



Project  
**MUSE**<sup>®</sup>

*Today's Research. Tomorrow's Inspiration.*

<http://muse.jhu.edu>

# Performing Jewishness In and Out of the Classroom

**Jill Dolan and Stacy Wolf**

Princeton University

As performance studies scholars and feminist teachers, we have long used embodied learning to help students apply the concepts we address in class. But in the “Jewish Identity and Performance in the U.S.” undergraduate seminar we taught together at Princeton in fall 2010, asking students to perform and embody the plays, theory, and history we read took on new resonances, as much of what they performed was, in fact, Jewish identity. Watching students who occupied a range of identity locations around Jewishness grapple with the implications of performing Jewishness—embodying both stereotypes and their deconstruction—gave us a new appreciation for how acutely and incisively performance can cut to the quick of political and theatrical quandaries about identity politics. Our goals in this essay are to clarify how performance circulated as both content and method in our course and to demonstrate how performance might be useful as a pedagogical mode for Jewish studies in general.

Neither of us had formally taught a course in Jewish studies and performance before, although the field has been adjacent to our scholarship for years. In Stacy’s examination of American musicals, the influence and prominence of Jewish men as lyricists, composers, librettists, producers, directors, and choreographers—for example, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, Stephen Sondheim, Arthur Laurents, and Jerome Robbins—has been a notable part of the field’s history and current practice. In Jill’s work on feminist and lesbian theater in the US since 1960, the predominance of Jewish women such as Roberta Sklar, Sondra Segal, Clare Coss of the foundational Women’s Experimental Theatre, and Deb Margolin of the historic Split Britches theater troupe, alongside playwrights such as Lisa Kron and performers such as new vaudevillian Sara Felder, has been significant and yet never purposefully investigated from a scholarly perspective.

These lacunae in our own work and a small seed grant we received from Princeton’s Center for the Study of Religion prompted us to develop our seminar, which culminated in a day-long public event, “Good for the

Jews? A Symposium of Scholars and Artists on Jewish Identity in American Theatre and Performance.” As we began to select texts from the canon of contemporary Jewish theater and performance, we soon confronted the limits of our more-feminist-than-Jewish academic backgrounds with Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* (1949). Before teaching this seminar, we knew Miller was Jewish, and we had frequently taught *Salesman*, but simply as an American drama. Jill had written about the text from a feminist perspective to deconstruct notions of the unmarked and “universal.” Reading the extensive literature on Miller and the play’s Jewishness opened a new slant on the play’s particularity in its themes of integration, ambition, and success.<sup>1</sup> Thus we parsed the questions “What is a Jewish play?” and “How do you know?” with each text we assigned.

The question “Who is a Jew?” haunted our class in fluid, flexible, and ever-changing ways, and identity was never simple or self-evident in our conversations. With a mixed group of students who identified as Jewish, half-Jewish, or not-Jewish, and some as religious, cultural, or ethnic Jews, every day we were surprised by the students’ affiliations and associations, by how certain experiences did or did not accrue “authenticity,” and by what kinds of knowledge and experiences different students possessed. One student from Hawai‘i, for example, who had not met a Jewish person before arriving at Princeton, bristled at the casual use of the term *JAP* among the Jewish students; for her, the epithet was offensive not as an acronym for Jewish American Princess, but because she could only hear it as a derogatory name for Japanese Americans. Moreover, with anthropology and religious studies majors in the room as well as a small cohort of serious theater students, book and theater performance knowledge productively supplemented experiential knowledge.

### **Progressive and Embodied Performance Pedagogies**

We based our seminar’s pedagogy—as all of the classes we teach separately and together—on the theories of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), which argues against a “banking model” whereby a teacher puts knowledge into a student’s head for future withdrawal. Instead, Freire advocates empowering students to participate in their own learning, to be active co-creators of their own knowledge and to look toward how that knowledge might be used. Brazilian theater educator, activist, and politician Augusto Boal adapted Freire’s ideas into theater and performance techniques for social justice. Rather than fostering an Aristotelian notion of theater as mimetic or a reflection of social circumstances, Boal fervently believed that theater practice could be used to change people’s

status in society. He used theater's embodiments to encourage oppressed people to "rehearse for revolution" (122), using theater games and exercises that allowed them to try out new pathways to agency.

