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PRODUCING THE PLAY *by John Gassner*

OF HUNTER COLLEGE & THE THEATRE GUILD, WITH THE

NEW SCENE TECHNICIAN'S HANDBOOK *by Philip Barber*

FORMER TECHNICAL DIRECTOR, YALE UNIVERSITY THEATER

The Dryden Press, Publishers, New York

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The Dryden Press, Inc.
386 Fourth Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

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First Printing, September, 1941
Second Printing, November, 1943
Third Printing, November, 1944
Fourth Printing, January, 1947
Fifth Printing, August, 1948
Sixth Printing, November, 1949

Designed by Burnshaw

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE HADDON CRAFTSMEN, SCRANTON, PA.

TO

Theresa Helburn

For Her Leadership in the American Theatre

[J. G.]

PREFACE

PERHAPS the sole justification for adding another book on play production to the present list is the importance of combining the esthetic and practical aspects of the subject in approximately equal proportions. As a result of about five decades of intensive study of the art of production, we now have an abundant heritage of artistic procedure. At the same time, owing to the ever-increasing technological developments of the present century and the demands of realistic production, there exists a large body of technical information. It is probably this abundance of matter that has led writers to focus attention on either the esthetics or the technics. In conceiving this book, the present author hopes to correct the one-sidedness that has been forced upon his able predecessors in the field. The present volume, although by no means exhaustive, is literally two books in one; it tries to pay equal attention to the soul and the matter, the mind and the hands, of play production. The balance thus achieved will, it is hoped, be serviceable to the student who must combine imagination and execution in his work.

Another departure from the ordinary text—one that may be of interest to workers in the community theatre and possibly to their audiences—is the inclusion of certain special chapters. An effort has been made to draw upon the experience of the professional stage. To this end, special phases of production, after being surveyed and related in a general approach, are treated by recognized specialists. However, it should be noted that there is no hard and fast line separating these workers in the professional theatre from their colleagues in the nonprofessional field. All of them have been at one time or other associated with university, school, community, and summer theatres, and many of them have been or still are teachers in their spare time. Moreover, their contributions are supplemented by reports on the special

work and problems of a number of university departments and little theatres.

I have followed this procedure—although with every effort at close co-ordination, without which this book would have invited the defects of a symposium—for several reasons. I believe that an omniscient survey from the point of view of a single writer tends to be too rigid for a subject in which flexibility and the personal equation must prevail, and that there should be an advantage in drawing upon the intimate knowledge of people whose combined experience cannot be matched by any one person. Moreover, the professional approach was decided upon in the belief that non-professional production should not be forever consigned to a position of inferiority; the best professional standards are the goal to be aimed at. There is a disadvantage, as well as some injustice to the university and community theatres, in assuming that the uncommercial stage has to be treated as a lower form of theatre, that it must accept various limitations as its unalterable destiny, and that the student may safely confine his study to the least professional standards and procedures. He must, of course, be able to adapt himself, whenever necessary, to limited equipment, to unprofessional actors, and to a variety of local conditions. Consequently, attention is given to these problems throughout the book, and particularly in the last chapter. But, if the uncommercial theatre is to be something more than a diversion for dilettantes, it is imperative for the non-professional to operate on the theory that he can equal and sometimes even excel Broadway, compensating for some disadvantages with other advantages, and overcoming certain limitations by a resourcefulness that may actually promote artistry.

A word of explanation, but not of apology, is also in order to the general reader or the critic into whose hands this book may fall. He will be disappointed if he expects a series of colorful *causeries* on the theatre, its glamor, its personalities, and its alternation of the sublime and the ridiculous. This may be reserved for the pleasant excursions of journalism or for one's anecdotage. The present work is strictly functional, and it may be noted, as this book will reveal, that even the most vivid personalities of the stage maintain a business-like attitude toward their art and craft. Scintillation costs little and accomplishes even less.

For purposes of utility the book is divided into four sections: The

first is a preliminary overview of the elements that enter into the collective art of theatre, from the play to the actor and his training, from styles of production to the routine but essential matter of organizing the producing company. The information is presented as basic preparation for an understanding of play production, its conditions and possibilities, its artistry and its craft. Special emphasis is also placed on that part of preparation for production which consists in training the actor and the acting group.

Section II deals with the actual production of a play. Since, in the modern theatre, this revolves around the director, the central emphasis is placed upon *Direction*. We begin with the procedure in directing a script from start to finish, the interpretation of the script by the director and his cast, and the problem of style and form. This is followed by chapters devoted to specific procedures in designing, costuming, and lighting the individual play in production, as well as to make-up technique. In so far as the personal note enters into these studies, it has been deliberately retained, in order to convey a sense of living artistry instead of presenting mechanical and absolute laws which do not exist. Although there are common denominators in production, different artists must work differently in some respects.

Section III treats with some important special aspects of production, such as the use of music and dance as adjuncts to production, directing social drama, comedy, Shakespearian plays, revivals in general, poetic drama, musical comedy and revue, and radio drama. Included here is a survey of many devices of progressive or so-called experimental production. This part is concluded with a review of the diverse activities and problems of producing in the university and the little theatres.

Section IV is entirely technical. It is a handbook for the construction of scenery, the making of costumes, and the use of lighting and acoustical equipment.

Naturally, this book cannot present an answer to every production problem. Nor does it provide a substitute for practice under adequate supervision by an instructor. Activity, trial and error, and above all the test of effectiveness for a particular audience with a particular play, are the ultimate textbooks of play production. No one has compounded a magic formula to cover all cases; no one ever will. No one has invented a method that will eliminate personal intentions, tastes, and divagations; no one should, even if he could.

In conclusion, I wish to express my deep gratitude to the many people who have helped in different ways to make this book possible in its present form. Mr. Barber's willingness to revise his valuable *Scene Technician's Handbook*, which now constitutes a book within a book, solved my most difficult problem in a manner which the many people who have already used his unrevised mimeographed manual will agree is admirable. From a practical standpoint, it is the most valuable part of the present work. Madeline Goodfriend's contributions on the actual making of costume also put me under a serious obligation. The contributors of special chapters to the other portions of the book were most co-operative and deserve my particular gratitude for interrupting their professional labors for the sake of this work; their names appear in the table of contents.

To Miss Rosamond Gilder of Theatre Arts, Mr. Barrett Clark of the Dramatists' Play Service, and Professor Garrett H. Leverton I am indebted for helpful advice; to Miss Gilder also for the privilege of reprinting her comments on the John Gielgud production of *Hamlet*. Mr. George S. Kaufman's charming little note *What Is Direction, Anyhow?* was a generous concession from one who dislikes writing about his infallible touch in staging plays. Mr. Erwin Piscator's statement of his views on the challenge of twentieth-century play production was contributed under particular difficulties. I am grateful to him for making an effort to state his vision in a few paragraphs at the risk of being misunderstood by those who were not privileged to observe his remarkable work in the European theatre before the new Armageddon.

Professors Glenn Hughes, Frederick H. Koch, A. M. Drummond, E. C. Mabie, Walter Prichard Eaton, N. Bryllion Fagin, Sawyer Falk, Robert Gates Dawes, Robert Finch, Boyd Martin, Lester Raines, Messrs. Lester E. Lang and Bernard Szold and Misses Marian Rich, Gertrud Eckhardt, and Alice Hermes were exceedingly helpful with information, comments, or specially written statements. To them I express my special gratitude for their generous gift of time and experience. Professors Jerry Blunt, Curtis Canfield, C. R. Kase, Hallie Flanagan, Theodore Fuchs, and J. Russel Lane also gave me useful information on their work and approach in the theatre. Finally, this book provides me with a fresh occasion for acknowledging the unfailing editorial assistance of my wife, Mollie Gassner.

JOHN GASSNER

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PRODUCING THE PLAY *by John Gassner*

INCLUDING CONTRIBUTIONS BY

Worthington Miner · Lee Strasberg
Harold Clurman · Margaret Webster
M. Gorelik · A. Feder · Earle McGill
Guthrie McClintic · and others

INTRODUCTION: THE DESIGN OF PRODUCTION

INDISPUTABLY play production is an art, and all its aspects can be subjected to the principles of esthetics—that is, the esthetic principles one happens to consider valid. Since the advent of Adolphe Appia and Gordon Craig, it has been a truism that the entire production, all elements collaborating to the full extent, must be unified in spirit and mood, thus comprising one comprehensive design. Although this approach to play production has led some of its proponents to attenuated speculations and to romantic mysticism (as may be seen in many of Craig's manifestoes), the basic idea is sound. The theatre is a composite art, and its various elements—the actor, the settings, the costumes, and so on—must serve together, not separately. In the art of modern lighting, moreover, we have a means of blending the sets, costumes, and actors. As Adolphe Appia noted, there are four elements to be combined in a production: the perpendicular scenery, the horizontal floor, the moving actor, and the lighted space that contains them. The director in the modern theatre is the designer of the entire production. He integrates these four elements and relates them to his basic conception of the meaning and mood of the play, as well as to the style of production that seems to him most appropriate to the play.

Esthetics in the Theatre

Beyond this fundamental principle of integration, lie the morasses of theory—dubiously conceived ideas of the importance of maintaining "esthetic distance," the desirability of giving theatre the elusive expressiveness of music, the primacy of the "laws" of design, the subjugation of the living actor to a production pattern, and above all the subordination of production to formal beauty. This book, however, pleads exemption from the alleged necessity of erecting or following any

esthetic of theatre beyond the plain injunction to make all elements supplement each other for the common purpose of expressing the play. It prefers to move to the theatre's basic elements and procedures, as well as special approaches, without preliminary speculation or idealization. In the first place, much esthetic theory is scientifically dubious or highly personal. It is almost always subject to modifications in practice. And all discussion of abstract beauty always overlooks the fact that dramatic art is not abstract—that its stories and ideas are concrete, and are tested concretely by all audiences except small groups of esthetes; the moment an art employs words and living people it ceases to be abstract.

Theatre art, moreover, is relative, and is not an absolute. Theatre is intended for effect, and the ways of conveying an effect are not only multifarious but are subject to social conditioning or circumstance. Some seemingly ideal esthetic procedure may be just the one to prove least efficacious for an audience affected by such forces as war, exacerbated class-conflicts, social upheaval or social reconstruction, and so on. Even the highly placed value of unity of style in any single play may in some ways prove inadequate—that is, lacking effect on a particular audience, while disunity may actually become efficacious under special circumstances. This was illustrated by the effectiveness of certain so-called epic productions in pre-Hitler Germany that departed radically from the integrating esthetics of symbolist staging. For audiences seething with disaffection and desire for social change, the epic style, which combined diverse techniques and styles, was gratifyingly dynamic. In America, brash "living newspaper" productions, compounded of diverse elements, proved eminently impressive in much the same way.

The truth is that the art of theatre is fundamentally pragmatic. Its various elements can never, of course, escape design, even if its professional practitioners no longer prate about it. But their function is to express rather than to beautify, to move and excite rather than to subordinate their dramatic functions to a perfect pattern or a passive cohesiveness, whether pictorial or spiritual. As a matter of fact, theatre proceeds under conditions of interruption and with casting, mechanical and other practical problems, and is affected by so many differences of temperament or outlook, that whatever design appears in the final production is perhaps more miraculous than an inevitable result of its director's, designer's, and actors' initial conception. As Lee Simonson

noted with respect to scenic design, "Drawings for the theatre are desires. They should all be signed with a question mark. . . ."[1] This is equally true of the other factors in play production.

The actual concern of each professional theatre worker and of the director is to be expressive. Insofar as such expressiveness is enhanced or made possible by design—by unity, balance, harmony, etc.—design is inevitable. But it is not the end itself. It is the means. Nor is it the only method of attaining effectiveness; it is one among a variety of factors. Nor is production something that the professional man of the theatre approaches with a theory, unless he is inaugurating a new procedure for which he seeks formal justification.

If this sounds like heresy to the esthetes of the theatre, the student needs only to plunge into a production. Let him do so first with the formal laws of design or some esthetic dogma in the foreground of his consciousness, and he will quickly see how wooden his production is becoming; how lifeless it is when he insists on strict execution of his blueprint. He will also discover that his actors cannot follow him without becoming automatons, an observation that must lead him to dream with Gordon Craig of a super-marionette to take the place of living performers, whose personalities are frequently at war with his preconceptions. Let him, on the contrary, modestly start with the intention of expressing a play by bringing the people in the script alive on a stage platform through the reactions, movements, and actions of actors whom he regards as distinct personalities and the results will be gratifyingly different. In a fairly extensive experience with professional-theatre, the author can state that he has never heard esthetic theory crop up as a serious factor in production procedure. Most of the best effects were the result of instinct, impulse, trial and error, and sometimes even of accident, combined with an intelligent comprehension of the play and a respect for the actors who performed it.

