

Created by:

Samiha F.

Ari B.

Madeline C.

Tina Z.

Claudine S.

Liza B.

Teaching Artist:

Brian McCormick

“STRAIGHT LINE CRAZY”

BY DAVID HARE AT THE SHED

David Hare portrays the infamous Robert Moses from all perspectives in the play *Straight Line Crazy*: the people who appreciated his contributions and those who recognized the impact of his oblivious and oftentimes selfish actions. In the play, we can see his frenzied yet strategic efforts that contribute to his plans—schemes, arguably—to cut across neighborhoods to grant access to beaches and parks for the middle class. Here, he is portrayed as a hero, fighting for public rights and developing a multitude of plans to better the quality of life for New Yorkers. At least, the New Yorkers he wishes to acknowledge.

The second act provides a stark contrast to his valiant, inspiring image as we uncover his lack of understanding of the impacts of his actions. His refusal to acknowledge the true interests of the underrepresented communities he was cutting across demonstrates his fundamental racist ideas. All while not realizing his true intentions, Moses ends up destroying communities and destroying his ‘friendships’, rather, his one sided relationships where he failed to recognize the needs of his peers and the depth of his bonds. These factors play a part in the narrative of his rise to power, his exploration of his colleagues, and his unwillingness to alter his old fashioned views, painting Moses as an ultimately selfish “human” being.

- Claudine S.



This play features the famous Robert Moses and highlights the different stages of his architecture career, the first scenes depicting his plans to build a highway connecting Manhattan to a Long Island Beach, and the last scenes on his plans of building a highway through Manhattan. These correlates to Robert Moses’s rise to power and outcry on his power, respectfully. This is apparent when, as there was resistance to him in the second half of the show, the audience felt more captivated and attentive. The first half is interesting in that it shines light on his perspective and ideology behind creating the highway to Long Island, but I felt as if the time between meeting with Henry Vanderbilt and the Governor was dragged out more than necessary. The set was very intricate, and it definitely helped paint a picture into my head of what working in an architectural firm at the time might have been like. Overall, the play definitely informs the viewer of Robert Moses and his plans and justifications for why he is significant in the context of the development of New York City, along with proper historical figures and commentary which add to the story-like concept. I would recommend this show to any interested in the history of the highway system and how the decisions of one man could effect marginalized groups for decades to come, and apparently his own employees as well.

- Ari B.



MAXWELL ALEXANDRE - PARDO É PAPEL: THE GLORIOUS VICTORY AND NEW POWER AT THE SHED

When entering this exhibition, the first thing you notice is the large, suspended pieces of paper organized to form intricate pathways to walk through. On these papers there are large, detailed paintings reflecting Black prosperity. It becomes apparent that the artist, Maxwell Alexandre, is from Brazil when paying attention to the references of Brazilian pop-culture and police brutality present in favelas. The many scenarios depicted in the paintings come together with the same variations in color and overall energetic theme. Viewers could spend plenty of time observing the paintings, not only because of the sheer amount of them but also because of the large amount of features unique to each one. I felt visually captivated by this exhibit, and it's definitely worth paying respect to, if convenient to get to.

- Ari B.

Maxwell Alexandre's exhibition celebrates Black people through a variety of paintings. He uses various cultural and historic symbols, to depict the streets of Brazil and representing the Black identity/Afro-Brazilians. His art seems highly influenced by hip-hop and pop culture, with iconic figures, shedding light on the Black community. His work also seems to focus on the social and political issues of Brazil. One piece that stood out was a depiction of a decapitated head, with a swarm of flies in the background, and onlookers in the forefront. It may be speaking out about the extreme crimes that take place in Brazil, which is notorious for its murder rates.

Something that was unique about his exhibition was the way it was arranged and composed. The gallery was organized in pathways, with the large paintings hanging from the ceiling. The paintings was done on brown paper, and the name of the exhibition, Pardo é Papel translates to brown paper. In a way it can be interpreted as a means of bringing awareness to racialism and colorism. Alexander's gallery really empowers the Black identity and captures Brazilian cultures and influences.

- Samiha F.



“MY BROKEN LANGUAGE” BY QUIARA ALEGRIA HUDES AT SIGNATURE THEATER

The most memorable play for me was “My Broken Language” by Quiara Hudes. The play depicts a story of a young Latina girl born and raised in the U.S. The author reveals that despite the fact she was raised in the United States her family moved from Puerto Rico. Quiara was raised in a bilingual family, however couldn’t understand Spanish language and her family’s traditions on the same level as her relatives. This created a barrier between the family members that the author had to face while growing up. To me the play was memorable because I was able to find a connection between the main character and myself. Even though my family members and I were raised in the same traditions and can communicate using the same language the play made me think about my future in the U.S. As an immigrant myself, who decided to settle here. I started to question the way I would raise my children. Before the play I was sure that I wouldn’t raise my child in Russian culture, or even teach them Russian language. However, I realized how broken my child might feel if not educated about their ancestry. The play also reminded me of a poem called “Fish cheeks” by Amy Tan, who also faced a challenge of accepting and understanding her ancestry growing up. Overall, the play “My broken language” correlated to my own life experiences.

- Liza B.

This play reports on the life of a Puerto Rican family in Philadelphia, focusing on the author, or Quiara’s childhood. Immediately in the first scene the actors interact with the audience in a fun, energetic dance which was a great hook to the story. As each scene progresses, you really do feel like you grow up along with the main characters, especially the author. They progress through time, and highlight the discrepancies with overdosing and other means of dying at a young age as most of the author’s cousins pass growing up. The actors then switch from the role of the cousins to the role of the author at different ages, which I thought was a really literal and effective way of demonstrating change. The play starts and ends at the same scene where the author starts writing the book that eventually becomes “My Broken Language,” which was predictable but structured well. Another important and impressive addition was the set, as it had included a beautiful tiled staircase and floor, running water, and tropical plants that gave off nostalgia and a Caribbean fling. I also want to highlight that the audience for this show would be great for people of all ages, especially those younger or still growing up like the author in the play, as the high-toned energy and the important messages I feel are the most valuable to younger generations. Overall, I would recommend this show to those expecting a warm, family-oriented story with glimpses of aggressive reality along the way.

- Ari B.