Using Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) strategies in the classroom is a time-honored tactic in student-centered, performance-based pedagogy.<sup>2</sup> While our class frequently looked closely at texts and discussed passages from plays and critical essays, we often organized the class around both planned and spontaneous performance. In this way, the students' embodiment was an ever-present feature of the seminar. One Boalian technique we introduced early to ease the students into embodied learning is called "vote with your feet." This exercise asks students to choose where to stand along a continuum that represents their interpretation of a text. For example, we said, "*Death of a Salesman* is a Jewish play," and students who agreed stood on one side of the room and those who disagreed stood on the other. Seeing one another's physical commitments to opposing interpretations of a play created an invested, spirited discussion (held while standing) about why students read the play as they did. Students moved along the continuum as they felt themselves persuaded by others' interpretations. We then watched them reconfigure themselves as we offered, "Linda Loman is the real hero of the play," then, "This play is outdated and irrelevant," and so on.

After "vote with your feet" launched us into a discussion of the play and its themes, we spent time comparing filmed versions to try to articulate how different actors' performances conveyed Jewishness at different moments in US history, especially in the famous role of Willy Loman: Lee J. Cobb (1949) vs. Dustin Hoffman (1985). Although both actors are or were Jewish (Cobb's birth name was Leo Jacob), Hoffman's smaller stature and fussier, more nervous, and flighty performance let us discuss representations of Jewish masculinity in ways that Cobb's more conventionally patriarchal, white, expansive physical performance belied. Both performances conversed with our accompanying reading: Sander L. Gilman's discussion of the Jewish nose and its implications for Jewish masculinity. This activity moved the students from interpreting the script—analyzing words and imagining performance choices—to interpreting the many aspects of performance and the *mise-en-scène*, including staging and blocking, set design, lighting, underscored music, and acting in body, face, and voice.

### **Embodied Thematics: "Sculptures"**

We added different techniques with Donald Margulies's absurdist and parodic *The Loman Family Picnic* (1989), which brings out the Jewishness of Miller's play and riffs on it with hilarity and wrenching pathos. Margulies

moves the New York Loman family to the suburbs, where the mother is slowly going mad, one son is preparing for his bar mitzvah, the other is writing a musical and fantasizing about Broadway, the father is mostly absent physically and emotionally, and none of them are happy. For an in-class performance exercise, we asked students to create “sculptures” that represented what they saw as the essence of *Death of a Salesman*, and then to physically morph their embodied image into another that represented *The Loman Family Picnic*. Taken from Boal’s arsenal of political theater games, “sculptures” instructs a group to use their bodies to create a tableau of a social relationship. In TO work, the group first forms an image of social relations as they exist, and then forms a new image of social relations they would prefer or that would make them feel more empowered. Boal theorized that by changing their bodies’ relations to one another to portray an image of a better world, people would be able to see and feel their way toward real social change.

The students’ statues of *Death of a Salesman* and *The Loman Family Picnic* and the transition from one to the other called attention to the historical and social tissue that connects these texts. One group, for example, presented an initial image of Willy standing above the other characters who all looked up to him, and then they dragged him down and shifted into an image with the Loman father upstage, crouching, bereft, and almost lost in the stage picture. Another group formed a tight circle of the male characters with the mother excluded, looking longingly toward them, then she inserted herself in the middle and they almost exploded outward, then froze into a tableau in which none of the characters had any connection—physical or visual—to another. A third group interpreted the plays less literally, and formed the shape of a house that was stable but tilted and overpowered by skyscrapers (echoing Miller’s opening stage direction) and then the house fell apart and all of the student-actors lay prone across the stage. We did “sculptures” several times during the semester so that students could embody the ideas and ideologies circulating in the plays we read without performing them in a conventionally theatrical way. In “sculptures,” the non-performing students’ interpretations of the images presented are as important as the intentions of the student sculptors. Like film viewing, this exercise hones students’ spectatorial abilities.