These paragraphs are not intended particularly to make a virtue of scepticism in a field which has been littered with all kinds of mauve and purple principles, from symbolism to dadaism. It is simply this writer's belief that the best theatre has always had feet of clay; that it has always compromised with its human material on the stage and in the audience; and that it has never been more magnificent than

[1] *The Stage Is Set,* Harcourt, Brace, 1932, p. 313. (*The Case of Gordon Craig.*)

when it was robust, impassioned, and earthy. This opinion concerning theatre, as well as the desire to clear the way for an understanding of its elements and procedures, motivates this disavowal of the need of preparatory esthetics, especially with respect to such matters as "play production design,"[2] "esthetic distance," and so on. Wherever problems of design—in settings, lighting, costume, and stage movement—crop up, they will be treated in connection with practice and with style of expression, as a matter of course. This may be better procedure than intimidating the student with high-sounding theories and speculations. There is only one way of learning something about play production, and that is to observe it in practice or, still better, to *work* at it.

However, when theatre is regarded as a function or as something to be done, there is one kind of "design" that *can* be recommended. It is to set oneself the task of bringing to concrete realization the emotion, tone, and thought of the play in their closest possible relation.

Play Analysis and Production Design

The starting point is the play itself, and the above procedure may be called *Play Analysis.* It must start with the discovery of the *spine* of the play. This should perhaps be called the *verb* of the play, for the spine that will ensure actualization on the stage is not a mere concept, or notion, but an activity or drive. We must discover what is being done, what is being effected, in the play text, regardless whether the characters are doing things or having things done to them. Then when this verb is discovered, it is well to look for the larger meaning implicit in it, which may in turn add clarification and dimension to the literal story. The first step, then, is to determine *what* is happening, and what this exemplifies.

The next step is to discover *why* it is done, a question that leads directly to characterization, since it poses the problem of personal motivation. Each character should be studied as a dynamic person compounded of desires and intentions. One need not be disturbed here by the possibility that the character's behavior is socially conditioned, that the *why* is rooted in social causation, since in general the *social factor* becomes identified with the personal motivation in any humanly realized and effectively projected play.

Since motivation colors, as well as conditions, modes of behavior,

[2] This is *not* scene design, of course.

the question "why" is a good introduction to the third important question—*"how?"*

How? obviously poses the problems of stage action. But the question goes deeper, referring not merely to the *beats of movement or action* but to the manner in which they occur, their intensity, their tone, and their degree of reality or unreality, of naturalistic or symbolic or fantastic quality. Before the question *how?* can be answered satisfactorily, it is also necessary to determine the style of individual performances and the larger style that represents the general tone or manner of all the performances.

The nature of the visual components of the theatre arts can then be determined. Make-up, costume, settings, and lighting must be conceived in terms of the style determined upon. This in turn naturally involves an accord with the *what* and *why* and the larger significance —whether social, psychological, philosophical, or spiritual—of the dramatic story. And at this point, too, other contributory arts like the dance and music must be fitted in and made an integral part of the production.

In this functional procedure, in addition to the principle that all the arts in the theatre supplement each other, resides the only generally applicable design of production. If, at the same time, the director senses the necessity or advantage of establishing a frame for the entire production (whether a formalistic frame like Copeau's permanent formal one at the *Vieux Colombier* theatre in Paris, or an expressive one like Orson Welles's brick-wall curtain for *Native Son's* story of the Negro boy's socially determined destiny), he can do so. But the functional design of the staging of a play will lie in what is happening, why it is happening, and how. Since this cannot be determined without a comprehension of dramaturgy and of the means by which it is realized on the stage, we must proceed to a study of the elements of theatre from script to the different departments of production art, and from this to actual procedures by the director and the theatre's other artists.

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NOTE

This is a highly selective bibliography for use by the student rather than by the specialist or scholar. It is inadvisable to burden the student with too many references. These will be found in other books on production and on the theatre arts.

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Elements of Production

I. THE PLAY IN THE PRODUCTION
The Nature of the Drama
Special Problems in Drama
Types of Drama
Styles of Drama

II. THE THEATRE AND ITS ELEMENTS
The Theatre and Its Styles
The Elements of Theatre

III. THE ACTOR IN THE THEATRE
The Actor's Art
Acting and the Training of the Actor
Supplementary Training

IV. ORGANIZATION
Co-ordination in Production
The Stage Manager as Co-ordinator

THE NATURE OF THE DRAMA

The Play as Basis

PRIMARY in the theatre ever since its emergence from ritualistic dances has been *the play*. It gives the basic *content* to the theatre production, and determines—within certain limits which will be noted later—its shape.

It is true that in some periods plays have been secondary to productions. In the post-Attic period in Greece, after the great fifth century B.C., actors took precedence over playwrights; the virtuosity of the former excelled the achievements of the latter. The triumphs of *commedia dell' arte* lay in the field of acting. The Kembles, Booths, Keans, and their fellow performers stood in shining contrast to the mediocrities who provided them with new plays. For over twenty years during the post-revolutionary period in Russia, the Soviet theatre's directors and scene designers have overshadowed the dramatists. Other examples will occur to the student. Nevertheless, this merely means that the actors had to make valiant attempts to overcome the shortcomings of their playwrights. If the scripts had been better the productions would have been more gratifying. Good productions of poor drama rarely deceive the discriminating audience as to the merits of the latter. Moreover, it is noteworthy that in all such periods most successful productions were revivals of older and better plays. Where this was not so, the reason is to be sought in the special taste of the period that made it accept pinchbeck as the genuine article.

There have been instances when a production transformed the content of the play. The director Orson Welles turned *Julius Caesar* into an anti-fascist drama, and the romantic *Shoemaker's Holiday* into a naturalistic comedy and a paean to democracy. The Soviet director Meyerhold altered the content of many a classic to gratify the interests

of his anti-romantic, anti-"bourgeois" audiences. This, however, was seldom achieved without actually revising the script, omitting lines and scenes, and changing their sequence—that is, without making a different play.

Less drastic alterations of content are of course the rule whenever the director and the actors interpret the script. In nearly all such cases, the play lends itself to different interpretations by the manner in which it is written and by the fact that its story may make a different impression on men of different periods. If the hero of *The Misanthrope*, Alceste, was a comic figure for the Golden Age of Louis XIV and is a tragic character for our own times, it is because both interpretations are latent in the script. It is not improbable that Molière was himself torn between two conceptions of his subject, even if it was the comic view that prevailed because the playwright was writing for a particular time and was conditioned by it.

Good, bad, or indifferent, a play has to be *understood* before it can be produced effectively.

It must be judged or evaluated before it is chosen for production. Is it a good play? There is a wide latitude of opinion concerning any dramatic work; taste, bias, and a variety of other subjective elements determine the individual's reaction. The producer cannot, however, be completely mistaken in his choice of a play if he has some understanding of the nature of the drama.

Situations in Drama

What is a play? The drama presents a *sequence of situations* in which characters express themselves *through what happens to them, what they do* or (even) *fail to do.* This is perhaps the lowest common denominator to which a play can be reduced, for it applies equally well to a tightly knit tragedy like *Hedda Gabler* and a chronicle play like *Henry IV*, John Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln* or Laurence Houseman's *Victoria Regina*; to a furiously turbulent melodrama, in which everybody is doing something, and a work like Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*, in which tragedy lies essentially in the failure of any of the characters to change their situation or achieve their desires.

A *situation* is an *involvement.* This may occur when (1) two or more characters are involved with each other; when (2) any character is involved with outside forces; or when (3) one part of a character's

personality is involved with another part. Each of these involvements is a situation. Its intensity or significance may vary; Situation 1 may be more forceful than Situation 3, but both are situations. Moreover, they are not mutually exclusive; for instance, character A may be involved with character B, but may be at the same time the subject of an inner conflict, in which different desires or different aspects of his personality are struggling for mastery. Plays that provide the richest dramatic experience will as a rule reveal all three types of situation.

To illustrate: Hamlet standing in opposition to his father's murderer, Claudius, and trying to wreak vengeance on him, is an example of Situation 1; Oedipus struggling against Fate in *Oedipus the King* is an example of 2; the conflict of John and Loving, the good and evil personalities of the hero John Loving in O'Neill's *Days Without End*, represents Situation 3. Within the Hamlet Situation 1, at the same time, we find a Situation 3—in the conflict between that part of the hero's personality which accepts the duty of avenging his father and the part that revolts against it. (At least this is so in the accepted interpretations of the play.) The Oedipus Situation 2 does not preclude such a Situation 1 as the hero's quarrel with his brother-in-law Creon. The John-Loving Situation 3 is closely related to John Loving's involvement with his wife owing to his infidelity. This mingling of situations can be multiplied considerably in a play.

The producer, then, must make certain that the play possesses situations or involvements, and that these are stressed in the production. In order to recognize them, and to realize them clearly on the stage, he will be aided by an understanding of the nature of involvement. There are infallible signs of a real involvement.

People are not involved unless (1) they have some *relation to each other* or *to something*; unless (2) they are dominated by some *desire*, by something they want to do, have, or avoid; and unless (3) that desire is still to be fulfilled—that is, unless they meet with *opposition*, which leads to a *tension*, a *crisis*, or a *conflict*.

Relation and Structure

(1) *Relation to each other or to something* implies *unity*. No matter how diffusely written a play may be (for instance, in a historical or biographical chronicle), it cannot exist without relationships among

characters. These must be found, and they must be stressed; otherwise there will be no situations because there will be no involvement. Moreover, transient involvements will generally produce weak situations. If one character is involved with different characters in a dozen different scenes, the situations will be undeveloped; and they will be quickly forgotten as they are succeeded by entirely fresh episodes.

Consequently, it is advisable to maintain *a main relationship* as much as possible throughout the play. Subsidiary characters may drop out at one point or other; *main characters* between whom a relationship is maintained must not. In anything but a chronicle (which covers many years), the producer should always be on the look-out for places where the actor of a leading role drops out for any length of time. If this is necessary to the play, it is important to make sure that another, and at least equally dominant relationship, is being maintained during the interval. In *Beyond the Horizon,* for instance, one of the two brothers is absent for a considerable period; but during his absence, the brother who remained behind and married is being dramatically involved with his wife. The ideal way of making the most of a situation is, of course, to retain it *throughout* the course of the drama—to establish it, develop it, and resolve it in successive portions of the work. (In the three-act structure which now prevails, the first act should, as a rule, establish the situation, the second act develop it up to a climatic point, and the third act resolve it. A one-act play can also be conceived in three such segments.)

It will be noted that the frequently stressed, debated classical *unities of time, place, and action* are actually nothing more than safeguards, or means of ensuring the maximum realization of *situation* or *involvement* in the drama. A situation is likely to receive its intensest treatment when it is not allowed to be diffused and weakened by time, which wears down all things; when it is confined to a single area, necessitating no new adjustments to new locales or backgrounds by the audience, which should be enabled to concentrate on the involvements of the situation; and when the situation is all of a piece instead of being interrupted by distracting extraneous matter like sub-plots. For this purpose *dramatic unity* is still considered highly efficacious, even if the unities of time and place are not as stringently applied as in the days of Louis XIV when they constituted a set of narrowly defined requirements.) No one any longer accepts the inflexible law

that the action must be confined to a single day or a single background. The ease and rapidity with which the modern theatre shifts scenery, the use of light to indicate background, and the devices of unit sets, space stage, and revolving stages have removed much of the logic that was claimed for these unities.)

However, there are plays that actually gain from a multiplicity of characters, involvements, actions, and localities, and from a free use of the time dimension. This is true of many of Shakespeare's plays; Dryden's *All for Love* is a "better constructed," "unified" version of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, but the latter is the greater drama. Greatness may sometimes be bounded in a nutshell, as is the case with the best plays of Racine. But there is a greatness that requires breathing space and an expanding frontier. A producer who insists upon pushing it into a nutshell is guilty of more crimes against art than can be forgiven. Extension of time and place, with concomitant multiplication and diffusion of character relationships, is inherent in some important dramatic work. It is inherent in a *Faust* or a *Peer Gynt*; and especially in chronicle plays like *Victoria Regina*, *Abraham Lincoln*, and *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*.

Finally, it is to be noted that a play consists not only of large blocks of situation or involvement but of numerous *subdivisions*, for which the term "beats" may be appropriate. Thus Hamlet's involvement with Claudius consists of a sequence of small involvements that add up to the whole: for instance, Hamlet's treatment of his uncle's advances to him in the first court scene, Hamlet's meeting with him on subsequent occasions, his planning the player scene, his watching his uncle at the performance, his behavior while Claudius is praying, his stabbing Polonius in the belief that the King is hidden behind the curtain, his later encounter with the King, and his stabbing him at the conclusion of the duel scene.

A producer who finds a large situation in a play without finding it broken into a sequence of lesser situations may be reasonably certain that the play will be undramatic. It will drag because it will lack a sufficient number of points of progressing interest. The consequence of this will be actually a blurring of the main situation—it will resemble a rubber band that becomes constantly thinner as it is stretched farther. The relationship that produces a situation ceases to

be dramatically immediate when it is static. It is part of the director's and actor's art first to discover and then to emphasize the fragments or beats that constitute a dynamic situation.

