Aidan Chin Response 9

Throughout the semester of theater, I have been exposed to various forms of theatrical expression. Among the options presented, I believe that non-speaking devised projects, Marina Abramovic's performance art, and the portrayal of the Hatmaker's Wife have profoundly influenced my understanding of theater performance and the world. I always like a piece of art that influences my perspectives and these were great pieces that did just that for me.

Starting with the non-speaking devised projects, this experience significantly broadened my perspective on the accessibility of creating theater. It emphasized that all you really need is a few people and a premise to create something impactful. For instance, one devised group reimagined the crucifixion of Jesus with a modern twist. Despite the absence of words, the performance felt incredibly recognizable, as if the characters were speaking through actions and sound effects. The impactful moment of the screen opening to reveal the cross is etched in my memory. During our own performance creation process, it became evident that crafting a cohesive story requires thoughtful consideration and care. While limitations stimulate creativity, many elements must align for a truly outstanding performance.

Moving on to Marina Abramovic's performance, her ability to subject her body to extremes for the sake of art is truly spectacular. Performance art, in general, has reshaped my perception of theater and art. Its temporality underscores the need to be present to fully experience it. The impact extends beyond the performance, becoming intertwined with the real world. This connection to the surroundings holds profound possibilities. Abramovic's performances convey unique messages to each viewer, and she effectively captures this individuality. For example, her piece where she and her ex-husband walked opposite ends of the Great Wall of China to meet in the middle and divorce encapsulates love and emotion, even when not explicitly expressed. Another performance that caught me was The Artist Is Present. It captured me so much that I even volunteered to do it in class, and just catching a small portion of what she did in front of hundreds was eye opening. I believe that experience was truly profound and don’t think I will ever forget it.

Finally, the performance of the Hatmaker's Wife by the UMass theater showcased the potential of smaller-scale theater. Unlike the large productions I've attended in the past, this play had a modest audience around a small stage. Despite the scale, the performance felt incredibly personal, with moments like the wall character breaking the fourth wall and greeting the audience. The golem crawling out from beneath a nearby chair added an unexpected dimension. The limitations of scale were skillfully utilized, resulting in one of the most captivating plays I've witnessed in person.

In summary, these three performances have transformed my perspective on art and performance. I have developed a deeper respect for those pushing the boundaries of theater and performance, uncovering the profound meanings embedded within each presentation. It is clear that performance extends beyond what is simply on stage.

I had always been a little interested in theater, but I knew acting wasn’t for me. I was in a high school play senior year as crew and that was it. When I got on campus here as a freshman, I thought all the plays here would be really serious so I would not be able to be a part of them. But after finding this class I thought it was a good opportunity to try it out and see what I thought. I am glad that I did because I learned so much about theater, art, and performances. It was a good introduction to the wider world that is theater.

Reflecting on the semester, I find it to be incredibly rewarding, and I've acquired valuable insights. I am grateful for seizing this opportunity, as it has heightened my interest in theater. Although my involvement in theater was limited in high school, this class has sparked a new perspective, inspiring me to view theater in a different light. Whether student-made or performed by a renowned artist, these performances have left a lasting impact on me. I am pleasantly surprised by how emotionally moving they can be, even when faced with constraints such as no spoken words or a small stage.