### **Performative Experiments: In-Class Scene Study**

As the course proceeded, our knowledge of Jewish performance grew and our understandings of Jewishness became increasingly nuanced and complicated. We varied our daily activities among discussion, close read-

ing of passages, in-class scene reading, and short performance exercises or experiments such as “sculptures” that blurred the boundaries between spectator and actor. These performative tasks required all of the students—whatever their identity positions, geographical homes, beliefs, or cultural and religious practices—to inhabit Jewishness. Each activity was imbued with a sense of fun and spontaneity as well as studied analysis. For example, we regularly gave the students in-class scene studies on the spur of the moment, inviting them to break into groups by counting off and then finding a place to work in the classroom or in the hallway of Princeton’s Lewis Center for the Arts where they could make quick, bold choices about how to present the section they selected or were assigned to perform. We were not looking for anything fancy—typically, we only gave them ten or fifteen minutes to plan and rehearse. The speed of their work often lets them be more impulsive and creative in their choices. When the performance of identity—especially one as frequently stereotyped as Jewishness—is in question, these choices are often revealing and informative and gave us, over the course of the semester, many specific examples to discuss. If we had given the students more time to work, they might have censored themselves or proceeded with a kind of care that might have dampened the risk-taking of the choices they made.

The scene work is meant to let students address the plays in an embodied way rather than simply intellectually. Much of the scene work was interrogative and deconstructive—that is, we were not interested in “faithful” renderings so much as we wanted students to engage the plays creatively, to mine them for possible meanings and resonances not apparent in a surface reading of the text. Such deconstructions required leaps of faith and also trust that the occasional over-stepping into stereotype might be productive rather than offensive. In this respect, our pedagogical practice exemplified theater director and theorist Anne Bogart’s insistence that pushing through stereotypes rather than shying away from or censoring them has the capacity to undo them.

When we discussed playwright Emily Mann’s *Annulla* (1976), for example, we asked each group to stage any moment they wished from the play, with the added challenge that everyone in the group needed to perform. In addition, we instructed one group to play the scene straight, one group deconstructed, and one group with no extra requirements. With four students presenting a scene from a play that is typically performed by one older woman and a younger female narrator, the question of how the students’ bodies would literally flesh out the play’s meanings became pressing. Mann’s first play, *Annulla* is an oral history of a woman who fled the Nazis and passed as non-Jewish throughout her life. Mann narrates

the story of visiting the title character with her friend, Annulla's granddaughter, in Europe and includes stage directions that describe Annulla cooking and performing other domestic tasks as she talks to the two young women. For their scene studies, each group in our class created very different arrangements of their bodies, shifting where they put the main character/narrator in relation to the others and how they embodied and placed Emily and her friend in the scene. The straight group had one student play the silent friend and another the unseen bedridden sister for whom Annulla prepares soup. The deconstructed group doubled the roles, and each "shadow" commented on each line spoken. The third group—perhaps most inventively—placed the young narrator on the far side of the classroom, so we literally heard voices from different places, which heightened the sense of historical distance among Emily's experience, her later writing of the play, our experience watching it, and the horrific events that Annulla describes. In all of the scenes, we witnessed the disjunction between the youthful students and the elderly woman character that a few of them played. The comparison among the three performances illuminated the play in helpful ways, since a dramatized oral history can be read as a story more than a performance. By staging a fragment of the piece, students recognized the importance of the actor's body in presenting the story of Annulla's life. Without our in-class moments of enactment, we are not sure any of us might have connected as emotionally as we did with the play and its tale. Other in-class scene work brought similar revelations about the variety of everyday performances of Jewish identity, as well as unique insights into the texts.