Motivation

(2) *Desire or Will.* Desire is the *motivation* of involvement. It is when characters want something—positively, or negatively in the form of seeking to avoid anything—that they become noticeably involved with other characters, forces, or parts of their own personality. The desire, even when complex, must be clearly defined before situations can become either forceful or convincing. It should be manifest in the characters' behavior; once properly identified in the character's actions and speech, it remains only for the actor to stress the desire.

Intense desire manifests itself as *will.* It is surely significant that the forceful and active dramas of Shakespeare's day revolved around characters whose primal drive was the will to power or some desire which was tantamount to an assertion of will. Even Hamlet is more dominated by will than is frequently realized; both John Gielgud and Maurice Evans realized this, in different ways, in their notable performances. Stanislavsky, who staged Chekhov's plays and knew them better than anyone else, rightly maintained that this dramatist's characters also want or "will" intensely; owing to social conditions, inhibition, conditioning and, in some cases, attrition of their capacity for action, they are merely incapable of asserting or realizing their will actively.

It would be too arbitrary to say that all drama is a representation of the will of man, either individually or collectively. Plays like Maeterlinck's *Interior* and *The Blind*, Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, and even a drama like *Our Town* could not be so defined. All of them, however, represent desire in one way or another.

Genuine emotion in any kind of play can never be achieved without desire or will; nor can empathy or identification of an audience with the characters. If the character doesn't care much, neither will the audience.

Finally, desire or will is the catalytic agent that precipitates *action* of one sort or another. Action without desire or "attachment" may possibly be true of a devotee of Hindu philosophy. But purposeful action without desire (unless there is compulsion from without) is hardly conceivable in human relationships. He who desires does, or

tries to do. Much of a play's unity arises from this form of causation—of desire leading to action. This is, generally, also the most convincing form of activism. If the drama is active, it is largely because characters are striking or dynamic enough to possess the faculty of voluntary action. This is even true of a Fate tragedy like *Oedipus the King*; if Oedipus had not wanted to end the plague in Thebes by discovering the man who polluted the city, he would not have inaugurated the series of actions that finally pointed to himself as the victim of Fate.

The Dynamics of Drama

(3) *Conflict and Crisis.* Desire or will-impelled relations, when they do not lead to instant or easy gratification (and in the actual world this is rarely the case!), produce *conflict.* And it is the peculiar nature of the drama that it concentrates on those relationships that generate difficulties or oppositions and that often produce *conflicts.* In *The Law of the Drama,* the great critic Ferdinand Brunetière, provides a comprehensive definition of this point, to which exceptions can be made without vitiating its validity for most drama:

> . . . . Drama is the representation of the will of man in conflict with the mysterious powers or natural forces which limit and belittle us; it is one of us thrown living upon the stage, there to struggle against fatality, against social law, against one of his fellow mortals, against himself, if need be, against the ambitions, the interests, the prejudices, the folly, the malevolence of those who surround him.

Drama is a way of regarding humanity, individually or collectively; a way of observing it in moments of maximum tension; an art of condensing human experience so that its dynamic processes—i.e., those that determine or change human destiny—will become evident. It is a kind of poetry of action—or of process. Drama is a form of dynamics.

Its nature undoubtedly stems in part from a habit of the human mind, a way of looking at life; and in part, from the fact that it is written to be staged. When literature is set on a platform it must translate itself into *movement*; otherwise it might as well be confined within the covers of a book, which will afford greater opportunities for reflection, analysis, and re-examination than the stage allows.

Conflict is similarly related to stage production. When characters

are projected through actors moving on the stage and highlighted by their surroundings (scenery, lighting, etc.), they achieve some kind of significance. When audiences take the trouble to gather together in a theatre to witness their behavior, they expect it to be confined to significant episodes. Conflict assures this most readily, though not exclusively.

Excitement, that indispensable requirement of theatre, is primarily the product of conduct that precipitates conflicts or is involved in them.

Suspense, another requirement, results from the intensity with which conflicts and their consequences are awaited by an audience.

A *crisis* arises when opposition leads to a crucial situation. Out of this comes a decisive situation or *climax.* After this, all that remains is for the situation to draw to its conclusion or *resolution.*

It is only to be added that, contrary to easy generalizations, there are subsidiary crises, conflicts, climaxes in the individual scenes or portions of scenes of a play. This alone can ensure the *continuous dramatic quality* of a play. This alone can also give every role dramatic vitality; every actor, no matter how minor his role and no matter how little of it is revealed to the audience, has his little drama.

It is to be noted further that it is the causally established sequence of increasingly intense situations (of development toward conflict, crisis, and climax) that ensures the *progress* of a play. When a play does not progress sufficiently, the flaw is to be located somewhere in this sequence. To complain vaguely of a lack of progression is helpful neither to the playwright nor the producer. To remedy this weakness in a new play or one selected for revival, it is neither necessary nor advisable, as a rule, to inject fresh situations; it is important to examine the old ones to discover what situations suggest further development.

Climax and Resolution

(*4*) *Resolution.* The resolution of the climax that arises in the play should be an inevitable outcome of the expectations created up to this point. Playwrights do not always succeed in creating this inevitability by force of logic, and this must be set down as a flaw. The audience will remain unconvinced that the conclusion had to follow, if it will not be downright disappointed by it. This is one of the producers' and directors' severest problems, for a play can suffer disastrously from an irrelevant, false, or half-convincing conclusion. A play may even strike its audience as futile or meretricious in consequence.

The production must take careful stock of the logic of resolution, and then proceed to strengthen it or compensate for its inadequacy.

In the case of a new play, it is entirely possible for the director to make suggestions. The first version of S. N. Behrman's *Rain from Heaven* that went into rehearsal had one ending: the German critic who escaped from the land of the Nazis only to find the virus of fascism in his English asylum decided to go away somewhere to think things over. For a liberal, who had been thinking things over for a long time, to respond to so much provocation with retirement and further reflection was anti-climactic; at least, it provided an insufficient discharge for the audience and made the entire play seem futile. When the play reached Broadway, however, it had received a new ending; the critic at bay decided to join the underground anti-Nazi movement. It may have been a little unprepared by the characterization of the hero, but it was a gratifying conclusion in relation to the antecedent action. Odets' *Awake and Sing!* acquired a new ending during rehearsals; after the suicide of the grandfather a discharge of the pent-up action was provided by the supposed enlightenment of his grandson. The solution for an inadequate *resolution* may not always be perfect (this was true of *Awake and Sing!*); the seams may show where the patch was added, but the immediate effect will be satisfying if credibility is not wantonly violated. The playwright may insure himself against faulty resolution by deciding in advance on what he wishes to demonstrate, although he may then risk the danger of contriving and forcing events to support his point to such a degree that his characters become puppets. The talented young playwright Clifford Odets once attributed "third-act trouble" to inability to take a stand or hold by a conviction.

Where, for some reason, a living author insists on retaining a certain conclusion in defiance of criticism, the director cannot legally do anything with the text. He should not, however, convince himself that all is right with the play, if he does not really think so. It will be better for him to remember his original doubts and to concentrate on the creation of sufficient theatrical magic to overcome the absence of inevitability or flawless logic. Logically considered, *Winterset*, in the opinion of some critics, need not have ended in the death of Mio; avenues of escape remained for the character, and the film version actually saved him for a "happy ending" without seriously violating

the sequence of events. However, Guthrie McClintic's brilliant direction, with the aid of Jo Mielziner's ominous settings, pervaded the play with a tragic atmosphere, or tone, already present in Anderson's lines. As a result, the tragic conclusion seemed theatrically, if not logically, convincing.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS IN DRAMA

(1) *Characterization*

IN WHAT has been noted above the emphasis has been on situations and the involvement they produce. This is generally referred to as a *plot.* It has been considered the prime element in a play ever since Aristotle's *Poetics,* and it is certainly of major importance in theatre or production. Since production means putting a play on the stage instead of merely reading it at home or from a platform, the stress must be on making sure that the play unfolds itself as a series of occurrences; otherwise the audience will become tired of watching somebody simply standing about and being a person. (The audience can easily make the assumption that a person is a person,—but where does it go from there?)

However, we were careful to speak of situations and involvements always with reference to character. It is a mistake to establish separate categories of plot and characterization, although it is often attempted purely as a convenience in treating the subject of drama. The distinction has been made by two camps—by the Aristotelians, who stress plot because they consider the drama as basically a series of actions, and by modernists like Galsworthy who, reacting against the melodramatic implications of putting the plot first, give the palm to character. Actually, the plot is never simply a series of situations but *the interplay of character and situation.* In the theatre, there would be no situation without characters, and no characters (in the sense of people who establish themselves fully for an audience) without situation—i.e., without the things they do or experience. Situations are what people do or experience; characterization, in the drama, is what people reveal about themselves in what they do, what they allow to happen to themselves, and how they react to other people

or to what happens. Characterization—conceived, it is true, in a very elementary sense—exists even in sheer melodrama.

(a) *Situation and Character.* The director who concentrated on situation wholly apart from character would have a production without any semblance of reality. As a matter of fact, his actors would prevent any such possibility, in the absolute sense, because their personalities would naturally assert themselves the moment they took the stage. Gordon Craig sensed this when he proposed that actors be supplanted by super-marionettes; only by this means could the actor become an automaton for the director. The director can, however, easily reduce the vitality of characterization by indifferent casting, by concentrating solely on stage business, or by imposing mechanical movements on his actors.

Accentuation of stage business where the play's characterization and content is meager is certainly permissible, and actually desirable (especially in farce and melodrama); but where characterization is present it must not be overlooked, and where it is potentially present it must be brought out in direction. Mechanization of actors' movements is also permissible—when a play demands that sort of treatment and depends upon automatism for its point, as in some expressionist works like *R.U.R.*, in which many of the characters are robots, or *The Adding Machine*, where they are robot-like and are designated by numbers. But undeliberate mechanization that is merely the result of negligence is always reprehensible. This applies equally, of course, to dramatists. The playwright who deliberately de-humanizes characters or makes them one-dimensional because he wishes to stress their unreality may write an effective work like *R.U.R.* and *The Adding Machine.* The playwright who unintentionally, from want of understanding, fails to create living people merely bungles his job. It need only be added that the greatest and most gratifying drama is always rich in characterization.

In conclusion, it is well to consider the previous history of the characters, to know not only who they are but what they were before they become involved in the drama. The good playwright, director, and actor, always achieve some understanding of the person's past, as well as of such routine matters as his social station, occupation, and general type. They should be able to convey the effect on his present conduct, his habits, and even his gait. This is true even of a farce like

Three Men on a Horse, in which the chief character's temperament is related to years of quiet suburban white-collar life.

(b) *Character and Action.* The director who concentrates on characterization, could not, of course, direct a play without outlining stage movement. In that sense no production can be said to be without movement of some sort. But there are mistakes that both playwrights and directors, as well as actors, can always make with disastrous results. They can think of characterization as "just being oneself." This may lead to the plain absurdity of merely stringing a number of people together in a play and making them live wholly within their own orbits, which is no play at all; of keeping characters frozen in their seats, isolated, and unconscious of others, in directing; and of merely thinking of oneself in acting. There can be no theatre without "give and take," without responsiveness to others, in either a play or a production. The responsiveness may differ in degree; for instance, Chekhov's characters are more self-absorbed and unconscious of other characters than George S. Kaufman's; the Russian author deliberately makes them so in order to convey his appraisal of their personalities, plight, and conditioning environment. In William Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life,* a number of the actors are unrelated to each other in terms of plot, but they are held together by some emotional responses and, above all, by the sheer flow of the aliveness that they share. But responsiveness there must be, and its extent must be carefully gauged for each play in accordance with whatever point it makes.

Playwrights, directors, and actors may overdo so-called *illustrative action*—the character going off in a corner to do something—out of a passion for characterization, as if each person existed in a vacuum. The way to create a maximum effect of characterization on the stage is not to relegate a character to a corner where he can *be* himself, but to give him an opportunity and occasion to *act* himself in relation to others. Psychology in the theatre is psychology of performance, of "give and take." When Galsworthy wrote that "Character is situation," he was touching upon the truth with respect to theatre only in so far as character leads to a series of particular actions or responses.

Actors must learn to listen and to talk to others. Directors must see to it that they do.

It may be true, as George Pierce Baker says, that "the *permanent*

value of a play rests on its characterization,"[1] but in the theatre this does not exclusively mean explanation, self-analysis, and private self-exhibition. This is not true even of such a play as O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*, which includes many interior monologs.

(c) *Relativity in Characterization.* Characterization, furthermore, is determined by *selectivity and contrast.* Too much detail on the part of playwright, director, or actor is a great hazard for those who maintain the primacy of character in the drama. A plethora of character-detail interferes not only with the progress of a play but with its clarity and the clarity of the characterization. In a novel every iota of revelation may add to the effect because of the leisurely appreciation, the checking up, and the pausing that the reader can allow himself. In the theatre, on the contrary, the play rushes along before the audience has been able to piece together the various details if these are too numerous; thus the motivation and the definition of a character may be obscured if too many contradictory or qualifying or constantly changing aspects of a character are given. (The playwright who successfully dramatizes a novel always practices selectivity.) In stage business which serves to reveal character, the director should select only those reactions which exhibit motivations and clarify a personality, striving—precisely as the playwright must—to convey a logic of character. No one in the theatre can indulge a passion for psychology to the same degree as a Stendhal, Dostoevsky, or Proust, no matter how greatly modern playwrights and critics admire the art of characterization.

