

**DRAMA 54-520 A**

**SLIDE GLIDE IN CONTEXT  
3 Credits**

Primary Instructor:

Dr. Michael M. Chemers  
Assistant Professor of

Dramatic Literature

335 PCA  
412.268.2399  
[chemers@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:chemers@andrew.cmu.edu)

Meeting info:  
(please see schedule below)

TH 6:30-7:20 February 3-April 7

Adamson Wing, Baker 136 A

Office Hours:

By appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

SLIDE GLIDE THE SLIPPERY SLOPE is a theatrical piece running in repertory as part of Carnegie Mellon's 2004-5 Drama season Feb 28 to Mar 3, and again Mar 14-26. The theme for this year's season is "Art is Science made clear". This pass/fail, 3-credit course is built around the play. Students will engage in a "deep read" of this provocative text in cultural, political, and scientific contexts. Eight lectures by experts in different fields from across the disciplines will discuss the salient issues of the play. A short reading may be required for each lecture. Students will be required to write a final paper.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this mini course, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate a unique comprehensive understanding of the dramatic and scientific issues raised by the play.
- Develop and apply several methods for evaluating the use of science in drama.
- Execute a critical analysis of a dramatic text within a larger socio-scientific context.
- Conceive, research, and write documented, balanced, and informed historical analyses of dramatic texts, performances, or periods of theatre history.
- Identify ethical issues raised in connection with scientific progress.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

*Slide Glide, The Slippery Slope* by Kia

Corthron. This and other readings will be  
provided by the instructor.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- *Class Attendance and Participation.* Because this course meets only eight times, full attendance is required for a grade of PASS.
- *Paper.* All papers must correspond to either MLA or APA research formats for style, citations, and bibliography. Detailed notes on how the papers are graded are included in the course packet. Paper topics are open, but must discuss the connection between at least one scientific issue and at least one socio-cultural issue raised by the play or the class discussions.

*SOURCES:* An internet source must meet the following criteria to be considered scholarly:

1. It must be peer-reviewed (other scholars must have been consulted in its editorial and publication process)
2. It must present a balanced argument supported by research and evidence.
3. It must employ traceable citations.

**GRADING:** Full attendance and a competent, well-written and well-researched paper are necessary for credit.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)**

FEB 3: Introduction to the course and the play                      Michael Chemers  
Dramatic Literature

FEB 10: History of Science in Drama:                      Brian Johnston  
Dramatic Literature

FEB 17: Science of cloning and Stem Cell Research:                      John Woolford, Genetics

FEB 24: Considering the Posthuman                      Michael Chemers

**MAR 3—10 : Spring Break                      NO CLASS MEETING**

MAR 17: Sociology of Cloning and Stem Cells:                      Troy Duster, Sociology\*\*  
UC Berkeley

MAR 21: Special Session with Playwright Kia Cothron

MAR 24: History of Cloning                      Jane Maienschein ,  
History and philosophy of  
Science \*\*  
Univ. of Arizona

*MAR 24 Class meets at Philip Chosky Theatre; for play at 7:30 pm.*

MAR 31: SLIDE GLIDE Page to Stage:                      Mladen Kislov  
Head of Directing Program

**\*\* These lectures are part of the University lecture Series and will take place at 4:30 in Adamson Wing, Baker Hall 136A.**

### *GRADING RUBRIC*

Papers will be graded according to four major criteria, and evaluated against four categories of sophistication:

	Not Yet Competent	Competent	Sophisticated	Masterful
Theoretical Groundwork	Does not indicate the author understands the theories used	Demonstrates a reasonable grasp of theories used	Demonstrates a <i>critical</i> understanding of theories used	Adds something new to general understandings of the theories used
Use of Evidence	Evidence is weak, does not support theory, or is not properly analyzed. Citations systematically incorrect	Uses good but unoriginal evidence, makes correct but basic or well-known conclusions. Citations murky or sporadically incorrect	Judicious selection of evidence, critical use of evidence, deep analysis, completes and correct citations	Uncovers something unknown or unexamined by the general scholarship on the subject
Organization	Argument poorly-constructed or difficult to follow	Logical flow, st analysis, clear, argumentation	ep-by-step coherent	Argument appears to flow “naturally” or “organically”
Clarity and Style	Systematic grammar or spelling errors, lack of competency with written language	Awkward writing, sporadic errors, lack of grace or fluidity in writing	Excellent grammar, spelling; communicates all ideas clearly with a minimum of jargon	Writing particularly elegant, funny, or otherwise aesthetically pleasing (without compromising argument)

The level of “Masterful” reflects the ability I would expect from an accomplished, publishable scholarly work. It is not necessary to achieve master in all four categories to get an “A” on your paper, but it is a level for which you should strive in all your writing.





*Nathan the Wise, 1/2" Set Sketch*

**Rendering by Hallie Stern**

*Nathan the Wise*  
By G.E. Lessing

Produced at the Philip A. Chosky Theatre  
by the School of Drama  
of Carnegie Mellon University  
February 24-March 11, 2006

Production Study Guide  
PRODUCTION STUDY GUIDE  
For *Nathan the Wise* by G.E. Lessing

**Edited by**

Arts Management Program

**Michael M. Chemers**

Head of Dramaturgy Program

**Lavina Jadhvani**

Master's Degree Candidate,

**Contributors**

Literature

Literature

of Dramatic Literature

of History, CMU – Qatar

Program, School of Drama

Program, School of Drama

**Brian Johnston**

Professor of Dramatic

**Stephen Brockmann**

Professor of German Studies

**Peggy Knapp**

Professor of English

**Elizabeth Bradley**

Head of School of Drama

**J. A. Ball**

Visiting Assistant Professor

**Ben Reilly**

Visiting Assistant Professor

**Hallie Stern**

Undergraduate, Design

**Alan Katz**

Undergraduate, Dramaturgy

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## INTRODUCTION

by Michael M. Chemers

The 2006 production of *Nathan the Wise* is a truly unprecedented event. Firstly, this production is United States premiere of Edward Kemp's vital new translation. The original full verse text of *Nathan der weise* is almost unspeakably dense and tediously long for modern audience tastes. Kemp's translation, which recently achieved notable success in England's Chichester Festival and in Canadian production, reveals the central dramatic action of the piece in a fresh and urgent new way.

Our production has, furthermore, attracted a great deal of scholarly attention from our own University and beyond. A special course

was created and offered by the School of Drama: an Interdisciplinary Play Symposium in which students from all disciplines listened to lectures and had the chance to chat directly with top scholars in the fields of German Studies, Theatre Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, History, and Philosophy. Some of the proceedings of that course have been collected and edited in this Study Guide.



As part of an

guest at a talk-back session after the February 23 preview of the production. Bryant-Bertail, an internationally renowned theorist of German drama, earned a PhD from the University of Minnesota and also studied at the Sorbonne and the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. In recognition of her study of modern productions of Lessing's work,

Bryant-Bertail was also selected to address the campus as a University Lecture Series speaker and as a lecturer for the *Nathan the Wise* play symposium.

As if these honors were not enough, the School of Drama's production of *Nathan the Wise* was selected by the Provosts of Carnegie Mellon University for a unique event: to be broadcast via satellite, live, to an audience of students, faculty and invited guests at CMU's branch campus in Doha, Qatar, on March 11. The audience in Qatar will be composed of students from CMU-Qatar, Qatar University, and the Qatar Academy, as well as associated faculty from these institutions and others in Qatar's famous Education City. Also present will be members of the Doha Players, the Qatari National Theatre, and the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Heritage of Qatar. To the best of our knowledge, such an event, the transatlantic transmission of a performance to a large, live audience, has never before been attempted on this scale, and we are extremely privileged and proud to have had a hand in the creation of this experience, and hope it will be the first of many such exchanges.

We believe that staging this powerful and highly topical play, with its tremendous relevance to modern problems at home and abroad, within our communities and between them, is one way that theatre artists can connect to one another, forging cultural bonds that will help make ours a more peaceful world.