### **Student-Led Performances and Discussions**

In addition to the daily low-stakes performance activities in class, we constructed another assignment that required preparation, planning, and rehearsal. For most of the plays we read, small groups of students signed up to perform scenes, which they chose and for which they devised and distributed a one-page "program" with information about the play's production history, the playwright, and dramaturgical notes that posed discussion questions about the play introduced and provoked by their scene. Students discussed the play and selected and rehearsed the scene on their own and then as experts brought their work to the rest of the class. This project located students as artistic directors, producers, dramaturgs, designers, directors, and actors. For students without theater experience, it offered an opportunity to understand how many decisions theater-making requires; for those with experience, it was a chance to be boldly experimental. For

all, the group work mirrored theater's collaborative nature.

Even as these performances required preparation, the aesthetic stakes were relatively low. Rather, we aimed to empower students to get outside of themselves, to get into the skin of someone different from themselves to "try on" another's subjectivity. In a conventional theater class, scene study is typically understood as an acting exercise, and in an English class, students read scenes aloud to understand how they sound. But our assignment asks students to stage the scene fully, to rehearse and make artistic decisions. At the same time, though, the purpose is more intellectual and relevant to the politics of identity than it is artistic. Here, theater is a means to an end, an opportunity to see, hear, and feel Jewishness embodied.

Some of the groups made choices in accordance with the "preferred reading" of a scene, but the exigencies of a class project invariably brought new readings to light. One trio, for example, performed several monologues from Tony Kushner's *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* (1993): the elderly rabbi's opening monologue/eulogy for Sarah Ironson, Louis's grandmother; Louis's racist diatribe to Belize; and Roy Cohn's early monologue in his office to Joe Pitt. Rather than playing each monologue completely from start to finish, students Molly Silberberg, Margaret White, and Bethy Atkins stitched them together in pieces to stress the resonances among the different characters who speak at different moments in the play. They took advantage of the monologue form with simple staging, each standing apart, isolated in the stage space. In this way, the performance accentuated their voices—the words, phrases, and dialect of Kushner's text as expressed in the sounds of three young women students.

This performance resonated with our reading of Gilman's historicization of "the Jewish voice" and the many discussions we had throughout the semester about voice. Some of our students worried about stereotyping when they used the broad vowels and upward inflections of the commonly quoted New York Jewish accent. Popular culture has made these sounds familiar but not always friendly or pleasant. For some students, these voices sounded like family; that is, their parents or grandparents actually spoke this way. But in the context of a course in which identity performance was under examination, we could not perform or listen to that voice without debating its effect as a signifier of Jewishness. In the *Angels* scene performance, the women relied on the voice to signify each character: the heavy Yiddish accent of the rabbi; the intellectual, neurotic, slightly effeminate speech of Louis; and the vicious, vulgar, manic rant of Roy Cohn. When we heard these voices, their tones, inflections, and accents, they sounded excessively Jewish, since the three women students' everyday speech is



relatively non-accented. The audience of the class became sharply aware of how the voice makes character and makes Jewishness, since the actors' bodies and our past experience with their natural voices did not align with those of the people they played.

The performance also instigated a discussion about gendered Jewishness. The rabbi who opens Kushner's play is historically played by a woman, who also typically plays the Mormon mother, Hannah Pitt, and various other roles.<sup>3</sup> This double- and cross-gender-casting affirms the play's heightened theatricality and Kushner's commentary on Jewish masculinity; in our class it allowed the women to experiment with and create their own performances of Jewish masculinity, both the rabbi's and the other two male characters who are not typically cross-cast. Watching and hearing Bethy, Margaret, and Molly illuminated the panoply of stereotypes that are fleshed out and humanized by Kushner. These representations of male Jews played by women with different affiliations to and performances of their own Jewishness held identity up for discussion and investigation in a way that simply reading the text on the page would not allow.