If overdetailed characterization defeats its own purpose in the theatre, so does too little variety in a group of characterizations. *Contrast* is valuable in establishing a main figure. A Hamlet who was not contrasted with a Horatio or was surrounded by other Hamlets would seem less bedevilled; uncontrasted with a Fortinbras and Laertes, he would seem less complicated and dilatory; uncontrasted with an Osric, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern, he would seem less noble. A director can promote necessary contrasts in casting, directing, and costuming his actors. The impression made by a characterization is partly the result of comparison.

Contrast, moreover, is also important within the compass of a single main characterization. Hamlet played in a single melancholy

[1] *Dramatic Technique,* p. 234.

mood would not only destroy the vitality of Shakespeare's characterization, but would reduce the pathos and intensity of this very mood; an audience exposed to it without contrasting effects might develop impatience with Hamlet, or would become too accustomed to his woefulness to be concerned. (See pp. 454-460 concerning John Gielgud's interpretation of the role.) Actually, Shakespeare's most vital characters are often in a state of flux. Any mood which is maintained too long becomes subjected to the law of diminishing returns; when the supply becomes too abundant the article comes down in value. This was noticeable in Odets' *Night Music*, which revolved around a continually rambunctious character. The brilliant young actor Elia Kazan who played the role is said to have complained during rehearsals that he was becoming tired of being angry all the time. So was the audience. Chekhov astutely overcame the dangers inherent in his penumbral, defeated characters by alternating moments of despair with moments of hope, resignation with longing, and even with explosiveness. He made externally undynamic characters internally dynamic. This fact was fully recognized by Stanislavsky who ensured the success of Chekhov's plays.

Even the manner in which characters make their entrances and exits has characterizing values, and this can be used to achieve contrast of mood. A person who always enters a room in the same manner describes himself as being in a certain frame of mind. Since an entrance creates a first impression, and an exit a last impression, the playwright and the director can say a great deal about a character without giving him a line of dialog.

(d) *Environment and Character.* Finally, it is to be noted that character is not wholly the inaugurator of situation without the reality of environment, which plumps him into certain situations or relates him to them and to other characters in a certain way. Background even modifies our apprehension of the person's character. Some of Chekhov's people, for instance, could be dismissed as fools and incompetents instead of pathetic and lovable people if they were set, let us say, in Pittsburgh. Their peculiar frustration is inseparable from Russia under the Tzars; it springs from the environment, within which, besides, they are not as exotic as they would be elsewhere. The director who, in collaboration with his scene designer, is insensitive to environment weakens both his characters and his story.[2]

[2] For a further consideration of Environment, see Directing the Social Drama, pp. 425 ff.

(2) *Dialog*

Character, like plot, is intimately associated with dialog, since a person reveals much of himself by speech. Dialog conveys necessary information about environment, situations, a character's mood, his opinion, his wishes and reactions. The best lines of dialog are those which are truest to the nature of the person, his station, environment emotional stage, and the situation which he creates or in which he finds himself. The dramatist must evaluate dialog in these terms, and so must the director, who will often be constrained to ask himself "Does this ring true?" or "Is this in character?" or "Would he say this at this point?" (He will often also ask himself, of course, whether a certain speech doesn't give away the plot too soon.)

In this connection the director frequently has some recourse other than getting the playwright to change his lines. He can change the force or meaning of a speech by requiring the actor to deliver it in a different way. Lines can mean different things when delivered differently. Neither a director nor an actor should despair of a speech until he has tried it out in a variety of ways and with various movements or "crosses," gestures, and facial expression. If necessary a line should be hurried along or "thrown away"; often that is what the author intended.

Dialog in the drama is more self-sufficient than in a novel; it is impossible to resort to prefatory remarks explaining the nature of a speech. Consequently good dialog must be written not for mere beauty of sound and imagery but for expressiveness. The playwright must be conscious of this while writing, the director while interpreting a speech sequence. George Pierce Baker called attention to Ibsen's two versions of the scene in *A Doll's House* when Helmer and Nora received Krogstad's letter in which he spares them from scandal.[3]

FIRST DRAFT

Helmer. Give it here. (*He seizes the letter and shuts the door.*) Yes, from him. Look here.

Nora. Read it.

Helmer. I have hardly the courage. I fear the worst. We may both be

[3] Compare *Ibsen's Workshop*, p. 162 and a *A Doll's House* in *Prose Dramas*, vol. 1, p. 377, Scribner.

lost, both you and I. Ah! I must know. (*Hastily tears the letter open; reads a few lines with a cry of joy.*) Nora!

(*Nora looks inquiringly at him.*)

Helmer. Nora!—Oh, I must read it again. Yes, yes, it is so. You are saved, Nora, you are saved.

Nora. How, saved?

Helmer. Look here. He sends you back your promissory note. He writes that he regrets and apologizes, that a happy turn in his life—Oh, what matter what he writes. We are saved, Nora! There is nothing to witness against you. Oh, Nora, Nora.

FINAL DRAFT

Helmer. Give it to me. (*Seizes letter and shuts the door.*) Yes, from him. You shall not have it. I shall read it.

Nora. Read it!

Helmer. (*By the lamp.*) I have hardly the courage to. We may both be lost, both you and I! Ah! I must know. (*Hastily tears the letter open; reads a few lines, looks at an enclosure; a cry of joy.*) Nora!

(*Nora looks inquiringly at him.*)

Helmer. Nora! Oh! I must read it again. Yes, yes, it is so. I am saved! Nora, I am saved!

Nora. And I?

Helmer. You too, of course; we are both saved, both of us. Look here, he sends you back your promissory note. He writes that he regrets and apologizes; that a happy turn in his life—Oh, what matter what he writes. We are saved, Nora! No one can harm you. Oh, Nora, Nora.

It requires only slight cogitation to discover which of the two versions expressed Helmer's egotism more effectively. Observe Helmer's lines in the final draft: "Give it *to me*"; "You shall not have it. *I* shall read it"; and, above all, "*I* am saved!" Observe also Nora's wondering line, which expresses her hurt and anticipates her leaving Helmer, "*And I*?" A director who threw away key lines like these by allowing the actor to mumble them would, of course, undo much of the dramatic effect.

Like character, dialog is strengthened by *contrast.* Unless there is a sufficiently sound reason for uniformity in speeches, a playwright should avoid it, and a director should compensate the former's error

by an astute selection of voices of different timbre and by direction that varies the quality of the lines by insisting on justifiable stress, crescendo and diminuendo. A play's dialog should sound like an orchestra or at least a chamber music ensemble; it is never a collection of piccolos or basses. The director should only guard against an indiscriminate conglomeration of accents, unless his setting is the League of Nations hall, an international hotel, or some similar locale! A distinguished play, Robert Turney's *The Daughters of Atreus*, was consigned to failure on Broadway when the three leading roles, Clytemnestra, Electra, and the Nurse, were played by actresses of three different nationalities.

Explosiveness is another valuable attribute of good dialog. Although many lines may reflect a detached, casual, or relaxed attitude, dynamic roles in dynamic scenes require lines that burst forth from the characters in a manner that will convey tension or inevitable utterance. There are occasions when words should seem to be wrung from people, when they speak because they cannot contain themselves, or when the unconscious speaks out. This is the practice of all good dramatists, including restrained writers like Chekhov and Galsworthy. To deliver such lines, when the playwright provides them, is a special problem in the theatre. The relative intensity and the number of these explosions have to be gauged carefully in order to avoid obvious or forced theatricality. When the playwright does not provide them, his theatrical executor—the director—has to create them wherever they are called for. And in all instances, lines must be spoken as if they arose spontaneously from the speaker, except when deliberation, automatism, or extreme habituation is indicated.

Intensity is not an absolute quality. It is relative to what precedes and follows a given speech or speech sequence. A whisper after silence can be as intense as a scream following a normal conversation. Moreover, intensity is merely an element in the larger design of a speech or group of speeches. In good playwriting, as a rule, this follows the mounting procession of drama; it is a miniature drama in itself (John Howard Lawson rightly calls it "a subordinate unit of action"[4]) and must be treated as such on the stage. This rising effect or movement toward climax may be found even in effective short speeches like the following:

[4] *Theory and Technique of Playwriting*, p. 296.

God. I'm trying to find it, too. It's awful impo'tant. It's awful impo'tant to all de people on my earth. Did he mean dat even God must suffer? (*The Green Pastures*)

Courier. Come then. I am innocent. If my lord Essex
Is as I have believed him, he will not hurt me.
If he will hurt me, then he is not as I
And many thousands believe him, who have loved him,
And I shall not mind much dying. (*Elizabeth the Queen*)

Marchbanks: I don't mean the Reverend James Mavor Morell, moralist and windbag. I mean the real man that the Reverend James must have hidden somewhere inside his black coat—the man that Candida loved. You can't make a woman like Candida love you by merely buttoning your collar at the back instead of in front. (*Candida*)

In our pursuit of naturalness in the modern theatre we may forget that all good dialog is somewhat heightened by the very fact that it is to be spoken on the stage. Its necessary tempo in the theatre, its close relation to a person who is actually seen in the flesh when he speaks, the rhythm that it needs if there is to be continuity, as well as "give-and-take" in the play—all this pegs up dramatic speech by several degrees. The very efficiency, precision, and pointedness of speech that is to serve the action makes it more than a factual recording. When well written, even colloquial or dialectic prose is a form of poetry, for it is essential and shaped expression, and it sings more or less in rolling out of the mouth with ease and fluidity. A good ear is a prerequisite both in playwriting and theatre. Mere fidelity to realism is no criterion of realistic prose, which must be "realism *plus*," giving an artistic *impression* of realism. Good dialog, moreover, pays an extra dividend, added to its utility in carrying the plot and promoting character—namely, the sheer pleasure of its music, shape, neatness, wit, and other esthetic gratifications.

(3) *Exposition*

An ever-recurring problem is that of conveying necessary information without which the audience cannot fully or properly understand the unfolding events. Past history, who the characters are, what their relations are, the time and background, and special facts pertaining to a variety of matters—most of this is exposition. Since most of the

data must come early if the audience is to follow the dramatic action intelligently, the first act courts the danger of dullness and crudity.

The trouble lies with the devices of exposition. In the history of the drama these have been many—the chorus, the soliloquy, the prolog, the garrulous servants or relatives, the *confidante* to whom the leading character unbosoms herself, and the inquiring stranger. When convention was strong, the audience accepted these devices and was perhaps unaware of their creakiness; moreover, in the poetic drama of the Greeks, Elizabethans, and classic-French theatre the magic of the verse supplied such exposition as the chorus and soliloquy with an autonomous esthetic gratification. This gratification is still possible in revivals when the poetry is genuine, is well delivered, and is astutely supported by naturally conceived stage business.

Modern variants of the old expository devices, moreover, are also possible. An extreme example was the informal setting of the time and the place, and the introduction of characters, by the narrator in *Our Town*. In his capacity of cracker-barrel philosopher and chronicler, he disarms the public with his charm; he is, besides, a legitimate character in the town; and his conduct conforms to the general informality of the play. The narrator also appears in other guises—as the man who is frankly demonstrating a case history and commenting on it in the new didactic social drama called the "epic" or "learning" play, exemplified by the Group Theatre's *Case of Clyde Griffiths*; or he may be the lawyer who opens a play or an act with a plea for his client, which was the case to some degree in the Paul Green and Richard Wright dramatization of *Native Son*. The director needs only to ascertain that the playwright has acquitted himself well within the form he has chosen, and that the staging supports the dramatic style. For instance, he would not ask the winningly casual narrator in *Our Town* to appear on the stage with incongruous formality, like a medieval herald, accompanied by a blare of trumpets.

There are plays which are basically documentary; in part, like *Yellowjack*, or in their entirety—"living newspapers" like *Power* and *One-third of a Nation*, which deal respectively with the utility and the housing problem in the United States. Here the initial (as well as the ensuing) exposition can be quite blunt, since it is the nature of this type of play to be an exposition. In such cases the playwright and the director must make certain only that the exposition is visually

striking, verbally dramatic (that the expository speeches are dramatically constructed), and progressive—that is, working up to a grand climax like the T.V.A. celebration in *Power* or the tenement fire in *One-third of a Nation.*

However, in most realistic drama, which strives to create the illusion that here is a slice of life which the audience is seeing through an enlarged peephole, the problem is different. The style having been established, the exposition must adhere to that style and must seem natural and uncontrived. The telephone may be used to good effect, when, for instance, the maid who answers it gives the caller some information which the audience overhears. Being an everyday occurrence in contemporary life, this may not strike us as a contrivance in some instances. Better still, the exposition may occur in the course of a scene that is not formally expository. Such an opening scene may actually begin with the conflict well under way, provided the needed explanations are inherent in the struggle. This is the case even in older plays like Molière's *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* and Sophocles' *Antigone.* Moreover, it is possible to distribute expository details, so that some of them are *deferred* until a crisis in later scenes or acts reveals them. This is the retrospective method which Ibsen employs to such good effect; it is especially notable in *Ghosts.* The discovery lends dramatic force to the exposition, and it is plausible because in a crisis a person may well refer to a relevant past event. It is well to remember that all dramatic action is, in a sense, expository; our knowledge of the characters, problems, and environment is constantly expanding during the course of a play.