### **A NOTE FROM THE FACULTY OF CMU-QATAR**

When the Qatar Foundation invited CMU to open a branch campus in Doha in 2004, we were charged with a dual mission. On one hand, we were asked to bring over our nationally-ranked business and computer science departments in order to train students in these specific technical fields. At the same time, however, the Qatar Foundation insisted that students at CMU-Q were to be given the same liberal arts education available on the CMU main campus. Indeed, in a setting like Qatar, the humanities and arts are perhaps even more vital to student development than they are in Pittsburgh: after all, many CMU-Q students came to us from educational systems that stressed rote memorization and the importance of received authority rather than creativity, diversity, and critical analysis. The Nathan the Wise project, then, provides us at CMU-Q a unique opportunity to fulfill our promise to the Qatar Foundation to provide a broadening, humanities-rich education to CMU-Q students.

The Nathan the Wise project offers a second benefit as well: the possibility of fruitful interaction between the two student bodies. A key part of the college experience at the CMU main campus is the opportunity to rub shoulders and exchange ideas with students from different disciplines. Obviously, with only two majors on campus, opportunities for such interaction are rare at CMU-Q, but the Nathan the Wise project should help ameliorate this problem by introducing our students to their drama department counterparts –and in the process, help open our students’ eyes to the full range of the CMU experience.

**Benjamin Reilly**

**Visiting Assistant Professor of History**

***Nathan the Wise and the  
Jewish Emancipation Movement  
by Stephen Brockmann***

*Nathan the Wise* has been called the “Magna Carta” of Jewish emancipation in Germany. Lessing modeled the figure of Nathan on his good friend the German-Jewish Enlightenment philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, grandfather of the great composer Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. At the time that *Nathan the Wise* was written, it was a tremendous provocation for Lessing to make the hero of his play a Jew and the villain of his play an intolerant Christian patriarch. It was equally astounding for Lessing to make the Muslim sultan Saladin a wise and tolerant ruler. The familial relationship between the major figures in the play, revealed at the end, is a metaphor for Lessing’s vision of brotherly love and mutual understanding among the major monotheistic religions. In many ways *Nathan the Wise* is still a provocation, over two centuries after Lessing wrote it. Or can any of us claim that there are no figures like the intolerant, murderous patriarch alive and active today, in all three of the major monotheistic religions?

Lessing wrote *Nathan the Wise* because the Duke of Brunswick, his employer, had forbidden him to engage publicly in theological controversies. During the months before he wrote *Nathan*, Lessing—himself the son of a Protestant pastor and a former student of theology—had, in various journals of public opinion, done battle with Christian fundamentalists, particularly the chief pastor of Hamburg. While Lessing’s opponents argued that the Bible was revealed truth, and that it must be understood literally—and that any questioning of the Bible’s revealed truth was tantamount to criminal apostasy—, Lessing argued for a liberal, tolerant Christianity. Religion was not true because of what was written in the Bible, he argued; rather, it was the absolute truth of religion itself that gave written words, even in the Bible, their significance. And the truth of a religion could only be judged based on the practical, real actions of that religion’s adherents in the world. If they behaved wisely, then their behavior spoke for the religion far more eloquently than any words; if they behaved foolishly or harshly, then that behavior spoke against the religion, no matter how eloquent their words. Lessing’s opponents argued that if the absolute truth of the Bible were questioned, then not only the religious but also the social order would be shaken; any overturning of fundamentalist religion might also overturn the absolute, divine right of sovereigns and kings. It was these arguments that moved the Duke of Brunswick to censor any further theological disputation on Lessing’s part; and in turn, it was the Duke’s censorship that moved Lessing to couch his arguments for tolerance in the form not of a conventional theological treatise but of a play that became one of the greatest works in the German theatrical repertory. Lessing’s vision of a religious belief based on tolerance and respect, and on practical work for good in the real world, still resonates with the problems of today. It is depressing to contemplate that over two centuries after Lessing’s vision of tolerance and respect among the three great monotheistic religions and eight centuries after the Crusades, which pitted Christians against Muslims in the Middle East, both the Middle East and the rest of the world are still torn by intolerance, self-righteousness, murder, and misunderstanding among the adherents of those same three religions, each claiming access to the absolute truth. The

more the world changes, the more it appears to stay the same, with Lessing's vision of tolerance and understanding appearing as an almost impossibly utopian dream on the very distant horizon.

*Nathan the Wise* was of course banned in Germany during the Nazi period, when neither its positive portrayal of a wise Jew nor its negative portrayal of anti-Jewish hatred could be tolerated by Nazi leaders who were themselves filled with anti-Semitic hatred and self-righteousness. After the defeat of the Nazis in 1945, *Nathan the Wise* was the first play to be performed in the newly reopened German Theater in Berlin that December. It was hoped that the play would signal the birth of a new age of tolerance in Germany, and the world. About a mile to the south of the German Theater the Holocaust memorial now stands as a reminder of the horrors of the twentieth century.

### ***The Crusades: Pope Urban II Orders the Conquest of Tierra Santa***



***Nathan, Utopia, and Enlightenment***  
**By Brian Johnston**

In one scene, of *Nathan the Wise*, Saladin complains that he is playing chess with “faceless pieces, and I can never tell which is which.” The pieces are faceless because of a fundamentalist prohibition against ‘graven images,’ a distrust of representing human and divine identities in all their variety. The uniform chess pieces are a metaphor for a humanity in which all are shaped by one ideology, one creed. The fundamentalist’s zeal to convert, like the character, Daya’s, in this play, is a zeal to erase difference. The rich diversity of humanity, and its diverging paths on the search for happiness and truth, are a blessing; and it is a particular blessing that no sect, faith or ideology, can prove *its* path is the only true one.

Lessing once wrote,

*If God held all Truth in his right hand, and in his left, nothing but an ever-restless striving after Truth with the condition of forever erring, and told me to choose, I would reverently choose the left hand and say: ‘Father, give me this. Pure Truth is for Thee alone.’*

In other words, to claim to possess the One Truth or to be following the One True God or Faith or Ideology, and that other paths are wrong, is to reveal you are not interested in *striving after* Truth at all; You are only interested in *certitude*, which is a very different, even an *opposite* thing.

The danger with *claiming* ‘the Truth’ instead of just striving after it, is that you are tempted to throw away everything you think does not fit this Truth. But what you throw away might be some valuable part of our complex humanity; what seems irrelevant now might be something an *adequate humanity*, needs. Humanity’s rich diversity can exist only if there are many paths to seeking truth. So that to force all to follow the one path is a violence against our humanity. Lessing’s colleague in Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, wrote

*Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing can be made.*

In fact it *was* a danger of the Enlightenment enterprise, with its emphasis on Reason and scientific understanding, that its *good* campaign against error, bigotry, and superstition could *itself* lead to a new tyranny: of forcing all human identity onto a single and straight new path. This might then lead not to liberation but the Guillotine, the Gulag and Guantanamo. Impatience with diversity (“you are either with us or against us”) is fertile ground for new Inquisitions to take root.

The harmonious conclusion of *NATHAN THE WISE* requires the young lovers not only to be willing to give up sexual longing in exchange for sibling friendship, *and with new parents*; which would be tough enough: but also to renounce all allegiance to separate ethnic or religious or cultural identity. In other words, the characters on the *stage*



*renounce human diversity* to adopt Enlightenment universality. In the play this can be done by a miraculous suspension of history; with the curtain falling before the complications begin. In real life the complications remain: *either* we seek enlightened universal humanity, and give up commitment to any particular race, faith or creed; *or* we maintain diversity through each sect or creed insisting on its own One Truth. Nathan's stance is that of the intellectual elite who have transcended doctrinal or ethnic, or national allegiance.

The harmonious conclusion of *NATHAN THE WISE* required suspending the truth of history and lifting the characters into a utopia where all conflict is resolved in joyful

friendship. That Lessing had not *logically* solved the problem would not have troubled him. He actually enjoyed defending contradictory positions: arguing for Faith against rationalists; and for rationalism against believers. Hannah Arendt remarked that Lessing was less interested in truth than in the *process of thinking*: that is, of human discourse itself. To have “discovered the Truth” would mean the end of thinking and therefore of the discourse that maintains our rich humanity.