### **Stereotypes of Jewish Women and Resistant Performances**

Other groups elected to present resistant or against-the-grain interpretations of the scenes, especially when they felt a female character was stereotypically constructed as a JAP or an overbearing Jewish mother.<sup>4</sup> Far from rejecting the characters outright, the students aimed to foreground their status as characters and not as real people, even as the realist form of many of the plays we read naturalized such types. The actors' opposition to their characters was especially evident when the young women in our class played older female characters. The age difference functioned as a politically useful Brechtian distancing device, allowing the students to comment on the troublesome stereotypes they portrayed.

Two plays by Wendy Wasserstein—contextualized in the class by historical and critical articles on the stereotypes of the Jewish American Princess and the Jewish mother—required that we ask what these types mean for Jewish women constructing their public subjectivities.<sup>5</sup> In *The Sisters Rosensweig* (1992), Wasserstein used her own autobiography to address the choices of three sisters with very different relationships to their Jewishness. Two assimilate and try to blend into the WASP-dominated culture to which they aspire, while one sister, Gorgeous, revels in her Jewishness throughout the play and is the family's JAP. Her materialism, however—as the stereotypical Jewish housewife who likes to shop, is acquisitive, and has a relationship with her Jewish friends that is covertly catty and critical—is turned inside out when Wasserstein reveals that

Gorgeous actually is not wealthy, that her designer clothing and accessories are “faux,” and that she watches her money carefully. Although the play ultimately complicates the stereotype by unmasking Gorgeous’s JAP persona as merely a performance, it nonetheless reproduces the stereotype by linking her materialistic values with her Jewishness, in contrast to her sisters’ behaviors.

In their in-class scene performance from the play, Jennifer Lopata and Rachael Alexandroff avoided this trap by infusing the character with a warm, emphatic commitment to Jewishness and ritual that read as affectionate and necessary instead of self-hating or parodic. Jennifer played Gorgeous with physical and vocal stereotypical attributes of a New York Jewish woman/JAP as fussy, but also sincere; thus, her determination to light the Sabbath candles at the correct moment became a sign of religious faith rather than a representation of an empty JAP gesture. Because Rachael played Sara—the thoroughly assimilated, “passing” sister—as clearly Jewish, with inflections and gestures similar to Jennifer’s, the students’ performance evinced an understanding of Jewishness as a continuum *within* the ethnicity instead of a marked difference that could only be read by comparison to the non-Jew (which in many ways, the casting of the original production must have attempted).<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the students’ youthfulness and their lack of experience in relationship to the characters’ lives affected their choices productively. Often, in theater contexts, teachers presume that students should only play age-appropriate characters. But this exercise brought to light new readings in large part because the students were not middle-aged women.

Similarly, in a scene from Wasserstein’s earlier play, *Isn’t It Romantic* (1983), which tracks the different choices two college friends make post-graduation, the student team resisted the play’s critique of Janie, the Jewish character who might be read as pathetic and needy. Without changing a line in the play, the student actors emphasized the sweet and supportive relationship between the two women as they wrestle with their plans and their prospects, romantic and professional. Once again, performing a scene from the play gave our students an opportunity to try on their own bodies how ethnicity might manifest itself—in a gesture, an inflection, a relationship of bodies to one another—since Janie is Jewish and Harriett is not. We could see commonalities and differences between the actors and the characters on the basis of embodiment rather than more abstract notions of identification, which is frequently the key interpretive entry to a play in a text-based dramatic literature class. By literally trying on these characters, the students found remarkable nuances there, and by embodying the characters, they complicated questions that frequently arise about

whether a character is “recognizable,” “realistic,” or “nice.” Perhaps surprisingly, performance forced a productive wedge between actor and character and allowed us to discuss the play’s purposeful construction of Janie and Harriett.