Exposition is a playwriting problem. The director has only to make sure that the new play solves it successfully, that he supplies the right atmosphere or locale in the production, and that revealing details are neither "thrown away" nor crudely stressed by the actor.

(4) *Expectation and Gratification*

It is not too much to say that a good play creates a certain expectancy on the part of the audience. The opening scene is *preparation* in a much larger and deeper sense than exposition. It tells us what kind of a play we shall see: Will it, for example, be expressionistic or realistic or surrealistic? Is the audience going to expect a fantasy, a stylized distortion of reality, or a pastiche; a formal demon-

stration or scrupulous adherence to peephole realism; comedy, tragedy, farce, or melodrama?

It is true, of course, that everything should not be given away at once, that suspense should be maintained, that the impact of a striking discovery should not be lost. In *Outward Bound* the audience believes at first that it is watching a real ship and living characters; and the opening of that other fantasy on death *On Borrowed Time* is merely a familiar family picture. It must be observed, however, that these plays present some intimations early enough, and that by the end of the first act the quality of the entire work is well established. In both instances, moreover, the unpretentious realism of the beginning is absolutely appropriate, since the tone and the feeling of what follows are likewise tinged with simple pathos. If either play opened with a frenzy and distortion reminiscent of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, the ensuing scenes—so restrained and intimate—would be incongruous and would require a violent readjustment on the audience's part.

This, too, lies essentially within the dramatist's province, although the director can call the author's attention to an improper beginning. It is the director's responsibility only to be sure that he does not violate expectation in his staging of the play (by overstylization of the ship in *Outward Bound*, for example); and that he introduces the right amount of suggestion or atmosphere—by lighting the first act of *Outward Bound* so that it will not look like an excursion trip to Coney Island, and by calling for lightness in the actors' movements, in order that they may not suggest a group of too solid stevedores.

Expectation naturally needs *gratification* as a discharge. A play that misleads the audience by creating an expectation and then surprising it with some totally unexpected event, makes a virtue of mere contrivance. In farce, melodrama, and especially in the mystery thriller, the element of *surprise* is more or less appropriate, to the extent to which the play is offered as a contrivance. Even here, however, the best effect is produced when the playwright plants some clues that will incline the spectator in a certain direction; he may expect something else, it is true, but when the climax occurs he can at least feel that he might have expected it if he had been sufficiently astute. The production can help to create this feeling by the stress it puts on some stage business and by the behavior of some actor.

(5) *Cause and Effect in Progression*

However, Lessing was correct when he pointed out that facile surprise never gives rise to "anything great." Drama at its best follows a basic logic, or law of *cause and effect*, without which events would lack cohesion on the stage. It is to be considered that unrelated events seem more conspicuously unrelated when they occur visibly on an illuminated platform than when they are merely described in a book. Moreover, a novel can *explain* relationships—cause and effect —that are not easily apprehensible, whereas the drama, which provides few opportunities for such explanations, must incorporate them in the action.

Causality in the drama is not necessarily absolute, of course. To begin with, the first or basic causal factor may not be a single, simple thing but a combination of factors, especially in action that stems from a particular kind of character. Hedda's training, aristocratic background and dreams, basic frigidity or sterility, and other factors all enter into the causal complex of her behavior. Cause and effect can, above all, be interrupted by other events, and involve intermediate steps leading to subordinate climaxes. Event *A* may not lead directly to event *X*, but may be either interrupted by the intervening events *b, c, d, e,* etc.; or, better still, may be shuttled deviously from *A* to *b* to *c* to *d* to *e,* etc. to *X* in one way or another.

It is the intermediate events that produce interesting progress—this being further assured by temporary resistances to the character's purpose (like Hamlet's exile which defers his vengeance); by threatened elimination or abortion of that purpose (the possibility that Hamlet will be slain in England); and by restoration of the main dramatic drive (Hamlet's escape from death and return to the court, which makes us follow the revenge motif again after some uncertainty concerning his fate). Further interest in progression may also be promoted by a temporary frustration of the audience's (or the characters') expectation. The audience, for instance, might expect that Hamlet will kill the praying Claudius who has earlier revealed himself as the villain and is at the moment defenseless; instead Hamlet spares him. Later, in the closet scene, Hamlet thinks he is killing Claudius, and expects to find him dead behind the arras; instead he finds Polonius dead. The audience has reason to expect that the police in *Winterset* will find the body of the murdered gangster and will

take his chief Trock into custody, thus relieving Mio of danger and giving him the long-desired opportunity to clear his father's name by proving Trock's guilt. Instead the body disappears, having been disposed of by Miriamne's family, and Mio cannot speak up lest he hurt Miriamne, whom he loves. Such details make for *suspense* on the part of the audience, and create a suspended action which enables the play to progress further.

A lack of intermediate, resistant, and suspended action in any play makes for dullness and flatness. This type of action has to be looked for by the producer in judging the interest of a play, and has to be given its full dramatic value in a production. However, there must be some causal relation between such events, so that they may be credible and illuminating, and the links have to be tested for possible weakness; the links must be clearly and easily discernible. And finally they must contribute to the end-action or *dénouement.* The director or producer must not insist on this in the case of special kinds of drama to be noted further, but these are exceptions that pose problems of their own in production.

The so-called *obligatory scene* or, as the French critic Francisque Sarcey called it, the *scène à faire*, is nothing more than a scene made obligatory by the expectations created by the logical trend of the individual events. There is a place, at least once in a play, when we expect that characters will come to grips with one another or will grapple with their problem. This may not occur immediately, but the force of events will sooner or later bring it to a head.

In witnessing *Winterset,* the audience expects that Mio will confront the judge who sentenced the boy's father to execution, and that Mio and the real murderer Trock will meet head on. They do so in the second act, and the clash of forces is eminently gratifying, since the previous portions of the play have made us await and desire this. Then, it is true, the body that might have implicated Trock disappears, and Mio does not press the point further for Miriamne's sake. The act thus leaves us and the characters in a state of suspension. Trock escapes, and in the third act does away with Mio who still constitutes a threat to his freedom. We can, it will be seen, go beyond the obligatory scene, but the conclusion (which becomes a secondary obligatory scene since we know that Trock is not going to let Mio live!) would have been less moving if the previous collision

had not been realized for us; the second act meeting between Mio and Trock is the springboard for their final conflict.

It is necessary only to observe that causality in the progression of a play differs in intensity and transparency in different types of drama. In a chronicle like *Victoria Regina,* the linking of the different episodes is slight. This is also true of the first act and a half of *Abe Lincoln in Illinois.* In an expressionist play like Georg Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight,* the relation of the central episodes is loose and even arbitrary. In each instance, however, there are extenuating circumstances. *Victoria Regina* has the effect of a pageant, and even then the play presents some causal relations between her restricted home life and her happiness with Albert, between her life with him and her growing sense of responsibility as a ruler, between her dependence on him and her later dependence on Disraeli. The early scenes of *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* reflect Lincoln's vacillation and inability to find himself, and then the play moves on toward his resolution and growth. In *From Morn to Midnight* the disjointed episodes are justified as a fantasy or day-dream, as a reflection of the hero's lack of integration, as well as his unco-ordinated picture of the world, and as a dramatization of his increasing helplessness now that he has left the security of his cashier's cage. Causal unity is provided by the character's excited state of mind.

Finally, plays that attempt to demonstrate an idea must observe causality in an over-all sense. In so far as *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* demonstrates that many a man, who has no taste for involvement in great events, is catapulted into them by the pressure of the times, it has to dramatize these forces. These are to be found in Lincoln's conversations with his law partner, the meeting with the friend who is moving West, Mary Todd's ambitions, the visit of the politicians, and other scenes. To the extent to which they reveal pressure on Lincoln they clinch the point.

Concerning another play, Odets' *Awake and Sing!* John Howard Lawson is, in one sense, justified in saying that it substitutes "emotional drift" for "rational causation."[5] There is insufficient reason for the girl Hennie to run away from her husband with her former lover at the *dénouement.* There is insufficient causation for the boy Ralph to be converted to social militancy by his grandfather's suicide, which followed the old man's purely personal quarrel with Ralph's mother.

[5] *Ibid.,* p. 251.

It is not surprising therefore that the ending, the liberation implied in the tale *Awake and Sing!* should be regarded as something tagged on; that astute critic Joseph Wood Krutch calls it "an afterthought." Even less logic of causality pertains to the claim made by some enthusiasts that the play demonstrates how the social system frustrates people; the system cannot be blamed for the characterological weakness of the father of the family or for Hennie's affairs. The conduct of the main characters, and, in a sense, of all the characters, actually demonstrates, as Mr. Krutch says, "the persistent and many-sided rebellion of human nature against everything which thwarts it . . . its unwillingness to accept defeat for its desires." In a larger sense, therefore, the play is held together by a supremely right causality—the innate rebelliousness of human nature which leads people to hit out in ways both intelligent and unintelligent. "Mr. Odets's characters are ignorant and often crude, but his play, despite its tragedies, is exhilarating just because he makes it so clear that people like this are going to go right on demanding of life more than it will ever give them."[6]

Finally, the element of causation involves the ultimate justification of any play with any pretensions to significance, whether tragedy or comedy. *Enlightenment* is provided by the dramatic exhibition of such basic causations as the creation of situation by character, by fate, or by social forces. Dramatic enlightenment concerns the dynamics of reality—namely, the forces that change the status quo in a character's or a society's destiny.

(6) *Story and Plot*

Regardless of the technique and the ideational content of a play, its interest depends greatly upon the story it tells. No one can resist a really good tale. It is a well known observation that the success of a play is greatly facilitated by an interesting story. The usual question that a potential playgoer asks from his friend who has seen the play is "What is it about?" Should the friend reply that he doesn't know, but that he enjoyed the play, he is unlikely to add another patron to the audience. Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life*, which possesses very little "story," received both the Pulitzer Prize and the Drama Critics' Prize, but was less successful with the public than many works less highly regarded. This point may well be kept in mind when

[6] J. W. Krutch, *The American Drama Since 1918*, Random House, pp. 269-270.

choosing a play for production. An astute producer, for instance, would never have chosen a recent Broadway failure, *Gabrielle,* originally only a psychological short story (*Tristan* by Thomas Mann) which naturally lacked enough narrative matter for a full-length play. (It is true that Shakespeare took many of his plots from Renaissance *novelle.* But these were packed with action, present and latent, like a synopsis.) In the meager story of *Gabrielle,* an unsuccessful novelist weakens an ailing woman by taking her on strenuous walks and making her play the piano when her energies are depleted, thus becoming responsible for her death. The interesting psychological basis of his behavior was not translated into a story; it was mere analysis. No producer should be deluded by psychological profundities unless these translate themselves into a tale of some interest.

However, it is possible to err at the other extreme in thinking of "story" purely in terms of narrative, in failing to realize how decidedly a slim narrative can be enriched by interesting characterization, feeling, atmosphere, and thought. It is a common mistake, made with respect to the short story as well as the drama. A story by Chekhov or Katherine Mansfield provides gratifications to the adult mind precisely because it possesses these elements. Even *Gabrielle* might have succeeded if its characters and emotional content had been interesting, and if its ideational content had been less clinical. Anyone who defined story in a drama naively, without regard for the enrichment of the bare narrative by other matters, could reduce Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* to the following tale: "An aristocratic lady, returning from her travels in Western Europe, finds that her income has been greatly reduced. A peasant-born merchant suggests that she cut down her cherry orchard and build villas on it for tourists. Being sentimentally attached to the orchard, she does not take his advice. Consequently the estate is finally sold at an auction. It is bought by the merchant, who proceeds to cut down the cherry trees. The lady and her family depart." No one familiar with the play would, however, be satisfied with this thin summary. It is a travesty on the real story that includes many facets of characterization, much atmosphere, some social reference, some symbolization, an abundance of feeling, and many shadings of supplementary behavior by characters who enlarge the picture. "*The plot is the most elusive element in a play to regard in itself because the hardest to isolate, to see separately,*"

although taken in its widest sense, "it is the most distinct and the most final in its effect."[7]

It is necessary to look from story to *plot*, which consists of a long and detailed sequence of character reactions, of subordinate situations, subordinate crises, climaxes, resolutions, and revelations. Plot, considered in this sense, is not summary but a procession of moments; it is a story, as Stark Young noted, "*in its exact dramatic gradations.*" The summary may be dull or stereotyped; the succession of moments—and these constitute life, as well as the living substance of a play—may be rich and fascinating. It is the business of the playwright to provide them; it is not his business to invent a new story, but to render his plot fresh by means of the progression, characterization, and revelations he can supply. It is the business of the production to give these elements their full significance and appropriate stress.