She writes:



*Lessing's greatness does not merely consist in a theoretical insight that there cannot be one single truth within the human world, but in his gladness that it does not exist and that, therefore, the unending discourse among men will never cease so long as there are men at all.*

According to Arendt the dramatic tension of the play lies in the conflict that arises between Friendship and Truth. Nathan's wisdom, she writes, consists solely in his readiness to sacrifice truth to friendship. The whole point about the parable of the three rings is that it is a *blessing* that the genuine ring, *if it actually did exist*, was lost. If it *did* exist “that would mean an end to discourse and thus to friendship and thus to humanness.” *If we possessed the truth we could not be free*, because freedom consists in ever-continuing choices between alternatives. ‘The Truth will make you *unfree*’ is Lessing's wonderful insight.

*NATHAN THE WISE* creates a *Utopian interlude* during which history and all its hatreds, crusades, massacres, wars: - miraculously can be suspended. The play's ending is a utopian dream: that our universal humanity can co-exist despite our ethnic and ideological divisions... The opposite situation is what the young Templar describes as “this mania of claiming our God's the best and then stamping His claim upon our brothers.” Fanaticism seeks a spiritual cloning of humanity into the One True Way.

Lessing's insists there is no True Way. This is likely to be discomfiting to most of humanity. Lessing offers a way out, however.

The power that can celebrate both our human unity *and* our cultural diversity, that can take pleasure in both, and in fact *requires* both, is Friendship. Friendship rejoices in the difference of the Other and recognizes the shared humanity underneath. *Bigotry* sees *only* the difference and fears and hates it. Rejoicing in another person's difference while recognizing a mutual human identity, is the basis of *friendship*. *Friendship* is a more discriminating and disinterested impulse than *love*: you fall in love; you don't 'fall in' friendship; you *choose* friendship.

Hannah Arendt, links Lessing's concept of to the ancient Greek term *philia*. The essence of *philia* is human discourse. She wrote:

*For the world is not humane just because it is made by human beings, and it does not become humane because the human voice sounds in it, but only when it has become the object of discourse. We humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it we learn to be human.*

Nathan finds a way of speaking that which it is dangerous to speak ("Which is the *true* religion?") when he takes up Saladin's challenge and tells the parable of the three rings. The parable refutes dogmatism and makes possible the discourse through which he and Saladin can recognize their shared humanity.

One of the moments in the play when this recognition of a common humanity within difference takes place is when the Templar, who has so far addressed Nathan as 'Jew' says, "Jew – Nathan you said your name was..." And, later, "we can – we must – be friends." At this moment, the Templar has recognized the Individuality of Nathan which makes all stereotyping – on which bigotry thrives – invalid. Diversity, which makes friendship possible, is so precious a human value that, for Lessing, it is worth the risk of conflict and controversy.

In fact, the motive behind writing the play originated in fierce controversy. And in *friendship*. Lessing wanted to help a friend – Elise Reimarus, the daughter of the 'scholar, Hermann Samuel Reimarus. He agreed to edit and publish a heretical' work by her father which, essentially, denied both the divinity of Christ and the truth of the miracles. [This was an opinion of many Enlightenment thinkers, including Thomas Jefferson] The publication of the book stirred up violent controversy and brought Lessing up against a fierce and anti-Semitic prelate, Johann Melchior Goeze. Lessing was a lifelong opponent of anti-Semitism. He had formed a close friendship with the philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn who was his ally in the campaign for enlightenment.

In Germany at the time, Jews were subjected to many forms of insult and humiliation. (For example, like all Jews, Mendelssohn could enter Berlin only through a gate

designated for cattle). Long before he met Mendelssohn, Lessing, took up the cause of the Jews in an earlier play, making a Jew the hero of the action.

Lessing won the intellectual battle against Goeze. But the Chief Pastor of Hamburg, was a powerful figure. He appealed to the political powers, getting Lessing banned from writing on religion. Lessing, therefore, returned to the *theater* as his pulpit. He transfers his quarrel with his contemporaries to another troubled time and place: Jerusalem in 1192. He also transfers his *friendships* there, so that NATHAN is modeled after Mendelssohn, Saladin after Lessing himself, Sittah, after Elise Reimarus, and Rachel after Lessing's own adopted daughter. Among these transplanted friends he finds a place for one enemy, Goeze, whose appropriate *doppelganger* is the despicable Patriarch of Jerusalem, Eraclius. History records the *actual* Patriarch Eraclius as being even worse than Lessing portrays him.

Lessing chose the time and place of his parable carefully. Jerusalem, named the city of Peace, is one of the most violently contested spaces in history. The year 1192, shortly before Saladin's death, was one of the City's interludes of peace. Saladin was an enlightened ruler in whom the Greek quality of *philia* was strongly present. He allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem, for the first time since their exile. He allowed full freedom of religious worship and actually *subsidized* the pilgrimages of poor Christians as well as of Muslims and Jews. His almost reckless generosity, shown in the play, is based on historical fact. Time and place, therefore, are central to the ideology the play is advocating.

*Nathan the Wise*, then, is a pure Enlightenment fable, like Mozart's *The Magic Flute* in which spiritual darkness (the Queen of the Night) is vanquished by Sarastro and his temple of Reason and Light. The one thing that emerges from the bewildering metamorphoses of the final scene of Lessing's play is a dream of *universal humanity within difference*, upon which new friendships can be built as the curtain falls.

As a *parable*, the play does not try to be 'realistic.' This is not the world as it is but as it ideally might be. Lessing wants the action to be remote even though intensely human. Its action is an exorcism of the ghosts that stand between us and our full human identity. Friedrich Schiller will take up and extend this counter discourse in his campaign for a cultural revolution; Henrik Ibsen will infiltrate it into a closer image of the world we have inherited and *miscreated*, and he will devastate that false world from within; and Bertolt Brecht, in many ways a modern Enlightenment poet, will translate it into a frontal attack on the institutions and forces that disfigure our world and our place in it.

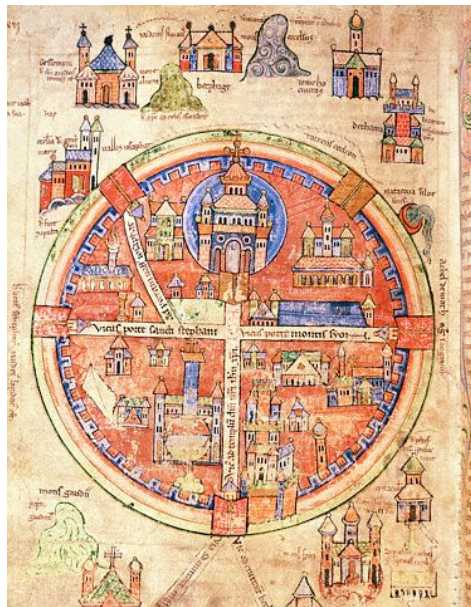
*NATHAN THE WISE* deliberately raises a confusion of identities, religions, languages and races. (Are Rachel and the Templar Christian, European, German, Jewish, or Arab? At the end they seem a mixture of all, and none, of these and it makes no difference: In a form of ideological and ethnic strip-tease, Rachel and the Templar, within minutes, successively shed and put on, like so many costumes, their sibling, filial, ethnic and religious identities. These complications are central to Lessing's message that none of these identities over which the world still fiercely fights, constitutes our intrinsic

humanity: we see them dissolving, comically, in the last scene which beautifully illustrates Nathan's protest: "We neither of us chose our people. Must Jews and Christians be always Jews and Christians and only humans afterwards?" The scene's atmosphere of '*wondrous unreality*', resembles Shakespeare's late Romances, in which tragic logic is suspended for miraculous intervention. But here, in the land of miracles, it is a miracle of enlightened reason.

