

Audience Response Play Critique

A critique is an evaluation of a performance of a play or musical.

The critique should contain five paragraphs and fill one-two 12 point font-typed pages or 2-4 hand written pages.

Short Paragraph 1 - The Basics

- Introduce the name of the play, author, place of performance, date you saw the performance, and director.
- Create a strong thesis statement about your impression of the success or failure of the production; plan to support your thesis in the body of your essay.

Paragraphs 2 & 3 - The Acting

- React to **two** (one paragraph per performer) of the performers in the play. Be sure to use their names.
- Were they believable: true to the play, the production, and the theatrical conditions?

The following items should be discussed in your review when evaluating acting:

- VOICE: volume, tempo, vocal quality, interpretation, articulation?
- BODY: Were the gestures, movement, and business suitable to the characters?
- BELIEVABILITY: Were reactions true? Climaxes achieved in the play by characters?
- RELATIONSHIPS: Was there team work? Were the relationships by the characters consistent and believable?

Paragraph 4 - The Design

The following items should be discussed in your review.

- SET: Did the set establish the correct mood and background for the play?
- LIGHTS: Did the lighting convey the proper mood, emphasis, and illumination?
- COSTUMES & MAKEUP: Were the costumes and makeup true to the characters?
- SOUND: How did the sound effects and music contribute to the show's mood?

Short Paragraph 5 - Your Reaction

- What was your opinion of the play? Be sure to use specific evidence from the play to support your opinion.

Avoid generic phrases like: "two thumbs up" or "3 out of 5 stars"

Dos and Don'ts

DO:

- Back up all your opinions with valid reasons.
- Be objective, fair and constructive. Indicate good points along with those you felt needed improvement.
- Evaluate the entire production.
- Be sincere. Believe what you say.

DON'T:

- Don't be overly critical. Approach a performance with an attitude of enjoying it.
- Don't be arrogant. Be humble, kind, and understanding of the difficulty of performing.

Sample

Theater review: Monty Python's Spamalot at Music Hall at Fair Park in Dallas

by Sten-Erik Armitage of *John Garcia's The Column*

Monty Python. Arguably the most powerful name in absurdist comedy in the 1970s, the troop entertained audiences in a way that has never been equaled, even up to this current day. So when Eric Idle took on the challenge of creating a musical that was "lovingly" ripped off from the motion picture Monty Python and the Holy Grail, fans were concerned. Would Monty Python's Spamalot (presented by Dallas Summer Musicals at the Music Hall at Fair Park through June 26) be able to maintain the keen subtlety and social commentary of the series and the movies?

In a word -- no. But does that really matter? What Idle crafted was fan service par excellence. Often the audience would burst into applause at the mere sight of a beloved character such as the Black Knight (Matt Ban) or Prince Herbert (John Garry). Spamalot was nothing more than a chain of gags that very loosely followed the plot of the film while at the same time poked fun at the musical theatre industry. Indeed, the best parts of the show were the bits that had nothing to do with the film. The satirical "The Song That Goes Like This" performed by Sir Galahad (Jacob L. Smith) and the Lady of the Lake (Caroline Bowman) was one of two highlights of the evening. In what was obviously a parody of essentially every ballad written by Andrew Lloyd Webber, Bowman showed off not only her amazing vocal skills but also an impeccable sense of comedic timing. Another high point of the performance was during an interlude where Bowman came out wearing her dressing gown and bemoaned her extended period of time offstage in Act 2 by singing "The Diva's Lament." Bowman's performance throughout the evening stole the show. She was simply brilliant.

On the downside was the opening number of Act 2. What should have been one of the best numbers of the evening somehow fell flat. "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life" performed by Patsy (Glenn Giron), King Arthur (Steve McCoy), and the Knights of Ni lacked energy and failed to captivate me. This was surprising as it was one of the more elaborately choreographed numbers of the evening. It was all the more surprising as Glenn Giron was one of the better performers throughout the evening.

Another show-stealing moment came from Sir Robin (Martin Glycer) during the number "You Won't Succeed on Broadway." This brilliantly done routine poked fun at the Great White Way while parodying the classic "Fiddler on the Roof." Glycer was another performer who was a pleasure to watch throughout the evening.

The set and costume design was perfect. Both made maximum use of the stage at the Music Hall at Fair Park and made scene changes smooth and seamless. From the gorgeous gowns worn by the Lady of the Lake to the stained woollens of the peasantry, the costuming was beautifully done.

The lighting design struggled throughout the evening. The players were often illuminated in stark, harsh lighting, and the follow spots were jerky throughout. It felt as though another tech rehearsal was needed. I'm sure that those were details that would be ironed out over the next few performances.

Another frustration occurred during the ensemble-driven numbers. I was uncertain if the problem came from the acoustics of the hall or from the ensemble itself, but it was difficult to hear the lyrics to the ensemble numbers. It was as though they were not striving to perform as one voice resulting in difficulty interpreting the lyrics. Some of the choreography was not executed as sharply as I'm sure the choreographer would have liked. It was easy to differentiate who in the ensemble had a background in dance and who simply learned the movements for this musical.

Speaking of dance, John Garry (Not Dead Fred, Nun, Prince Herbert) was a standout in every scene in which he appeared. Not only did he possess a wonderful sense of comedic timing, he was also an accomplished dancer.

Whether you are a Python fan or not, Spamalot is sure to have you laughing throughout the night. The jokes are clever and non-stop. The songs are witty and engaging. Bowman will blow you away with her vocal prowess. If you have never seen Spamalot, don't waste another minute. It's much better than Camelot. After all, Camelot is a silly place.

Audience Response Paper Assignment – 50 Points

Rubric

Mechanics _____/10

- 2- Errors make paper indecipherable
- 4- Shows little control of basic grammatical conventions
- 6- Errors are present but not horribly distracting
- 8- A few spelling, punctuation, or usage errors but not many
- 10- Paper is impeccably proofread and clean of errors and mistakes

Length _____/10

- 2- Less than a half of a page turned in
- 6- More than half of a page but less than the full requirement
- 10- Meets 1-2 page typed requirement or 2-4 pages hand written

Style _____/10

- 2-Vocabulary and sentence structure is extremely basic and elementary
- 4-Vocabulary is repetitive and uninspiring and sentences are incorrectly formed
- 6-The tone is ill-suited for the topic, and the vocabulary attempts some variety
- 8-The tone is appropriate and the vocabulary varies. Various types of sentences are correctly used.
- 10- --WOW. Great vocabulary is used correctly and the tone is inspiring and appropriate. Sentences flow and read beautifully.

Content _____/20

Organization:

- 2- There is no central idea
- 6- Ideas are not organized in a coherent manner
- 10- Student has organized ideas around a central theme with an introduction, body paragraphs, and a satisfying conclusion.

Elaboration:

- 2- Student does not use topics covered in class to form the basis of their response.
- 6- Topics from class are mentioned but in a very list-like (minimal) manner with little to no discussion or details from the production.
- 10- Student uses topics from class to form the basis of their response. Student also provides insight and details from the production to support their assertions.