### **Challenging Realism through Environmental Staging**

As we neared the end of the semester, the group scenes grew increasingly ambitious and offered more provocative challenges to the meaning of the performance of Jewishness. One of the last scenes performed by a group of students used environmental staging to put the audience in the middle of the action, to implicate us in our judgments of the Jewish characters’ behaviors and choices. In Donald Margulies’s play *The Model Apartment* (1995), the daughter character, Debbie, embodies her Holocaust-survivor parents’ memories of horror and harm they cannot outrun.<sup>7</sup> Debbie is played in actual productions by an actor wearing a body suit that makes her inhumanly large. She is haunted by Deborah, the impossibly perfect daughter her father lost in the camps and still mourns. Taking off her body suit, the same actor plays both daughters, with Deborah appearing to her father in non-realist, ghostly scenes that mingle the past with the present.

The student group performed the excesses of the play’s metaphors spatially rather than through the costume choices indicated in the script, moving us into a small staff and student lounge, crowding us around little tables in the make-shift kitchen. They used environmental staging, placing us in the middle of the action, and acted around us as the scene progressed. Nell Diamond, who played Debbie, ate constantly throughout the scene, crumbs cascading down her chin as she chewed and spit through her words. Although she did not wear a body suit, she opened her legs and gestured widely with her arms, food flying, to evoke Debbie’s suffocating physicality. The two students playing her parents hovered nervously, obviously trapped in the small space as Debbie/Nell’s loud vocalizing and her desire to eat up as much physical and emotional space along with her food kept them darting miserably around the boundaries of the room.

During our initial discussions of the text, the students saw Debbie as mentally ill. This too-realist reading of a play that we felt was more metaphorical and allegorical began to fracture after the scene presentation, as Nell’s performance of Debbie’s fantasy monologue clarified that the character is a vessel for memories that her parents—and by extension American and other culpable cultures—would like to forget. Seeing the scene helped students differently understand Margulies’s use of genre, just as those performing confronted the psychological limitations of the

language. We watched Nell succumb to the pleasures of a more symbolic, evocative text and its delivery. In this way, too, embodiments allowed us to confront the plays we read in a way that uncovered their literary, physical, and emotional challenges and to consider how they revealed aspects of Jewish identity.

### **Performance Ethnography and Final Projects**

Although we had not emphasized an autobiographical component for the course, the performance activities in the class provided models for students to interrogate their own identities for their final course projects, which we encouraged them to conceive and design in any direction they desired. We had not studied performance ethnography as a method, but the practice of frequent, regular, low-stakes embodiments allowed the students to explore their own identities or those of friends and family in complexly theorized ways. Their experience reading and performing Mann's *Annella* and Lisa Kron's *2.5 Minute Ride* (2001) clarified how solo performance and performance ethnography might be vehicles for examining and expressing Jewish identity. Bethy and Margaret, for example, collaborated on a performance ethnography in which they interviewed a number of self-nominated Jewish students at Princeton about their experiences on campus *as* Jews. They juxtaposed and interspersed sections of the stories, borrowing Anna Deavere Smith's performance style of using informants' words verbatim to create an ethnographic collage of experiences. Bethy and Margaret presented a similar tapestry knit with Jewish themes. Although many of the stories they related found humor in Jewish students' experiences, almost all were tinged with the bittersweet irony of being outsiders at a place where Jews remain very much in the minority. They performed students' stories of being required to take exams on the Jewish high holidays, of the torturous project of creating holiday cards with suitemates overly solicitous about calling them *holiday cards* instead of *Christmas cards*, and of being othered in numerous subtle but insidious ways at Princeton. We learned later that many of the students interviewed were in our class, so Bethy and Margaret's performance provided the same kind of community mirroring for which Smith is famous. Another student, Nava Friedman, used the oral history format for her final project to collect and perform women's stories about different attitudes toward *tashlikh*, a ritual performed during the Jewish New Year that typically involves emptying lint or breadcrumbs from one's pockets and tossing them into a body of water to represent the casting away of the past year's sins. Since she, like Bethy and Margaret, performed pieces of the many stories she had

gathered, Nava embodied different Jewish women in ways that recalled our discussions of the Jewish American Princess and the Jewish mother. These ethnographic/oral history/storytelling performances galvanized the students in our class to look at their lives, their experiences, and their perceptions as art-worthy. Rather than merely expressing Jewish pride, the performance ethnographies held up Jews, Jewishness, and Jewish culture to scrutiny, equal parts critique and celebration, analysis, and expressions of both affection and ambivalence. Again, embodiment offered subtle presentations of the students' experiences.