### ***Nathan the Wise* and its Medieval Literary References** By Peggy Knapp

Some literary images of crusading:

1. The *Song of Roland* was written in 1090, just before the First Crusade, unleashed by Pope Urban II in 1095. Urban's crusade was motivated by a variety of complex political needs at home, but it was urged as a recovery of Christian shrines held by Moslem forces. The nobles who led the troops were devoted or adventurous, or simply land-hungry. But on a popular level, the first crusades unleashed a wave of impassioned, personally felt pious fury. That fury spilled over into the massacres of Jews that accompanied the movement of mobs later into the violent treatment of Christians of the east, of Constantinople in the Crusading armies times, Pope John Paul II apologized for this factor in the story of people came to be "personally felt pious us as butchery may not the Patriarch in *Nathan* know the mind of God.



**Medieval Map of Jerusalem from Robert  
the Monk's *Chronicle of the Crusades***

The Knights Templar, an order established shortly after the First Crusade to protect the Temple Mount, above what was believed to be the ruins of the Temple of Solomon. It was from this location that the Order took its name of Templar. Donations of money, land, and new initiates came from throughout Europe, from noble families who were seeking to support the war effort in the Holy Land. The Order's power further increased when, in 1139, Pope Innocent II, issued a Papal Bull stating that the Knights Templar

could pass freely through any border, owed no taxes, and were subject to no one's authority except that of the Pope. They were sworn to celibacy.

Saladin doesn't enter the picture until the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, where he is widely remembered as a chivalric knight who won the respect of his English opponent Richard I (Lionheart), mentioned in the play as Saladin's chess opponent and the brother of the man he wanted his sister to marry.

*The Song of Roland* was based on an incident in 777, an incident that has nothing to do with crusading and no real relevance to the clash of religious loyalties the crusades stirred up. The retelling of these events at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century (after several centuries for which there is no evidence of written transmission) is motivated by increasing tensions between northern Europe and Moorish Spain, the consolidation of a sense of specifically "French" chivalry, and of course the earliest crusades by Christians against Saracens (pagnims). Roland was chosen by the anonymous author of this "song of deeds," *Chanson de Geste*, to represent the perfect Christian feudal knight. His excellence for courage and prowess is writ large on every page, and linked, increasingly as the poem goes on, with his Christian identity. The plainly intended effect of the *Roland* is its forceful propaganda for crusading.

2. Giovanni Boccaccio tells the story of the three rings in his *Decameron* (1351), Day 1, Story 3. The *Decameron* is composed of 100 stories told by 10 young people who are amusing themselves at a country estate having fled the plague in Florence. Many of the stories are openly critical of the institutional Church and clergy, and many seem scandalous even now. Boccaccio has retained thereby a reputation for "realism." Francesco de Sanctis's (1870) judgment that Boccaccio was the turning point: "Life was no longer based on what should be, but on what is. Thus Dante closed one world and Boccaccio opened a new one." Criticism has added words like "complex" and "urbane" to this description of the *Decameron*, without changing its basic claim to realism. But Day 1, Story 3: the story of Melchisedech, Saladin, and the three rings and is as much a fable as *Nathan the Wise*.

3. Chaucer's description of the Knight in the *General Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*. Worthy and wise, he has been a crusader, but may be on pilgrimage to atone for some of his crusading acts. In the "Franklin's Tale," the plot is headed for promise-breaking. An act of generosity on the part of one of the four major characters inspires a similar act by another until the whole crisis is diffused and everyone lives happily ever after. This too is a fable, like *Nathan*, and as Saladin says in the play, "from one good deed how many others flow" (60). But fable was Nathan's instrument, too.

4. Identity, both religious and familial, depends on stories and inferences from stories. The play places biological identity next to cultural identity. Johnston has called the play an enlightenment utopia, and indeed it is, as is Boccaccio's. What makes the utopian vision possible is the inspirational potential of stories; stories can prevent disasters. Boccaccio's telling proves that it was possible to see beyond the binary oppositions that incite religious wars, even in the Middle Ages.

Now let's circle back to the *Song of Roland*. Even *Roland*, seen from our own angle of vision, cannot sustain those binaries in the face of close reading. Why?

- 1) The very similarities between the paynims (Muslims) and the Christians, insisted on at every turn (were he but Christian), suggest a feudal military aristocracy on both sides.
- 2) To us the paynim gods destroyed by Charlemagne do not look altogether different from the magical powers of the relics in Roland's sword.
- 3) The failure of Roland to win his battle occurs because he was too proud to call for reinforcements, valuing personal glory over feudal loyalty to his overlord's cause.
- 4) And most important, the crisis was caused by Ganelon's hatred for Roland in the first place, and his gruesome death is the last scenic event in the poem.

I am not arguing that the anonymous author who shaped the poem from remnants of history and oral tradition intended those contradictions (ripe as they are for deconstructive attention), but they are, none the less included in the record—you might say they haunt it.

What prevents the catastrophe in *Nathan* is the generosity that speaks through stories postponing mayhem and the reliance on evidence—the book bearing Rachel's genealogy and that of the Templar. The principle characters in the play are related all along by their ability to listen to reason and recognize reason in others. The final tableau of their biological relationship is merely an image of that affinity, utopian because it could form a bond for all human persons.

It [Temple Mount] was the site of the first and second Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and according to Judaism is to be the site of the third and final Temple in the time of the Messiah. It is also the site of two major Muslim religious shrines, the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque, built in the 7th century. It is the holiest site in Judaism, the third holiest site in Islam, and has special significance to Christianity. It is thus one of the most contested religious sites in the world.



**The Relevance of Muslim Views on Europeans  
in the Crusades to *Nathan the Wise*  
by Alan Katz**



During the Crusades, Richard the Lionheart's forces meandered their way through most of the important cultural centres in Muslim Palestine, steadily engaging in an intense cultural exchange. The cultural exchange was rampantly one-sided, a meritocratic and learned society with open trading policy warring with a parsed, feudal, and primogeniture-invested society. The Enlightened society was, of course, the society of the followers of Allah and His Shadow on Earth, the Sultan Salah Al-Din (Saladin). The term Enlightened is

perhaps particularly appropriate in this instance due to the ensuing peace proffered by Saladin, finally accepted by Richard in the Spring of 1192 because of his troubles with his insolent brother King John. Although Saladin's offer of peace came at the time of his strategic advantage (excepting, perhaps, the city of Acre), his perspective on Europeans themselves was deeply influenced in a positive manner until the end of the Third Crusade.

*...the Venetians, the Pisans, and the Genoese all used to come, sometimes as raiders, the voracity of whose harm could not be contained, and the fire of whose evil could not be quenched, sometimes as travelers, trying to prevail over Islam with the goods they bring, and our fearsome decrees could not cope with them... and now there is not one of them but brings to our lands his weapons of war and battle and bestows upon us the choicest of what he makes and inherits...*

--Saladin, Letter to the Caliph of

Baghdad, circa 1164.

Saladin is a microscopic example of a macroscopic issue of Muslim prejudice against Europeans, a result of the negative cultural experience stemming from the Crusades. Therefore, the relevant Muslim experience of the European Crusaders, and Christendom in general, can be divided into two parts: the Muslim experience during the Third Crusade and the Muslim Experience during the peace of Jaffa.

In 1175, during the intense heat of the Third Crusade, there was a warrior who mingled among the Christian soldiers (whom he characterizes generally as Franks) and recorded his exploits, providing invaluable evidence of Muslim opinion of Christian soldiers:

*When one comes to recount cases regarding the Franks, he cannot but glorify Allah (exalted is he!) and sanctify him, for he sees them as animals possessing the virtues of courage and fighting, but nothing else; just as animals have only the virtues of strength and carrying loads.*

-Usmah Ibn Munqidh, *Autobiography* (circa 1175)

The barbaric tones of his description belie his contempt for the cultural “inferiority” of the Christian knights, yet he shows intense respect for their fighting prowess. This commonality provided for fertile ground during the peace of Jaffa, and re-established the veracity of the *dhimmi* (DEE-mee), or “person of the Book”, a status (consisting of Christians and Jews) deemed protected by the Koran. During the Third Crusade, the *dhimmi* protection did not restrict the violence against these groups, but, instead, created fertile ground on which the Christians and Muslims could interact. This respect historically justifies and anthropologically clarifies Munqidh’s reverence for the “Frank’s” ferocity while still establishing a perjorative tone relating to their culture.

