PERFORMANCE TREATMENT  Mr. Burns, A Post-Electric Play by Anne Washburn – Due (submitted through Compass): 11pm (CT) Friday, Nov. 4th

The performance treatment assignment is meant to apply things we’ve been learning in class directly to a theatrical production created by the Department of Theatre.

QUESTIONS YOU MUST ADDRESS: We do expect formality and proper academic writing style in your answers. Any supporting, outside research or resources should be cited properly using the appropriate MLA style guide. For such a style guide you might visit the library or the Writing Center. It should be about 2 pages in length.

1. Describe the effect of having seen this performance as a “live” performance. How did attending the show in person effect your experience? What effect did being in the same place as actors and audience have on your understanding of the work? Do you think the experience differed greatly from seeing a recorded version of the performance- if so- how, if not- why not? (See text pgs. 16-17 for Live Performance aspects.) Give specific examples to support your conclusions.

2. Describe how you would classify Mr. Burns, A Post-Electric Play in terms of genre. (See text pgs. 22-25 for Genre definitions.) In what genre does the play fit? If it doesn’t fit neatly in a specific genre mentioned can you create a genre that would fit the play? If so- what would that genre be? Give specific examples to support your conclusions.

3. Describe the central conflict of Mr. Burns, A Post-Electric Play as you understood it from the production. (See text pg. 33 for definitions.) Give specific examples to support your conclusions.

4. Describe the actors’ use of their “virtuosity” (See text pgs. 46-47 for definitions) in their performances. How did the actors use voices and bodies to create characters? How did their work communicate with the audience? Were they successful in creating characters- is so why and if not why not? Give specific examples to support your conclusions.

5. Describe, in specific detail, the final moments of the play in terms of actual events as well as how those events related to the central conflict. Was the central conflict resolved? If so- how? If not- why do you think it was not resolved? Give specific examples to support your conclusions.

6. What appealed to you about the production and why? (You don’t have to “like” the whole production, but we do want you to focus on at least some things that appealed to you. Provide specific examples and explain why.)

HOW WILL I BE GRADED? This assignment is worth 150 points. 30 points will be assigned based on evaluation of format (spelling, grammar, punctuation, citations and the like). Each question will be worth 20 points. You will be evaluated by assessment of the following: Did you completely answer the questions provided? How successfully did you apply concepts from class to practices in production through your brief answers? Is it clear you attended the production? Note: Should it be determined that you did not attend the performance, you will forfeit the grade for this assignment. By submitting a performance treatment for a production which you
EXAMPLE OF PARTIAL ANSWERS: Below are examples that we would consider to be only PARTIALLY successful. These are offered as a starting guide for your writing— for full credit you should expand the following: offer multiple observations per individual question, expand the number of your supporting examples in each question, and offer a clear and discernable conclusion based on your observations and supporting examples. AGAIN— these are examples we would consider to be only partially successful.

1. Seeing Baby Don’t Cry in person greatly influenced my connection with the piece. Beyond the experience of having to buy tickets and show up at a given time I found the sense of community of the audience viewing the live performance in unison to be liberating. Watching audience members react to the ideas brought up by Cindy, the play’s main character, confirmed my belief that our political system is not on the right track. I watched as a woman in the audience cried during Cindy’s Act II monologue about not being wanted for the dance team and saw that the presence of being together with performers and audience communicated with more emotion than a movie I could simply tune out at any time.

2. Assigning a genre to Baby Don’t Cry presents a particular challenge to an audience member of today’s theatre. Technically speaking, in classical Greek terms, it is a comedy because it is not about Gods or the downfall of a great person. I feel like the genre of comedy though also implies it was funny. Baby Don’t Cry was certainly moving and made great use of music to propel the plot and as such I would classify it as a melodrama. Each scene depended on music to portray meaning. For instance— when Robert sang to the kids at the dance in Act I there was no other way the move to creating a dance team could be as effectively communicated.

3. Baby Don’t Cry’s central conflict comes from the Cindy dancers finally accepting the Baby singers as artists in their own right. Symbolically that conflict represents the acceptance of all artists’ craft as having value. It might be taken further as a message of acceptance for all human endeavors. This conflict is best seen in the climactic scene of the play when the dance-off ends in a tie and the teams come together in one dance.

4. The actors’ use of “virtuosity” brought the main focus of their character creation on their use of voice and body. Watching Tim Guttmann’s portrayal of Robert brought focus to an actor’s need for strong vocal training and physical endurance. Guttmann’s Robert became the loudest member of the ensemble during his leading of the revolution in Dance or Don’t Dance. The performance demanded a strong voice that could pierce through the action as well as a spot-on Scottish accent. At the same time the physical portrayal of Robert required Guttmann to use acrobatics (primarily back hand springs) that showed Robert to be young, athletic, and energetic. The audience could better understand Robert as a character of strength because of his mastery in voice and body and the result was tumultuous applause as the character decided to follow Robert to revolution.

5. The final moments of Baby Don’t Cry were a visual feast. The unit set that had been used throughout the second act suddenly exploded into slivers of the original set. All
this happened while Cindy stood center stage screaming her anthem *What I Did I Would Do Again!* Cindy’s song clearly resolved the central conflict of accepting the Baby singers as artists and offered her justification for the choices she would gladly make again.

6. Not being a big fan of musicals I thought I would dislike this production. However, the acting and dancing were so superb I found myself moved by the show. Todd Handig’s performance of the song “Why Men Don’t Dance” was a spectacular example of actors not only using their craft but also seemingly enjoying themselves in the process.