

Features of Theatre Forms

Shakespearean/Elizabethan

Male actors; playing to three sides and levels; thrust stage; flow on/off exits and entrances; audience interaction; no stage lighting; iambic pentameter, blank verse; rhyming couplets to indicate end of scenes; use of dramatic irony; Elizabethan costumes with symbolic additions to change era; costumes indicated class; the Wheel of Fortune; the Great Chain of Being; the four humours influencing personality types (phlegmatic, choleric, melancholic, sanguine); soliloquies to reveal thought and motivation; stage fighting (duels); multiple deaths; last important living character speaks the last lines; order is restored to society after upsetting of order, e.g. when king killed; belief in the supernatural (the power of witches); dark imagery; prose as comic relief (Porter scene); ambition key idea [in Macbeth].

Victorian Comedy of Manners

Parody of the stock characters of comedy; epigrams that puncture conventional sentiments and affectations; linguistic dexterity; wit, puns, aphorisms; clever plot of misunderstandings and revelations; symbolic character names; naturalistic acting; NOT sexually explicit; conventional manners of the time adhered to; class – aristocracy, servants knew their place.

New Zealand Theatre

Concern with NZ history and the concept of national identity and sense of belonging; issues of land, racism, colonialism, tradition, morality, spirituality, family/whanau; Tikanga Maori vs the world of the Pakeha; displacement/loss; characters finding and using authentic language; NZ characters.

Purapurawhetu

Themes of identity, dis-location, mana and contested leadership; Maori spiritualism, politics, culture in foreground; use of te reo and waiata; weaving as a motif; use of flashbacks and the juxtaposition of two worlds; poetic language mixed with vernacular Americanisms; tangata whenua perspective on history; presence of lost child through disembodied voice; loss of memory; theatre as cosmos; historical allusion to 1990s Maori politics such as foreshore rights; NZ slang expressions; living by the sea, small coastal town; Te Kupenga means 'the net'.

Pacifica Theatre

Niu Sila

Multi-cultural NZ comedy of manners; Pacifica/Pakeha juxtaposition; use of Samoan and contemporary slang; physical theatre; actors playing multiple roles with versatile physicality; stereotype spoofing; use of symbolic set and minimal props; importance of family; issues of racism and physical abuse; cross-cultural friendships; allusions to the 1980s dawn raids and recent Asian immigration.