The well-earned respect from the Muslims to the Christians and from the Christians to the Muslims in many ways prepared the City of Jerusalem and the region of Palestine for the peace that was to come in 1192, resulting from the eventual capitulation of Richard the Lionheart to Saladin’s offered peace. The attitude of both Europeans and Muslims became deeply adaptive during this peace. The nature of Muslim scholarship was permanently seared on the European learning consciousness through this adaptive awareness, drawing from the absorbed knowledge of Crusading warriors and profiteering merchants. By 1400, Ibn Khaldun could speak rather dismissively of the European Renaissance:

*We have heard of late that in the land of the Franks, that is, in the country of Rome and its dependencies on the northern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, the philosophic sciences are thriving, their works reviving, their sessions of study increasing, their assemblies comprehensive, their exponents numerous, and their students abundant. But God knows best what goes on in those parts. “God creates what he wishes and chooses.”*

--from *Muqaddima* by Ibn Khaldun, Tunisian, circa 1400

As evidence of the expanse of trade, the Muslim knowledge of the Renaissance demonstrates the pervasiveness of trade between Christendom and Islam. In this time, trade became the language of cultural exchange since many of the warriors who arrived in Jerusalem didn’t speak more than a few words of local languages. However, markedly Muslim goods appear at this time in European castles, and, whether from purchase or from seizure, the very presence of Muslim goods caused an *arête* form of cultural exchange that took place not only in the streets on Jerusalem but also in the homes of European nobles.

Jerusalem itself at the time seems to have been a pre-conception of the Enlightenment values that Gotthold Lessing held so dear, with a variety of minority religious and social groups living under a relatively enlightened and marginally benevolent rule. The European observation of Muslim meritocracy and the possibility of even a limited freedom of religious observance created an exchange of ideas that altered each group’s history. Muslims introduced forms of logic into European culture that would be the obsessive study of monks for centuries to come, while Europeans opened up thousands of



new possibilities in Muslim trade. This momentary exchange of ideals, amidst centuries of near-constant war, connected well with the Enlightenment consciousness, and, after the Thirty Year's War, remained culturally relevant in Lessing's Germany. The parallels between the times of the Peace of Jaffa and the Enlightenment historically justify the rule of Saladin in *Nathan the Wise* as near-ideal (in the context of the Enlightenment) and accurate (in the setting of the Peace of Jaffa).

## GLOSSARY OF IDEAS

by Brian Johnston

### *Nathan the Wise and the German Enlightenment*

Although the tone of *Nathan the Wise* is one of **enlightened** tolerance, it was written in the heat of fierce controversy. Lessing had defended a thesis of H. S. Reimarus, a Deist who disputed the evidence for the New Testament miracles and the divinity of Christ. Lessing claimed the right of free criticism regarding even the most sacred subjects. His most belligerent adversary, the chief pastor of Hamburg Johann Melchior Goeze, wielded considerable power and got the Brunswick government to stop Lessing continuing the controversy. Lessing decided to carry on the fight from his 'old pulpit', the stage. The result, *Nathan the Wise*, is a classic of the German Enlightenment along with other masterpieces such as Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Schiller's *Don Carlos* and Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

The setting for the play is Jerusalem in 1192, during the Third Crusade. Palestine is enjoying a rare interlude of peace and justice under the enlightened rule of Salah ed Din (Saladin). Religious bigotry and intolerance are the issues around which the complex plot of *Nathan the Wise* revolves. Mysteries of identity, complications, mounting tension, violent reversals, are used to lead audiences to envisage a happier image of our humanity; free of the dogma of a single, incontrovertible Truth, for all time and for all mankind.

*Nathan the Wise* creates, not the world as we know it, but an Enlightenment utopia where partisan passions give way to humanist harmony; where characters can cast off ethnic and religious identities as if they were interchangeable costumes. Like Shakespeare's late Romances, the play dreams into being a non-tragic world where astonishing revelations lead happily to wondrously implausible endings. Rachel and the young Templar, within minutes, undergo a sequence of Jewish, Christian, Muslim, German, Arab identities to emerge, finally, not as conflicted lovers but as contented siblings. We know such easy metamorphoses are impossible in our real world. This is not how the world behaves, but how we might wish it would behave. Lessing's message is clear: ideological differences are distortions imposed on us by the world's unhappy history. Our universal humanity, deeper than any faith or creed, still waits to be recognized and affirmed.

### The Crusades

There were seven Crusades between 1096 and 1254 - a series of military campaigns to take possession of Palestine and Jerusalem. The Christian Byzantine Empire lost control of the region to Muslim Arabs in 638 but, under the caliphates, Christians were tolerated. The Patriarch Sophronios, who surrendered the city to the Arab commander Omar, was given written assurances that Christians would retain control of Christian holy sites and practice their faith without hindrance. There was agreement to maintain Christian holy places in the city and protect the pilgrimages of European Christians. Relations between

Christendom and Islam were for the most part cordial. This changed when the Seljuk Turks conquered the Arabs, taking Jerusalem in 1070, and then conquered most of the Byzantine Empire, taking Antioch and much of Asia Minor. Christian Byzantium, though at odds with the Roman Catholic Church, appealed to the Roman Pope to save all Christendom by beating back the Ottoman army. In response, Pope Urban II proclaimed a holy war. At the Council of Clermont in 1095 he called upon European Christian "men of all ranks, knights as well as foot soldiers, rich as well as poor, to hasten to exterminate this vile race from the lands of your brethren...Christ commands it!" he added. This was to prove fatal for Byzantium when the Crusaders attacked and pillaged Constantinople. When the Muslims ultimately defeated the Crusaders they accorded Christians the right to trade and to visit as pilgrims. Saladin allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem at a time when Christian Europe continued its religious inquisitions and pogroms.

### **The Templars**

The Crusaders founded the Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon, or Knights Templar, in Palestine in the 12th century. From their formation in 1118 they grew in power and riches until their downfall in 1307 when King Philip destroyed the Order in France. The Order was a purely military one made for the purpose of guarding pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem but it quickly evolved into an immensely wealthy, very effective and ruthless army against the Muslims. Saladin's particular aversion in the play to the Templars resulted from their participation, under the command of Richard the Lionheart, in the massacre of thousands of Muslim prisoners at Acre in 1191, one year before the play's action begins.

### **Salah al-Din**

**(Saladin)** (1138 - 1193) Almost all impartial accounts testify to Saladin's chivalry and enlightened humanity, which Lessing celebrates. One historian observes "In stark contrast to [Jerusalem's] conquest by the Christians, when blood flowed freely during the barbaric slaughter of its inhabitants, the Muslim reconquest was marked by the civilized and courteous behavior of Saladin and his troops." As military leader he cleared Palestine of the invading Crusaders and reclaimed Jerusalem for the Muslims. His generosity, emphasized in the play, was legendary: when he died, "his friends found that the most powerful and most generous ruler in the Muslim world had not left enough money to pay for his grave." Saladin died March 3rd 1193 at the age of 55, one year after the action of the play.

### **Patriarch Heraklios of Jerusalem**

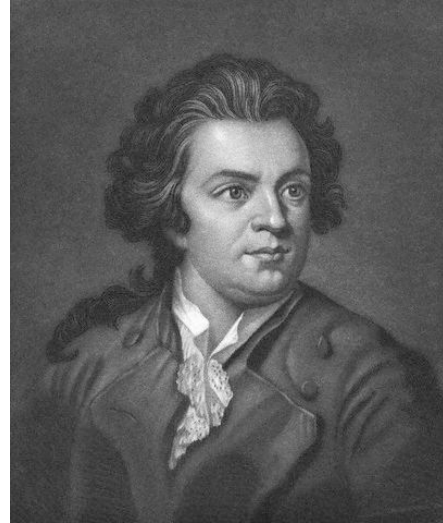
The other historical figure in the play, the Christian Patriarch of Jerusalem, seems, from historical accounts, to have well deserved Lessing's hostile portrait. If the characters of Nathan and Saladin are partly derived from Mendelssohn and Lessing, Patriarch Heraklios most likely owes much to Lessing's foe, Johann Melchior Goeze. In the fictional character of Friar Bonafides, the dramatist provides a more favorable example of Christianity.