### **Public Performances and “Good for the Jews?”**

That sense of public investment was epitomized during the “Good for the Jews?” symposium. The day-long event, advertised widely to the Princeton and surrounding communities, capped our seminar, requiring the students to embody yet another intellectual and performance practice and providing a culminating experience for us all. We invited eight presenters, each of whom spoke or performed for fifteen minutes, followed by another fifteen minutes of curated questions and answers moderated by our students and a brief question-and-answer session with the public audience, also managed by the students. Either one student or a team introduced each presenter, then returned to the stage after their talk to sit side-by-side with the speaker on large easy chairs center stage with lavalier microphones to encourage a more informal discussion style. Participants sent papers in advance and we rehearsed with the students so that they had practiced making their introductions from the podium. We also ran through the questions students had prepared for the speakers. We interspersed our guests' papers and discussion with some of the scenes our students had performed in class, and these brief interludes reminded us all that we had gathered to talk about theater and performance. The presence of our students' performing bodies made palpable the live quality of the texts in question.

The symposium also helped our students experience the ideas addressed through the semester in a performative, embodied style. Watching scholars whose work we read during the course deliver works-in-progress to a public audience gave our students a new understanding of what it means to be a scholar, of how ideas become publicly traded commerce, tested and explored, exchanged and developed. Active participation in the day's events allowed the students to invest in the material more than if they had simply been spectators. They engaged with scholars' presentations and entered this particular academic world as fellow scholars, asking ques-

tions, crafting interviews, and offering their own vivid, interpretive performances as part of the dialogue about ideas sustained throughout the day. The symposium as a form of intellectual and professional performance, too, demonstrates the utility of thinking about embodiment as a paradigm for pedagogy in Jewish studies and beyond.

We were profoundly changed, both personally and professionally, by teaching this class. We found ourselves in the role of students, learning alongside our crew, as we also were reading some of the plays and essays for the first time. Moreover, our students' knowledge of Judaism and Jewish culture, either through their experiences or through their other coursework, enhanced our understanding of the texts and performances we encountered each week. Most of all, we were transformed by immersing ourselves in this material and by feeling our Jewishness keenly through the semester and after. Teaching this class allowed us to see the importance of the Jewishness that lingered on the edges of our work and compels us to center Jewishness in current research projects: Jill's book on Wendy Wasserstein and Stacy's book on amateur musical theater.<sup>8</sup>

As scholars and teachers, we always come to our classes with performance at the base; we see all identities as performed and performative, all behaviors as twice-behaved. A performance-studies perspective looks for repetition rather than authenticity. Yet we found that grappling with questions of *Jewish* performance, of *Jewish* history and culture, of *Jewish* voices, bodies, and noses tempered our typically slippery, deconstructed analyses. By combining Jewishness with performance studies, we hope we have equipped students with a vital, flexible tool for embodying a productively critical relationship to their own identities, Jewish or not. We also hope that they come away from the course—as we have—with a more nuanced understanding of how performances of Jewishness circulate through the representational and material cultures with which we interact every day.

### Notes

We thank our students for an inspiring semester and for permitting us to share their work in this essay, and we thank Lori Harrison-Kahan and Josh Lambert for their generous advice and superb editing.