(7) *Conflict*

Because the term conflict is used so frequently in references to the drama, it is well to consider it further. Does it appear in all plays?

If conflict is defined conventionally, as a *visible* struggle or contest, it is undoubtedly absent from some plays. It will not be found in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, in which Madame Ranevsky merely disregards the merchant's advice and fails to save her estate; or in Odets' *Paradise Lost*, in which the characters succumb to economic circumstance—to the depression and the business partner's diversion of the firm's funds. Conflict, in the above-described sense, will not be found wherever a leading character is trapped without manifest struggle on his part. This is true, for instance, of the first part of *Macbeth,* in which the king is murdered, and of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon,* in which the hero is caught in a net while bathing and murdered by his wife Clytemnestra; the climaxes in both these instances are produced without the actual clash of the victim and his antagonist. There is no big clash in a work like *Oedipus Coloneus*, in which the two leading characters are actually in agreement. When the blind Oedipus has come to seek shelter and burial in Attic Colonus, he receives only kindness and protection from the Athenian king Theseus. Nor is there any conflict in Euripides' *Alcestis* between Admetus and Alcestis, who volunteers to die in place of her husband. In Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, too, there is no real struggle between the leading charac-

[7] Stark Young, *The Theatre*, pp. 52-53.

ters, the boy and the girl, or between the comparatively subordinate persons of the play.

It would seem, then, that opponents of the conflict theory of drama are correct. To cover the widest possible range of dramatic effect I have used the term "involvement" to describe the dynamics of dramatic effect; involvement, it is evident, covers even plays in which the main action consists of agreement or *rapprochement* such as one finds in an *Oedipus Coloneus* and the love story of *Our Town,* in which two main characters are brought together without any perceptible clash between them. From this concept, which refers to the fundamental fact that in the theatre the chief characters meet with a certain impact (something that no production can afford to ignore), we then move on to *gradations* of involvement; that is, from the lowest voltage, *rapprochement,* to the high voltages produced by the clash between two combatants. The higher the voltage the more intense and exciting the play, provided, of course, that the other elements of the play do not reduce the force or meaning for us; for instance, as between two thoughtful treatments of indecision, *Hamlet* is decidedly more intense and exciting than *The Cherry Orchard.*

Directors and producers can be mistaken in two ways: by insisting on "conflict" in all cases, whereas even very active plays will have some effective scenes *without* conflict; and by failing to perceive that conflict, in the broad sense, pervades tensions and crises. The first mistake will lead to the rejection of some good or even notable plays, and will promote direction that accelerates tempo unnecessarily (in order to step up the play and hasten it toward climaxes) or that produces too much sound and fury. The second mistake—that of failing to discover *underlying* or *over-all* conflicts—may lead to tepid directorial treatment of characters, situations, and atmosphere.

It is necessary only to recognize that conflict is not simply the clash of two visible opponents. In *The Cherry Orchard,* the clash takes place between a visible character or family and the invisible force of social necessity; it is the new world of activity and business, as represented by the merchant Lopathkin who came up from serfdom, that overwhelms Madame Ranevsky and her family. Nor is it true that they do not struggle against this force, as much as they can within the limits of their character and conditioning. Madame Ranevsky's adopted daughter tries to manage and save, her brother Gaev finally takes a position, and Madame Ranevsky herself tries to hold her own

against Necessity (or social Fate). She constantly avoids decisions and staves off selling the cherry orchard; this is her way of opposing the facts and pressures of reality—and a familiar way it is, historically speaking. In *Our Town*, an admittedly quiet play, the antagonist Death is potently dramatized (though not childishly represented as cutting down a character with a stage scythe!), and the struggle for life is abundantly present in the characters—in the whole vital reality of the town, and in the love and marriage of the youngsters. Here perhaps is the ultimate struggle, without fanfares and swords.

Even in drama where some *rapprochement*, reconciliation, or resignation is effected, some conflict precedes it. In *Oedipus Coloneus*, Oedipus opposes Creon who wants him to return to Thebes, the Athenians drive off the Thebans who try to abduct Oedipus' daughters, and Oedipus quarrels with his son before finally making his peace with the world. In other effective *rapprochements*, in love dramas which end with a marriage, we always find the pervasive sex-duel realized as intensely as the nature and age of the lovers warrant.[8]

In plays in which a character has no opportunity to struggle because he is trapped, it is still possible to find genuine conflict, provided one does not insist that it be as obvious as a wrestling match. *Agamemnon* is permeated by one long-standing conflict noted by the chorus and the Queen as the *active* past, in addition to conflicts at the end of the play with the chorus, with Agamemnon concerning his treading on the purple carpet (courting the sin of pride), and within Cassandra. All these would need emphasis in a production.

(*a*) *Crisis.* Crisis requires no extensive definition. It is the point in any play or in any portion of a play at which a character or some characters are at bay, at which they must make some decision or decide upon some course of action with reference to their antagonist (whether it be a person or thing). Often it leads right into a strong conflict; or it leads to some decisive evasion of conflict (as in *The Cherry Orchard*, for instance).

[8] If we take the extremest example of a play that received some critical acclaim, William Saroyan's *The Beautiful People*, we shall still find some conflict: (a) that between the father of the imaginative family and the company that discovers that he has been receiving a dead man's pension and cancels it until the vice-president is charmed by the father; (b) that between the family and the workaday, practical world. These are conflicts or states of conflict, and they are additional to the other dramatic element which we may designate as the state of tension that characterizes the behavior of the love-bewildered daughter, Agnes.

Crisis calls for special attention, if the stress in a production is to ensure continuity and keep the progression clear. For instance, when Hamlet returns and is met by Claudius a crisis is precipitated; the king had expected that Hamlet would be quietly dispatched in England, but instead he is back. Claudius must now try a new method of getting rid of him, and this leads him to arrange the fatal duel. An effective production will give this scene the weight and impact which it needs if the audience is to sense a crisis instead of just another detail in the spinning out of the plot. Much may depend on making the king's reaction perceptible to the audience. A play can lose much of its force and causal continuity when produced without an intelligent perception and execution of moments of crises. The vibrancy of a drama cannot be conveyed solely through scenes of conflict.

(*b*) *Climax.* It has already been noted that a play consists of *subordinate climaxes*, as well as a *grand climax.* Any director who stressed only the main climax would make himself responsible for a dull production; ninety percent of it would be hopelessly neutral. This is so self-evident that it requires no elaboration.

A problem arises, however, when a play has more than one grand climax. This rarely happens in classic or neo-classic drama, though exceptions will be found in such works as *The Seven Against Thebes* and Euripides' *The Phoenician Women.* It is more frequent in Elizabethan and later drama. More than one main climax may be claimed for plays like *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, Goethe's *Faust* (when both parts are considered as a whole), *Peer Gynt,* and in all dramas in which there is more than one plot. A notable example is *Macbeth*, in which the first two acts build up to the tremendous climax of Duncan's death, and the next three to Macbeth's destruction.

In some cases the disunity is a matter of plot and may never result in a single tightly knit structure. However, there is no need for despair or fear on the part of the producer and director. In the first place, even a series of dramatic tableaux, as in Schnitzler's *Anatol*, and a chronicle like *Victoria Regina* can be entirely effective, if the content is interesting, and if the individual scenes are dynamic and build up to individual climaxes. A certain unity of effect is, moreover, ensured by *the binding idea*—the tragi-comic aspects of a philanderer's search for gratification (*Anatol*), the vitality of the woman Victoria (*Victoria Regina*). This unity can even have mounting intensity, such as the growth of Victoria from a sheltered girl rebelling against her mother

to a vigorous queen and a grand old woman. The unified and progressive quality of a work can be ensured by the inherently unifying and progressive central concept; for example, the theme of crime and inevitable retribution in *Macbeth*. Besides, the last grand climax can be made much stronger in production than any earlier climax and this may ensure an impression of unity and spiraling force.

It is the matters described in this and the preceding chapter that must determine the choice of a play for its dramatic merit. They are also essential in the director's understanding of the points he must watch, stress, and extend, if the values of the play are to be translated into stage production.

TYPES OF DRAMA

BASIC elements in the drama assume a variety of gradations in different types and styles of playwriting. That dramatic concepts like exposition, progression, and conflict are elastic has already been indicated, but the nature and degree of their elasticity can be understood only if the various types and styles are understood. (And even then the director, like the playwright, must proceed pragmatically, since no two plays in any particular category are absolutely alike and call for the same degree of exposition, progression, conflict, etc.)

Types of Drama. The formal division of types into tragedy, melodrama, comedy, and farce seems somewhat academically arbitrary, since overlapping occurs. For instance, Racine's *Phaedra* and many Greek plays like *Agamemnon* and *Oedipus Tyrannus* are pure tragedy, but *Hamlet* also contains high comedy (in Hamlet's repartee, etc.), farce (in the gravedigger scene), and melodramatic effects (in the slaughter and poisoning at the conclusion). Then, too, how are we to define many modern plays? Can one classify *Bury the Dead*, *Our Town*, and *Awake and Sing!* as comedy or tragedy? Nevertheless it is possible to represent tragedy, melodrama, comedy, and farce as four dominant *moods* or ways of looking at life, adding a fifth which may be denominated rather loosely as "serious drama."

(*a*) *Tragedy.* Tragedy looks at life not only seriously but in a mood of exalted fascination; and no wonder, since it sees man wrestling with his demoniac impulses and with the outward forces of cosmic, spiritual, or social antagonism. Since the struggle is so great, it leads to disaster. But it raises the protagonist or protagonists above mere pathos, and so affirms in some way man's capacity for greatness. Macbeth and his wife may be morally reprehensible, but their "will-to-power" lifts them above the commonplace, exemplifies the dynamic strength of the human will, and causes them to suffer greatly. We may

be able to analyze Hedda's tragic flaw psychologically and in terms of social conditioning, but the blind rebelliousness of her spirit is impressive; we are compelled to sit up and take notice of her, and to recognize her perverse intensity. Her disease is merely an antisocial perversion of the same impatience with limiting realities which, in other people and under different circumstances, leads to creativeness and mastery of life. To play Hedda without conveying some magnitude in the character is tantamount to depriving the play of its tragic force.

In tragedy, moreover, the *stakes* are in themselves, or at least from the characters' point of view, great; thus the stake in *Macbeth* is the crown and the founding of a dynasty, and in *Hedda Gabler* it is Lövborg the genius. The stake, moreover, becomes bigger because of the stature of the character or the group fighting for it; the magnitude of an objective increases in proportion to the magnitude of the person who pursues it and the intensity of his desire. The *stature* of the protagonist depends, of course, on his character, and not on his social position; this was true even when only kings and princes could be heroes in the theatre,—for instance, not all kings were tragic heroes in the Greek and Elizabethan theatres.

Finally, since the stakes are large, tragedy involves some *point of larger reference* than the personal events, a reference which is perhaps a little too glibly termed "universality," although no better word has yet been discovered. A "universal" perception concerns the mainspring of human behavior or the workings of anything else that is always with us—social process, deity, or what is vaguely called Fate, no matter how differently these concepts are understood in different eras.

The variants of tragic material are many; we note, for instance, the substitution of a struggling mass hero for the individual in *The Weavers*, of frustration and attrition for physical catastrophe in *The Three Sisters*, of the loss of the cherry orchard in *The Cherry Orchard* for any physical liquidation of the aristocracy. The classification of some plays can, moreover, be argued back and forth, with different classifications insisted on by individuals whose point of view is determined by their philosophy and social conditioning in different times and places. Thus the quality of any performance of *An Enemy of the People* (which would have certainly been regarded as comedy in Molière's day), *The Merchant of Venice*, or *The Misanthrope* will be

distinctly affected by the director's determination to consider these plays as tragedies or comedies, regardless of what they seemed to be for their authors and their first audiences.

Nevertheless, it is clear that criteria for tragedy (or comedy, etc.) must be found. Then these must not only be applied to the particular play in determining its nature, but once the director has classified it as such and such he must apply the criteria in his production. For instance, a director who wanted to present *The Merchant of Venice* as a tragedy of social injustice (a rash assumption in this writer's opinion) would have to take precautions to create a tragic instead of romantic atmosphere by means of appropriate lighting, settings, costumes, and perhaps musical effects (such as religious chants in the minor key, possibly contrasted with frivolous songs by Shylock's antagonists). The casting would have to select a dignified and intense Shylock contrasted with actors who might convey an impression of frivolity, wanton cruelty, and arrogance; Portia might even become an ultra-sophisticated minx, and the Prince a Machiavellian figure. Both stage business and the delivery of the lines would naturally have to support the tragic interpretation; Portia's court-room speech might be delivered not as an earnest and noble plea but as mockery and would have to be applauded hypocritically. In a tragic interpretation of *The Misanthrope*, Alceste's railings and perturbation would be presented with dignity and intense nobility avoiding broad gesture and facial play, and adjustments would have to be made with respect to the other characters; for instance, the friend who instructs him to be tolerant might have to suggest insincerity in his stage performance.