### **The Parable of the Rings**

In his crucial confrontation with Saladin, Nathan tells the parable of the Three Rings. The immediate source for this fable was Boccaccio's *Decameron*; but the parable has a long pedigree in many versions where, often, one or other religion emerges as the 'true' one. Lessing transforms the conclusion to one where the true ring can never be established except through the enlightened behavior of its wearer.

### **Important Figures of the Enlightenment**

**Gotthold Ephraim Lessing**, (1729–1781) playwright, critic, and philosopher, helped inaugurate the astonishing German cultural renaissance that was to include Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner and many others. Lessing fought all his life for truth and intellectual freedom. He was born at Kamenz in Upper Lusatia (Oberlausitz), Saxony, on the 22nd of January 1729, the son of the chief pastor of Kamenz. Lessing's plays, *Minna von Barnhelm* (1767), *Emilie Galotti* (1772), and *Nathan the Wise* (1778-79), are classics of the German theater. His critical works were as notable. *Laoköon* (1766) radically redefined the limitations of poetry and the plastic arts. *The Hamburg Dramaturgy* (1767-68) proclaimed that the Greek tragedians and Shakespeare, not the French neo-classical dramatists, truly realized Aristotle's requirements for a tragic drama. This was the signal for the younger dramatists, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich von Schiller to launch their careers as dramatists. *Nathan the Wise*, the first German play to be written in iambic blank verse after the Shakespearean example, was first produced and directed by Friedrich Schiller after Lessing's death and set the standard for the great epoch of German drama that followed.



**Moses Mendelssohn**, (1729,1786) The model for the character of Nathan, Moses Mendelssohn was Lessing's friend, chess companion and cultural ally. *Nathan the Wise* commemorates their friendship in the alliance of Nathan and Saladin. Mendelssohn was brought up in poverty and suffered from the widespread anti-Semitism of the time. As a Jew, he could enter Berlin only through the Rosenthal Gate, available to Jews and cattle. Through his own genius, however, he was to rise to a prominent position in the court of Frederick the Great - much as the Jewish rabbi and philosopher, Moses Maimonides, was an honored physician at the court of Saladin. The friendship of Mendelssohn and Lessing was as mutually fruitful as that between Goethe and Schiller later. It was only after his friend's death that the Mendelssohn, who believed in a personal God and the immortality of the soul, was distressed to learn that Lessing professed the philosophy of Spinoza.



**Baruch Spinoza** (1632- 1677) was born to Portuguese Jews living in exile in Holland. Despite early rabbinical

education, in 1656 he was expelled from the synagogue at Amsterdam for defending heretical opinions. While pursuing philosophy, Spinoza supported himself by grinding optical lenses. His philosophical treatises soon earned him a significant European reputation. In 1673 he declined the opportunity to teach at Heidelberg, preferring to work independently. Spinoza proposed modern historical-critical methods for biblical interpretation and defended political toleration of alternative religious practices. Christians and Jews could live peaceably together provided that they rose above the theological and cultural controversies that divided them. Spinoza held that freedom is self-determination: I am truly free when I acquire adequate knowledge of the emotions and desires that are the internal causes of all my actions. His major work the *Ethics* (1677), published posthumously, had great influence on later philosophers. Spinoza disavowed anthropomorphic conceptions of a god who dealt out rewards and punishments, either here or in an afterlife, as both logically and theologically unsound. His God is infinite Being, whose nature is manifested in the natural laws revealed by Newton and Descartes. Therefore, all religious conceptions are false and all god-worship or claims to be favored by god are fictions. Human beings attain their love of Virtue not by commandments or edicts but by bringing their action into accordance with Reason, whose laws are manifested in the physical universe. The life of Virtue, being blissful, is its own reward. This, of course, is the attitude of Lessing in *Nathan* and lies behind the Parable of the Rings.

**Immanuel Kant** (1724-1804) was born in the East Prussian city of Königsberg, studied at its university, worked there as a tutor and professor for more than forty years and never traveled more than fifty miles from home. Yet he was to create “a Copernican Revolution” (his own words) in modern philosophy. His *Critique of Pure Reason*, (1781, 1787) spelled out the conditions for mathematical, scientific, and metaphysical knowledge. Kant held that the most useful forms of human knowledge are possible only when the mind determines the conditions of its own experience. The mind created reality from its own Categories of Imagination which, however, provided no knowledge of absolute reality: the ‘Ding an Sich or ‘thing in itself’ which was forever inaccessible. Instead of the mind being a passive blank sheet upon which external ‘reality’ wrote our knowledge of the world, as earlier philosophers suggested, it was, from birth, a dynamic and creative force *organizing* a knowable reality from the barrage of appearances and sensations that impinged upon it. Time and Space, for example, were not ‘things in themselves’ but the necessary conditions for human knowledge. Our rational human faculties lead us to the limits of what can be known, by clarifying the conditions under which experience of the world as we know it is possible. Beyond those boundaries our faculties are useless. The profound skepticism of this philosophy also informs the spirit of *Nathan the Wise*.



## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF RATIONALISM

1. Do not feel absolutely certain of anything.
2. Do not think it worth while to proceed by concealing evidence, for the evidence is sure to come to light.
3. Never try to discourage thinking, for you are sure to succeed.
4. When you meet with opposition... endeavour to overcome it by argument and not by authority, for a victory dependent upon authority is unreal and illusory.
5. Have no respect for the authority of others, for there are always contrary authorities to be found.
6. Do not use power to suppress opinions you think pernicious, for if you do, the opinions will suppress you.
7. Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every "opinion" now accepted was once eccentric.
8. Find more pleasure in intelligent dissent than in passive agreement, for, if you value intelligence as you should, the former implies a deeper agreement than the latter.
9. Be scrupulously truthful, even if the truth is inconvenient when you try to conceal it.
10. Do not feel envious of the happiness of those who live in a fool's paradise, for only a fool will think that it is happiness.

-Bertrand Russell

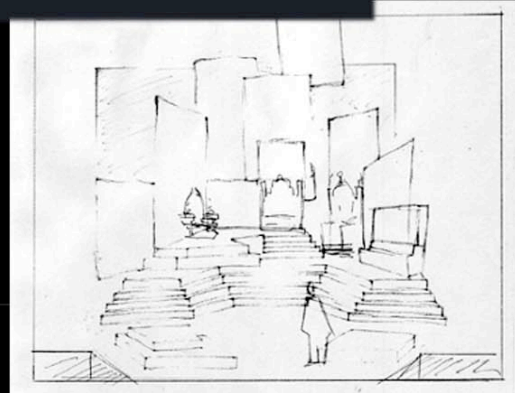
from: *Bertrand Russell, An Introduction*, by Brian Carr (65).



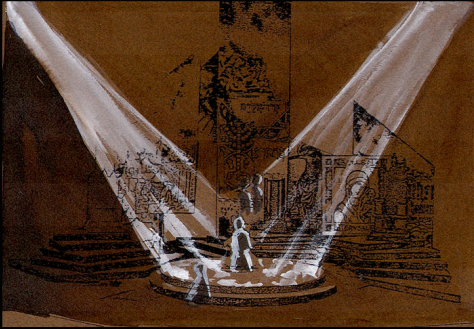
## Production Design Sketches by Hallie Stern, Scenic Designer

*Nathan the Wise, Development*

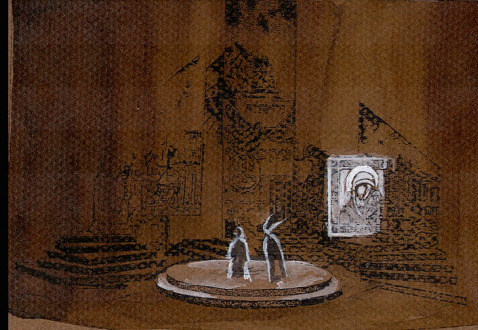
(currently in process of budget and redesign  
for mainstage production)



*Nathan the Wise,*  
Storyboard, cont'd.