1. See Andrea Most.

2. See Jan Cohen-Cruz and Mady Schutzman's edited collection. Also see Kelly Howe.

3. On Broadway in 1993, the role was performed by Kathleen Chalfant; in the filmed HBO production, by Meryl Streep; and in the 2011 Signature Theatre

- Company New York revival, by Robin Bartlett (Dolan, “Angels”).
4. For a useful discussion of these gendered Jewish stereotypes, see Riv-Ellen Prell.
  5. Wasserstein, who died in 2006 of lymphoma at age 55, remains one of the few popular American women playwrights to succeed on Broadway. She won the Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award for Best Play for *The Heidi Chronicles* (1988), her whirlwind tour through American feminist history.
  6. Madeline Kahn originated the role and won a Tony Award for her performance in *The Sisters Rosensweig*, which was her last appearance on Broadway before her death in 1999. Jane Alexander played Sara.
  7. Although Holocaust literature figured only slightly in the course—by our own choice—we did read two plays that addressed the question of Jewish memory and how a traumatic, collective ethnic past is incorporated into contemporary identity: *Annulla* and *The Model Apartment*.
  8. As one example, we coedited a special issue of *TDR: The Drama Review* on Jewish American Performance (55.3, 2011), which never would have occurred to us had we not taught the class. Editing the issue allowed us to explore new and cutting-edge scholarship on Jewish performance from a range of perspectives.

### Works Cited

- Angels in America*. Dir. Mike Nichols. Perf. Ben Shenkman and Al Pacino. 2003. HBO, 2004. DVD.
- Boal, Augusto. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. 1979. Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride. New York: Theatre Communications, 1985. Print.
- Bogart, Anne. *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.
- Cohen-Cruz, Jan, and Mady Schutzman, eds. *A Boal Companion: Dialogues on Theatre and Cultural Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Death of a Salesman*. By Arthur Miller. Dir. Alex Segal. Perf. Lee J. Cobb. CBS. 8 May 1966. Broadway Theatre Archive, 2002. DVD.
- Death of a Salesman*. Dir. Volker Schlöndorff. Perf. Dustin Hoffman. 1985. Image Entertainment, 2003. DVD.
- Dolan, Jill. “Angels in America.” *The Feminist Spectator*. Blogspot, 28 Dec. 2010. Web. 6 Mar. 2011.
- . *Wendy Wasserstein*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, forthcoming. Print.
- Dolan, Jill, and Stacy Wolf, org. ““Good for the Jews?” A Symposium of Scholars and Artists on Jewish Identity in American Theatre and Performance.” Princeton University. Lewis Center for the Arts. 11 Dec. 2010. Symposium.
- . “Jewish Identity and Performance in the U.S.” Princeton University, Fall 2010. Course.

- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 1970. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum, 1986. Print.
- Gilman, Sander L. *The Jew's Body*. New York: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Howe, Kelly. "Adapting Boal's Legislative Theatre: Producing Democracies, Casting Citizens as Policy Experts." Diss. U of Texas, 2010. Print.
- Kron, Lisa. *2.5 Minute Ride*. 2.5 Minute Ride and 101 Humiliating Stories. New York: Theatre Communications, 2001. Print.
- Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*. New York: Theatre Communications, 1993. Print.
- Mann, Emily. *Annulla: An Autobiography*. 1976. New York: Theatre Communications, 1985. Print.
- Margulies, Donald. *The Loman Family Picnic*. New York: Theatre Communications, 1989. Print.
- . *The Model Apartment*. 1988. *Sight Unseen and Other Plays*. New York: Theatre Communications, 1995. 141-96. Print.
- Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman: Certain Private Conversations in Two Acts and a Requiem*. New York: Viking, 1949. Print.
- Most, Andrea. "Opening the Windshield: *Death of a Salesman* and Theatrical Liberalism." *Modern Drama* 50.4 (2007): 545-64. Print.
- Prell, Riv-Ellen. *Fighting to Become Americans: Jews, Gender, and the Anxiety of Assimilation*. Boston: Beacon, 1999. Print.
- Smith, Anna Deavere. *Talk to Me: Listening between the Lines*. New York: Random, 2000. Print.
- Wasserstein, Wendy. *Isn't It Romantic*. 1983. Garden City: Doubleday, 1984. Print.
- . *The Sisters Rosensweig*. 1992. New York: Harcourt, 1993. Print.