(*b*) *Serious drama.* This intermediate type of play has dignity, a point of reference, tragic overtones or details, and a general tone of seriousness but does not provide a catastrophic conclusion for the chief character or characters; the conclusion may even be hopeful.

The term *tragi-comedy* might be used to describe this form, and was, in fact, so employed by the Elizabethans. Its chief practitioners, Beaumont and Fletcher, described it as the kind of drama that "wants deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy; yet brings some near it, which is enough to make it no comedy." An example is their play *Philaster*. The term, however, smacks of dishonesty (the forced "happy ending" of the films), and it does not cover non-tragic serious plays in which death for some noble character does occur, as in *Awake and Sing!* (in which the grandfather commits suicide) and in *Our*

Town, in which the young heroine dies. Elizabethan tragi-comedy is only a subdivision of the larger classification "serious drama," which ranges all the way from thoughtful romances like *The Tempest* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes* to works of such impassioned realism as *Awake and Sing!*

Nor is such drama characterized, as Beaumont and Fletcher held, by the purely negative quality of not being comedy. The kinship with tragedy is apparent, as already noted, in the serious approach and in some perception of human dignity—of man's capacity for suffering. aspiration, rebelliousness, passion, or spirituality; and in some importance of theme and resolution, like the wronging of Prospero by his brother, Prospero's forgiveness, the reparation of wrongs, and the reconciliation in *The Tempest.* This may also be seen in Sophocles' idyllic *Philoctetes*, in which we are shown the conflict between generosity and Machiavellian policy in the respective treatment of Philoctetes by the youthful Neoptolemus and the hardened statesman Odysseus when they come to fetch him to the Greek camp, and in the conflict between vengefulness and patriotic duty in Philoctetes, who was mistreated by the Greeks but without whose bow they cannot conquer Troy. A name like "romance," "idyl," "pastoral drama," may be more descriptive of some classic and Elizabethan plays, but the term "serious drama" is an apt description of many modern plays.

Considered as a mood or as treatment of experience—and this is especially important in the tone of a production—this intermediate type does not, indeed, harrow the emotions as thoroughly as tragedy, it does not glow so darkly, and generally it possesses less elevation in character and struggle. Although a sober play like *Awake and Sing!* ends with a fervent affirmation of liberation and militancy, the character and struggles of young Ralph, who wants to marry a girl and Hennie, who deserts her husband for a small-time racketeer, are not on a strictly tragic level. If the production of a non-tragic serious play were to indulge in a constantly darkening atmosphere and weighty postures and movements, it might seem excessive and possibly even ridiculous.

The greatest danger in the non-tragic serious play resides, indeed, in the nature of the struggle and the dynamics of its protagonist. When the character's exertions are, for reasons of circumstance or personality, indistinct or mild, the play is likely to prove merely depressing; it will lack true intensity and exhilaration. It may lack

theatrical force, evoking nothing more than pathos in the actors and sympathy in the audience. This was true, for instance, of that earnest study of the depression, *But for the Grace of God* by Leopold Atlas, in which the activity of the victims is piddling because one of them is still an irresponsible child and the other is an unemployed father who has lost his stamina. One observes how much more effective is a mixed play like Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*. Here comedy and tragedy exist side by side, but the serious scenes are made truly tragic by the intensity of the characters, their struggle, and the shape of events, while the truly comic conduct of the shiftless husband Captain Boyle and his crony "Joxer" actually deepens the tragedy for the other members of the Boyle family.

A production can try to overcome some of the limitations of the negative type of drama exemplified by *But for the Grace of God* and by many unproduced plays. The selection of actors who will suggest latent forcefulness, and the creation of stage business and gesture indicative of strength, may help. It is extremely difficult, however, for any production to make sufficient compensation.

(*c*) *Comedy.* It would be easy to define comedy as a play that evokes laughter. This would save a great deal of theorizing about the mainsprings of the comic spirit, especially since the specialists on the subject disagree. It is still a sensible, practical procedure to define comedy thus, provided one differentiates between the most elementary kind of fun known as *farce* and the more intelligent laughter of high comedy.

An impediment to the above generalization arises in the case of plays like S. N. Behrman's *Biography*, which ends with the regretful separation of the lovers, and *The Misanthrope*, because most of us can no longer laugh at Alceste's revulsion at society and angry exit. Nevertheless, the mood is still comic, not only because of the presence of much comic expository detail, but because, no matter how impassioned the idealistic characters Kurt and Alceste happen to be, the authors' over-all view is unimpassioned. No, it is neither tepid nor indifferent! But it is decidedly reasonable, cool, and considered. Everything is regarded by them relatively—even passion; and something is said for both sides of the controversy.

Comedy, then, is a way of looking at life with the mind rather than with the passions. And life regarded in this manner becomes comparatively light and playful; it induces smiles, if not laughter; it asks

of an audience detached observation instead of emotional involvement. Life is certainly comic, in this sense, to those who think dispassionately.

This is particularly true of Molière's comedies, and of such modern work as Behrman's *Biography*, *End of Summer*, and *No Time for Comedy*. Nevertheless, this does not rule out the presence of either moral earnestness or feeling in comedy. It is all a matter of degree and dominant mood, as we noted above. For instance, Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, and many of Shaw's comedies like *Candida*, *Pygmalion*, *Androcles and the Lion* and *Man and Superman* possess a basic outlook that is much more serious than many a lecture. What makes them comedies is a certain lightness of treatment, a nimble dialectic (which creates balance), a watchfulness for human incongruities and contradictions, an intelligence that is never overwhelmed by life's pain, and a triumphant retention of the spirit of play—in short, all the qualities that will also be found in comedies devoid of moral earnestness, like Congreve's *Love for Love* and *The Way of the World*. Thoughtful laughter is still laughter, thoughtful comedy is still comedy; it is the attitude and the tone that determine the mood that we call comedy. The same considerations apply to feeling.

It is the duty of a production, always, to discover *the comic mood* or attitude in a play. Such classifications as Aristophanic comedy, domestic comedy (Porto-Riche's *Amoureuse*), comedy of manners (*The Way of the World*), romantic comedy (*Twelfth Night*), Jonsonian "comedy of humours" (*Everyman in his Humour*), "character comedy" (*Candida*), naturalistic comedy (*Tobacco Road*), and historical comedy (Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*), in so far as they appear in a fairly pure state, may require special treatment. Evoking romantic comedy requires a degree of grace anl delicacy that would be incongruous in a naturalistic comedy, where a certain earthiness is indicated. A comedy of character calls for meticulous characterization, whereas a comedy of manners demands particular attention to fashions, customs, elegances, and other aspects of social behavior. Moreover, production may be called upon to give different emphases to different elements in a play, since it may combine romance, comedy of manners, character comedy, and so on; this would apply, for instance, to *Twelfth Night*. In this work Malvolio's gross infatuation parallels the Duke's lyrical obsession with Olivia; both men are really absorbed only in themselves, but their scenes differ distinctly in key and mood. However, it is *the over-all comic mood* that must receive

prime attention, since any director who treated the Duke's love for Olivia as if it were passion-drama similar to *Romeo and Juliet* would destroy the comic quality of *Twelfth Night*, and would fail to integrate his production.

(*d*) *Farce.* It is well known, of course, that even comedies of great poetic or intellectual refinement may contain episodes of sheer horseplay; this is particularly observable in some of Shakespeare's dramas. Since farce is merely a more obvious way of inducing laughter than comedy it is only a grosser or broader variant of the comic spirit. It is laughter for the sake of laughter, regardless of how arbitrary, contrived, or obvious the means of evoking it. It is frankly a contrivance, even when the objective is satire or important commentary. Farce readily resorts to gross exaggeration of incidents and character. As Stark Young has noted, it is "free to disregard those limits within which the sweet sanity and humor of comedy appear."[1] Farce depends largely, though not exclusively, on physical action both in the working out of the plot, and in the initial impetus given to the dramatic action. In the perennial *Charley's Aunt* all the complications stem from the fact that a young scapegrace dresses up as a woman. Farcical episodes provide the simplest release from sobriety and make a virtue of playfulness. Mental antics, as in *The Importance of Being Earnest* and in some of Pirandello's work, are merely an equivalent of physical action. Freedom of movement or contrivance is assured by relative release from the laws of probability.

The problems of production are comparatively lessened, provided the director achieves a sufficient lightness of mood. However, the necessity of stressing and keeping the episodes moving rapidly is proportionately increased. Imaginativeness or at least resourcefulness is needed if the mood is to be created and the interest sustained, since a farcical detail cannot be stretched very far; it is so rapidly absorbed by an audience that its substance vanishes quickly and must be followed by something else. The poetry of nonsense has few overtones.

It is not to be forgotten, as well, that some initial motivation rooted in character and in a real situation is valuable; this provides the farcical complications with some recognizable point of departure, like the opening bars of a "theme and variations" in music. *Charley's Aunt* would be less gratifyingly entertaining if it did not start from the perfectly human perturbations of some Oxford adolescents who are

[1] *The Theater*, p. 62.

dependent on their elders, and who happen to be in love. Much of the pleasure we find in *Three Men on a Horse* arises from the sweet innocence of its leading character.

Farce also does not rule out reference to external realities, to the social world. *Three Men on a Horse* gains much of its humor and interest from its picture of horse-race gambling, a recognized American activity; *Room Service* from the complications of producing plays in the commercial theatre. No matter how fantastic the plot, a farce gains from any reference (exaggerated, of course,) to reality; and a production should convey the flavor and visible realities of the background. Playing the above-mentioned farces on a constructivist set might speed up the movement of episodes but would deprive them of their savor. There can be too much reliance on mere movement and tempo.

Because of the presence of some rather sound characterization or of some significant point of reference to reality (*The Male Animal*), there are plays which are designated as *farce-comedy*. It is an intermediate form and must be conveyed as such in production. For instance, the production of *The Male Animal* cannot completely elide the theme of academic freedom by "throwing away" the professor's lines and action with respect to this subject by means of excessive tempo and exaggeration. This is also true of such plays as Pirandello's *Right You Are, If You Think You Are* and Shaw's *Too True to be Good*. In the last-mentioned play, the production would have to give full weight to Aubrey's prophecy of doom for contemporary Europe. The danger in such a play and its production, as was apparent in several of Shaw's last plays, lies only in the difficulty of integrating the mood of the whole. The audience may be too confusingly jarred by sudden transitions from extravagance to seriousness.

(*e*) *Melodrama* has much in common with farce—exaggeration, predominance of physical movement, concentration on action without weighty characterization and social reality. The mere abundance of physical action is a melodramatic quality but does not make a play a melodrama: Hamlet is not to be set down as a melodrama because the stage is littered with the corpses of Hamlet, Claudius, the Queen, and Laertes at the end. But physical action combined with the other above-mentioned qualities will produce melodrama.

Stress, tempo, and appropriate atmosphere are the main tasks of the production. In the variant called the *murder mystery*, the director

must also attend to the planting of clues that lead to discovery and of other clues that prevent the audience from making the discovery until the climactic moment. In a melodrama which possesses some character base—which grounds a crime in the character of the criminal, as in *Ladies in Retirement*—the performance must of course include some concentration on individual characterization. However, unless this is specially called for in the case of some characters, stage characterization will stress the typical rather than the complex traits; easily recognizable habits or easily comprehended idiosyncrasies will receive more attention than psychological subtleties.

STYLES OF DRAMA

MANY styles of dramatic structure have been referred to in the preceding chapters. It remains only to review the subject, in order that the artist in the theatre may both envisage the range of dramatic approaches that he must translate into theatre and have a ready comprehension of their problems. Fundamentally possessing the same objective of arousing interest, the different styles arose in response to different points of view, intentions, and conditions (chiefly, though not exclusively, conditions of production). Today we inherit all these styles. We can use them freely, when for instance we make up a program consisting of *Agamemnon, Julius Caesar, Ghosts, The Adding Machine,* and *One-third of a Nation.* We can also modify certain features of a style in production, as is the case when we break up the choral odes in Greek drama and allocate the lines to different speakers. This treatment of choral drama appeared in the Federal Theatre production of T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral,* as contrasted with the unison recitation in the more conventional, liturgical Canterbury Cathedral production of the same play. Finally, we may blend elements from different styles to form a new one, as in the "living newspaper" *One-third of a Nation,* which combined realistic scenes with non-realistic ones, dramatic vignettes with lectures or demonstrations. Our theatre is enriched by its acceptance of a variety of styles; it is capable of elasticity for the sake of greater and more appropriate expressiveness.

A. The Basic Styles. Basic in any differentiation of styles is the difference between the non-realistic and realistic styles. The former is based on the assumption that a play does not have to create the illusion that the story is unfolding, the events occurring, and the characters behaving as they would if they were observed through a peep-hole. The realistic style, on the contrary, presents the content

of a play in the manner and sequence of actual life, as though people were being watched through a peep-hole.