**Sc. 4, Palm Grove**



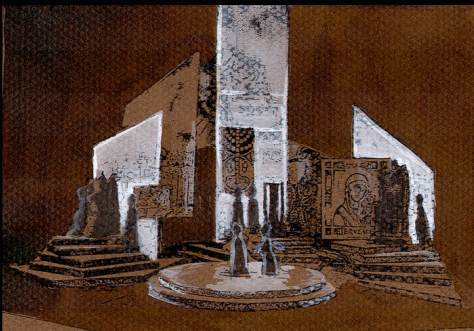
**Sc. 8, Monastery**



**Sc. 6, Saladin's Palace**



**Sc. 12**



**Sc. 6, The Three Rings**



**Closing Costume Change**



Lessing's drama is rarely encountered on stage. But, as the dangers of religious fundamentalism escalate, it has finally made the leap from cobwebbed classic to vital play-for-today.

--Paul Taylor *The Independent*, London

Lessing's play is a seminal piece of world drama; written in 1779 and banned by the Nazis in 1933, its theme speaks urgently and forcefully to us today.

--Michael Billington, *The Guardian*, London

The impulse of the play is to alert us, in the face of increasing religious and political polarization both foreign and domestic, that we are more than our cultural and ethnic labels. *Nathan the Wise* argues that the only way forward lies in transcending notions of separation and embracing our common humanity, both at home and abroad. This play in my view is one of the most powerfully articulated pleas for religious and ethnic tolerance ever written.

--Elizabeth Bradley, Head of the School of Drama

**DRAMA 54-520 A3**  
**NATHAN THE WISE IN CONTEXT**  
**Interdisciplinary Symposium**  
**Spring 2006, 1 Credit**

Primary Instructor: Dr. Michael M. Chemers  
Assistant Professor of  
Dramatic Literature  
335 PCA  
412.268.2399  
[chemers@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:chemers@andrew.cmu.edu)

Meeting info: TH 6:30-7:20 January 12-March 9  
(please see schedule below)  
Adamson Wing, Baker 136 A

Office Hours: By appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

NATHAN THE WISE, by G. E. Lessing, is a powerful 18<sup>th</sup> century German drama dealing with the Crusades, with an astounding contemporary relevance. This pass/fail, 3-credit course is built around the play. Students will engage in a “deep read” of this provocative text in cultural, political, and scientific contexts. Lectures by experts in different fields from across the disciplines will discuss the salient issues of the play. A short reading may be required for each lecture. Students will be required to write a final paper.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this mini course, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate a unique comprehensive understanding of the dramatic, philosophical, and political issues raised by the play.
- Develop and apply several methods for evaluating the use of politics in drama.
- Execute a critical analysis of a dramatic text within a larger socio-political context.
- Conceive, research, and write documented, balanced, and informed historical analyses of dramatic texts, performances, or periods of theatre history.
- Identify ethical issues raised in connection with politics.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

*Nathan the Wise* by G.E. Lessing. This and other readings will be provided by the instructors.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- *Class Attendance and Participation.* Because this course meets only eight times, full attendance is required for a grade of PASS. Students must also attend a performance of *Nathan the Wise*. Students who attend the February 23 performance will be given complimentary tickets.
- *Paper.* All papers must correspond to either MLA or APA research formats for style, citations, and bibliography. Detailed notes on how the papers are graded are included in the course packet. Paper topics are open, but must discuss the connection between at least one scientific issue and at least one socio-cultural issue raised by the play or the class discussions.

*SOURCES:* An internet source must meet the following criteria to be considered scholarly:

1. It must be peer-reviewed (other scholars must have been consulted in its editorial and publication process)
2. It must present a balanced argument supported by research and evidence.
3. It must employ traceable citations.

**GRADING:**

Full attendance and a competent, well-written and well-researched paper are necessary for credit.

**COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)**

**DRAMA 54-520 A3**

**NATHAN THE WISE IN CONTEXT**

<b>JAN 19: Introduction to course and play</b>	<b>Michael Chemers</b> Dramatic Literature
<b>JAN 26: Lessing's Utopian Message</b>	<b>Brian Johnston</b> Dramatic Literature
<b>FEB 2: German Classical Drama</b>	<b>Stephen Brockmann</b> German Studies
<b>FEB 9: European Culture and the Crusades</b>	<b>Peggy Knapp</b> English

**FEB 16: TBA**

FEB 23: Significance of *Nathan* in modern production Sarah Bryant-Bertail\*\*  
*Evening: Nathan the Wise, Chosky Theatre, Curtain time 7:30 pm.*

**MAR 2: *Nathan*, Page to Stage** **M. Kiselov & J.A. Ball**  
*Nathan* Director & Dramaturg

**MAR 5: Simulcast performance of *Nathan* for CMU Qatar: talkback session with CMU Qatar students and faculty to follow.**

MAR 9: Papers due: turn in to Dr. Chemers' mailbox by 5 pm (Purnell Center for the Arts, Second Floor).

**\*\* These lectures are part of the University Lecture Series and will take place at 4:30 in Adamson Wing, Baker Hall 136A.**

## GRADING RUBRIC

Papers will be graded according to four major criteria, and evaluated against four categories of sophistication:

	Not Yet Competent	Competent	Sophisticated	Masterful
Theoretical Groundwork	Does not indicate the author understands the theories used	Demonstrates a reasonable grasp of theories used	Demonstrates a <i>critical</i> understanding of theories used	Adds something new to general understandings of the theories used
Use of Evidence	Evidence is weak, does not support theory, or is not properly analyzed. Citations systematically incorrect	Uses good but unoriginal evidence, makes correct but basic or well-known conclusions. Citations murky or sporadically incorrect	Judicious selection of evidence, critical use of evidence, deep analysis, completes and correct citations	Uncovers something unknown or unexamined by the general scholarship on the subject
Organization	Argument poorly-constructed or difficult to follow	Logical flow, step-by-step analysis, clear, coherent argumentation	Logical flow, step-by-step analysis, clear, coherent argumentation	Argument appears to flow “naturally” or “organically”
Clarity and Style	Systematic grammar or spelling errors, lack of competency with written language	Awkward writing, sporadic errors, lack of grace or fluidity in writing	Excellent grammar, spelling; communicates all ideas clearly with a minimum of jargon	Writing particularly elegant, funny, or otherwise aesthetically pleasing (without compromising argument)

The level of “Masterful” reflects the ability I would expect from an accomplished, publishable scholarly work. It is not necessary to achieve master in all four categories to get an “A” on your paper, but it is a level for which you should strive in all your writing.

February 15, 2006

Mr. Nasir Abd Rida  
National Council on Culture, Arts and Heritage  
P.O. 22330  
Doha, Qatar

Dear Mr. Abd Rida:

It is my pleasure to inform you that the Carnegie Mellon University School of Drama will be broadcasting a live performance of G.E. Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* to an audience of students in Doha. The performance will be followed with a live talkback, made possible through the wonders of modern technology. We are very excited about this unprecedented event, and we want to invite the NCCAH to attend the performance.

The performance will be broadcast at 8 pm Qatar time on Saturday, March 11. The audience will be made up of students from CMU-Qatar, the U of Qatar, and others. We are preparing a press release and some preparatory materials (including a study guide), which I will be happy to send to you.

I will be coming to Doha on March 6 to help CMU-Q prepare for the performance, and departing on March 14. While I am in town, I would very much like to meet with you or someone in the NCCAH who is connected to the Qatar National Theatre, if possible. We are very interested in the state of theatre arts in Qatar, and in creating cross-cultural bridges between our two theatre communities.

I look forward to visiting your city, and I hope we can take advantage of this opportunity to make meaningful contact. We are hopeful that this broadcast of a live performance is only the first of many. For more information on this event, please do not hesitate to contact me directly via email at [chemers@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:chemers@andrew.cmu.edu), on the phone at US 412-268-2399, or at the above mailing address. Please also see this internet link for a news article about the broadcast: [http://www.cmu.edu/PR/press\\_releases/index.html](http://www.cmu.edu/PR/press_releases/index.html).

Very sincerely yours,

Michael M. Chemers, PhD

Assistant Professor of Dramatic Literature  
Head of Dramaturgy Program

## REPORT ON EFFICACY OF 54-520-a SLIDE GLIDE IN CONTEXT

Michael M. Chemers, Drama, Course Administrator

In Spring of 2005, the School of Drama hosted an interdisciplinary mini-course surrounding the School's production of Kia Corthron's *Slide-Glide, The Slippery Slope* as part of the American Repertory of Plays. Modeled on a successful launch the previous term (Fall 2004) of a similar production-centered interdisciplinary mini, *Arcadia In Context*, the course was open to all students at all levels, and featured guest lecturers, specialists in discrete fields of academe who spoke on a particular topic raised by the play.

The course enrolled, initially, some twenty students. These included undergrads from ENG, SHS, CS, BHA, HOO, DRA, BSC, SHS, and PSY, including 6 freshmen, 2 sophomores, 2 juniors, and 3 seniors. The class also hosted two Masters' students in Drama, and a Doctoral student in Chemistry.

Professors for the course were taken primarily from CMU faculty. These included Brian Johnston from Drama, Michael Chemers from Drama, John Woolford from Genetics, Alex London from Philosophy, Mladen Kiselov from Drama, and two invited speakers; Troy Duster, an eminent sociologist from UC Berkeley, and Jane Maienschen, a celebrated historian of biological sciences from Arizona State U.

No single class meeting (Thursdays 6:30-7:20 Adamson Wing baker 136-A) was attended only by students, however. Guests from all walks of the community, especially faculty from other departments, appeared to some or all of the lectures. Generally the population of the class was close to thirty people, but this rose to 153 for Jane Maeinschen's lecture, and at least 175 for Troy Duster's (standing room only in Adamson).

Of all the successes of the program, in my opinion the most valuable was certainly the creation of the opportunity of persons from departments historically separated by what we all assumed were vast methodological and ideological gulfs to get together and discover common ground. I was very pleasantly surprised, for instance, to discover that bioethicist Alex London is an actor and playwright, and he was likewise surprised to discover that I have published quite a bit in the field of bioethics in conjunction with my work on freak shows. Jane Maeinschen, as it happens, is administering a nationwide convergence of science and drama at ASU.

For the School of Drama, in particular, I think the immense value of this project was the bringing in to Purnell a wide variety of faculty, students, and administrators who otherwise might not have any interest in the theatre, who are now beginning to discover the deep joy of the theatre. Simultaneously, we have been able to demonstrate that our community, the School of Drama at Carnegie Mellon University, does not exclusively succumb to romantic appraisals of scientific progress, that science can be a vital and



exciting topic for dramatic art, and that dramatic art can be a legitimate form of rational, skeptical argument.

I would argue very heavily in favor of continuing these production-related projects.

**DRAMA 54-520 A**  
**SLIDE GLIDE IN CONTEXT**  
**3 Credits**

Primary Instructor:

Dr. Michael M. Chemers

Assistant Professor of

Dramatic Literature

335 PCA  
412.268.2399  
[chemers@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:chemers@andrew.cmu.edu)

Meeting info:  
(please see schedule below)

TH 6:30-7:20 February 3-April 7

Adamson Wing, Baker 136 A

Office Hours:

By appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

SLIDE GLIDE THE SLIPPERY SLOPE is a theatrical piece running in repertory as part of Carnegie Mellon's 2004-5 Drama season Feb 28 to Mar 3, and again Mar 14-26. The theme for this year's season is "Art is Science made clear". This pass/fail, 3-credit course is built around the play. Students will engage in a "deep read" of this provocative text in cultural, political, and scientific contexts. Eight lectures by experts in different fields from across the disciplines will discuss the salient issues of the play. A short reading may be required for each lecture. Students will be required to write a final paper.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this mini course, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate a unique comprehensive understanding of the dramatic and scientific issues raised by the play.
- Develop and apply several methods for evaluating the use of science in drama.
- Execute a critical analysis of a dramatic text within a larger socio-scientific context.
- Conceive, research, and write documented, balanced, and informed historical analyses of dramatic texts, performances, or periods of theatre history.
- Identify ethical issues raised in connection with scientific progress.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

*Slide Glide, The Slippery Slope* by Kia

Corthron. This and other readings will be provided by the instructor.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- *Class Attendance and Participation.* Because this course meets only eight times, full attendance is required for a grade of PASS.
- *Paper.* All papers must correspond to either MLA or APA research formats for style, citations, and bibliography. Detailed notes on how the papers are graded are included in the course packet. Paper topics are open, but must discuss the connection between at least one scientific issue and at least one socio-cultural issue raised by the play or the class discussions.

*SOURCES:* An internet source must meet the following criteria to be considered scholarly:

1. It must be peer-reviewed (other scholars must have been consulted in its editorial and publication process)
2. It must present a balanced argument supported by research and evidence.
3. It must employ traceable citations.

**GRADING:** Full attendance and a competent, well-written and well-researched paper are necessary for credit.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)**

FEB 3: Introduction to the course and the play                      Michael Chemers  
Dramatic Literature

FEB 10: History of Science in Drama:                      Brian Johnston  
Dramatic Literature

FEB 17: Science of cloning and Stem Cell Research:                      John Woolford, Genetics

FEB 24: Considering the Posthuman                      Michael Chemers

**MAR 3—10 : Spring Break                      NO CLASS MEETING**

MAR 17: Sociology of Cloning and Stem Cells:                      Troy Duster, Sociology\*\*  
UC Berkeley

MAR 21: Special Session with Playwright Kia Cothron

MAR 24: History of Cloning                      Jane Maienschein ,  
History and philosophy of  
Science \*\*  
Univ. of Arizona

*MAR 24 Class meets at Philip Chosky Theatre; for play at 7:30 pm.*

MAR 31: SLIDE GLIDE Page to Stage:                      Mladen Kislov  
Head of Directing Program

**\*\* These lectures are part of the University lecture Series and will take place at 4:30 in Adamson Wing, Baker Hall 136A.**

### *GRADING RUBRIC*

Papers will be graded according to four major criteria, and evaluated against four categories of sophistication:

	Not Yet Competent	Competent	Sophisticated	Masterful
Theoretical Groundwork	Does not indicate the author understands the theories used	Demonstrates a reasonable grasp of theories used	Demonstrates a <i>critical</i> understanding of theories used	Adds something new to general understandings of the theories used
Use of Evidence	Evidence is weak, does not support theory, or is not properly analyzed. Citations systematically incorrect	Uses good but unoriginal evidence, makes correct but basic or well-known conclusions. Citations murky or sporadically incorrect	Judicious selection of evidence, critical use of evidence, deep analysis, completes and correct citations	Uncovers something unknown or unexamined by the general scholarship on the subject
Organization	Argument poorly-constructed or difficult to follow	Logical flow, st analysis, clear, argumentation	ep-by-step coherent	Argument appears to flow “naturally” or “organically”
Clarity and Style	Systematic grammar or spelling errors, lack of competency with written language	Awkward writing, sporadic errors, lack of grace or fluidity in writing	Excellent grammar, spelling; communicates all ideas clearly with a minimum of jargon	Writing particularly elegant, funny, or otherwise aesthetically pleasing (without compromising argument)

The level of “Masterful” reflects the ability I would expect from an accomplished, publishable scholarly work. It is not necessary to achieve master in all four categories to get an “A” on your paper, but it is a level for which you should strive in all your writing.