In the non-realistic approach, the object is to project the play's content frankly and directly to the audience. If this can be done by making an actor serve as a chorus or narrator, by addressing the spectators directly, or by expressing inner thoughts in perfect trimeters or blank verse, the playwright takes the liberty of doing so without either apologizing for the device or concealing it. He is giving us the *essence* of an experience in whatever way will be most striking and most expressive. Soliloquies, asides, choral effects, poetry such as no character except the author is capable of creating—these and other elements enter into the composition. Characters indulge in descriptions that the scene designer could convey to an audience without a word being uttered. Scenes are created by the playwright without worrying how they can be set on the stage so that an illusion of place can be created; any area on a platform will do for a battlefield or river—the merest suggestion will do. Everything is possible that the pure realist will not countenance when he insists that what happens should create an impression of naturalness such as would occur if we peeped into a room, or if we removed one of its walls without the characters' being aware of the fact. The bulk of the world's drama—classic, oriental, neo-classic, romantic, expressionistic, and "living newspaper" drama—has been non-realistic. The bulk of post-Ibsen drama is realistic in presentation.

The non-realistic style is frankly theatrical; the realistic one aims at non-theatricality. The former has been called *non-illusionistic* (not trying to create an illusion of actual reality), or *presentational* (presenting a story in theatrical forms); the latter, *illusionistic,* or *representational* (representing life in natural behavior and background).

Content is not involved in this matter of style. The realistic matter of a play can be presented non-illusionistically. The substance of Euripides' *Electra* is profoundly realistic before the appearance of the gods at the end, but the style is non-illusionistic. Conversely the fantastic or non-realistic story of a play can be presented illusionistically. Fantasies like *On Borrowed Time* and *Father Malachy's Miracle* are illusionistically constructed.

The production problem in ascertaining the basic style is quite simply to recognize the style and to adhere to it in staging, making any stage modifications which will prevent the production from

seeming too remote for its audience. (Unless, of course, the production intends to provide a demonstration of some old style, in which case the prime object is scholarly reproduction!) Among such modifications may be the delivery of soliloquies and asides on the forestage but without thrusting them at the audience, the breaking up of choruses, and the use of a revolving stage for an Elizabethan play.

However, a director may be misled both with respect to the illusionistic and the non-illusionistic drama if he accepts any hard-and-fast theory. It is well to remember, on the one hand, that even the most realistic theatre represents an artistic *selection* and *arrangement* of details, of content, movement, gesture, facial play, background, etc. Realism also forms, and to some degree stylizes, experience; it does so inconspicuously so as to avoid breaking the "illusion." Even symbolism is not precluded, since an intensely realized and meaningful detail, especially when significantly placed, has the quality or effect of a symbol. The grandfather's phonograph records in *Awake and Sing!* represent (symbolize) the longing for a richer life that permeates the play. The orchard in *The Cherry Orchard* is actual, but it also symbolizes the old order. Many other examples can be mentioned.

It is to be noted, on the other hand, that the non-illusionistic drama does not exist in an absolutely pure state. There are realistic elements in it; for instance, the basic behavior of a Clytemnestra or Antigone would fit into an utterly realistic play without the slightest difficulty. Much of the action in most non-illusionistic plays is authentic and natural; one could look at it through a peep-hole and derive the illusion that it was happening without reference to the audience and without any more theatrical arrangement than one finds in *Ghosts* or *Awake and Sing!* Consequently it would be preposterous to assume that the staging of non-illusionistic dramas like the classics and Shakespeare's works should omit recognizable and normal details of behavior, although the background can be suggestive or even devoid of any realistic settings. The fact is that the drama has generally combined illusory and non-illusory elements quite freely, without consistency or adherence to pure esthetic theory.

B. Particular Styles. Without venturing into the extensive story of historical styles, which belongs more properly to a history of the theatre, and without pretending to completeness, the following main occidental styles of drama may be distinguished:

(a) Classic (Greek)
(b) Neo-Classic (Renaissance, classic French)
(c) Aristophanic comedy
(d) Non-Aristophanic comedy (Late Greek, and Roman comedy; and later variants)
(e) Morality drama
(f) Romantic (medieval, Elizabethan, and later)
(g) Realistic
(h) Symbolist
(i) Expressionistic
(j) "Epic" (the "learning play," "living newspaper," etc.)

(*a*) *Classic (Greek) Tragedy* is conspicuous for its compact structure and its unity, though the unity of time and place is nowhere as closely observed as the Renaissance scholars believed. (There are two locales, for instance, in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*—Apollo's temple at Delphi and the hill of Ares in Athens where Orestes is tried.) The play consists of a number of episodes separated by choral odes, which serve as a kind of curtain. After a prolog, the body of the play starts with a choral ode and frequently ends with an ode. (The *Agamemnon* does not, but concludes with Clytemnestra's assuring her lover that all will be well.) It often ends, especially in the work of Euripides, with an *epiphany;* a god appears to resolve the action or untie the knot that has been produced by the dramatic involvement. The play combines song, recitative, reportage by a Messenger, and dramatic action. Violent action, murder, suicide, disfiguration, and human sacrifice occur off stage.[1]

The other features of Greek tragedy are comparatively unimportant for modern productions. Tragedy employed only three speaking actors, but since they multiplied themselves by donning different masks, a production today can use as many actors as there are parts. Moreover, it can make additional speaking actors of the chorus, by allocating different parts to different members of the chorus so that the choral odes are not spoken in unison, and these lines can be addressed to the actors or to some other member of the chorus. (In fact, there is no reason to assume that the Greek chorus always spoke or sang in unison.) The chorus consisted of twelve and sometimes of fifteen persons, representing some homogeneous group, like the senators in the *Antigone* or the crowd of men in the *Agamemnon* who were left

[1] Evidently as a result of a taboo against physical violence on the tragic stage.

behind because they were too old to serve in the army; but naturally the number can be modified in a modern production. The Leader of the chorus often spoke to the actors. The tragedies also used mutes for retinues, servants, and other supernumeraries, giving a sense of mass movement to the stage picture. Modern staging can avail itself of the mutes to the full extent; and there is no law that prevents them from ad-libbing if the director wishes, although too much license can be disconcerting, if not disastrous. The classic tragedy used music (played by a flute and sung by the chorus), and Euripides even required solos. The special music for each play has been lost, but modern composers can supply the deficiency and modern instruments can be employed without fear unless an antiquarian effect is desired by the director. Dancing was called for in the production but it is hardly needed in revivals except where the text calls for it as essential to the action. Finally, the plays called for processions.

Much is often made of the contention that Greek tragedy was like modern opera. This may prove a dangerous analogy if it leads to the showiness and superficiality that characterizes grand opera, and if it results in the kind of singing that subordinates the words to music. If a model in modern opera is to be sought, it is best to refer to Beethoven's *Fidelio* as presented by Bruno Walter, with its spoken passages and with its stress on the content. Indeed, anything operatic in the treatment of the Greek drama in our own day seems pseudo-theatrical; it is incongruous for an audience accustomed to natural stage behavior especially when the text itself is so honest and forthright.

(*b*) *Neo-Classic Tragedy*, as best exemplified by the work of Jean Racine, dispenses with the choral or lyric element of classic Greek drama.[2] In all other respects, it is similar to Greek tragedy, and in the observance of the unities it is even stricter. When choruses are used, as in *Athaliah,* the difference in fundamental structure is negligible for practical purposes. The long, formal poetic dialogue (the tirade) has the nature of recitative, and is a test of elocution, as well as of acting. For all its classic formality, however, neo-classic drama is *romantic,* and is performed most effectively by the French in a romantic manner.

This type of drama is foreign to the spirit of the Anglo-American theatre. Consequently, a production is faced with extreme difficulties;

[2] There are a few exceptions; see Racine's *Athaliah.*

above all, it requires virtuoso acting now virtually extinct except among veteran Shakespearian actors.

(*c*) *Aristophanic Comedy,* also known as "Old Comedy," is hyperactive, exaggerated, and boisterous. Music, choruses, dancing, and action are all treated in this vein, but ample allowance is made for the purest and loveliest lyricism. Aristophanes is one of the world's most gifted lyricists when he turns from slapstick to poetry. The action is fantastic, but it can almost at any moment veer toward orgiastic or gross realistic details. Characterization is generally unsubtle, and depends upon exaggerated types and distortions; the individualized and realistically-conceived character of Lysistrata in the play of that name is exceptional in extant "Old Comedy." The plot is loosely strung together and favors freshly invented episodes which maintain the interest through their novelty rather than through their strict development of the dramatic plot. This style may be described as poetic burlesque or farce with a strong resemblance to our musical comedy. A revival must capture the gusto, pageantry, and movement of this style, although it will have to omit some of the obscenity of the text.

Aristophanic comedy, nevertheless, possesses serious elements. It is generally topical, satirical, and even hortatory. It employs direct exhortation after the main struggle (the *agon*) of the leading characters, when the chorus addresses itself directly to the audience with a long harangue called the *parabasis.*[3] Needless to say, the basic style is *non-illusionistic.*

Contemporary musical comedy and the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas may be included under the Aristophanic style, even though they do not follow the formal features of "Old Comedy." American musical comedy, as exemplified by *Of Thee I Sing* and *I'd Rather Be Right* has an especially strong inclination for fancifulness, frankness, and topical satire. The musical revue is another variant, because of its loosely strung-together episodes, fantastication, songs, and chorus.

(*d*) *Non-Aristophanic Comedy.* This is the non-lyrical, non-fantastic, and unpolitical comedy which started in the Hellenistic period and in Rome; the classic world called it "New Comedy." It is first exemplified by the work of Menander, Plautus, and Terence.

[3] In some plays there were two parabases; at least one play (the *Plutus*) is known to have no parabasis, but this may have been because Aristophanes' last comedy belongs to a transitional style.

It is *comedy of character* in the sense that it treats credible human beings in recognizable, instead of fantastic, situations. Even when, as in the Amphitryon comedies,[4] the supernatural appears, the orientation of the characters is not fantastic but human. The *dramatis personæ* consist, in the main, of set types like the braggart or the boasting soldier (*miles gloriosus*), the infatuated lover, the parasite, the prodigal son, the indulgent or the severe father, and so on.

It is *domestic comedy* in the sense that it deals with the imbroglios of the characters, with the ingenious plotting of lovers and their servants, as well as with the counterplots of their antagonists.

It is *romantic comedy* in the sense that the situations are romantic or stem from romantic impulses like love and infatuation. Adventures by the lovers, mishaps like the disappearance or kidnapping of a character, and the discovery of long-lost relatives comprise the romantic complications.

It is, finally, *comedy of manners* in the sense that the plot and characters reflect the prejudices, social gradations (the parasite, the slave, the pander, the soldier, etc.), customs, fashions, vagaries, and inclinations of the time.

The non-Aristophanic style of comedy reappears, in one way or another, in medieval farces, medieval "interludes" (in which, however, plot intrigue is absent, the place being taken by discussions or debates), Renaissance comedy, *commedia dell' arte,* Spanish "cape and sword" plays, Elizabethan romantic comedy, "comedy of humours," the comedies of Molière and his school, Restoration comedy, 18th century comedy, and thereafter.[5]

The emphasis merely differs in the work of these different eras. In medieval, Renaissance, *commedia dell' arte,* and "cape and sword," drama, the style is preponderantly *comedy of intrigue.* In Elizabethan drama (except in "comedy of humours") we have *romantic* comedy. In the Molière school, the Restoration, and Sheridan's plays, we have

[4] According to the contemporary French playwright Giraudoux, there have been thirty-eight comedies on the subject of the seduction of Amphitryon's wife Alkmena by Zeus, who impersonated the husband.

[5] Examples: medieval farce—*The Farce of the Worthy Master Pathelin;* interludes—John Heywood's *The Three P's;* renaissance comedy—Machiavelli's *Mandragola; commedia dell'arte* (improvised plays for which only synopses of the plot were written down)—Flaminio Scala's synopses; "cape and sword" comedy—Lope de Vega's *The Star of Seville;* Elizabethan romantic comedy—*As You Like It;* "comedy of humours"—Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour;* Molière—*Tartuffe;* Restoration—Congreve's *The Way of the World;* 18th century comedy—*The School for Scandal.*

comedy of manners. All these types are created for non-illusionistic staging, using soliloquies, asides, and other presentational devices.

Since Ibsen, we have, in addition to romantic comedy and comedy of manners, a preponderance of *comedy of character* and *comedy of ideas.* Shaw's *Candida,* Behrman's *The Second Man,* and John Van Druten's *Old Acquaintance* are good examples of the former; Shaw's *Pygmalion* and *Getting Married,* of the latter. Post-Ibsen comedy is, of course, illusionistic.

The problem in production is to determine what element is preponderant in the play and then to impose it on the entire comedy as its over-all tone or pattern. For instance, there is comedy of characterization in *Twelfth Night,* but the dominant tone of a correct production would be romantic; there is comedy of character in *The Misanthrope,* but the emphasis would have to be on the comedy of manners—that is, the behavior of the social set in Molière's day.

(*e*) *Morality Drama,* exemplified by a medieval morality play like *Everyman,* personifies abstractions like Vice, Good Deeds, and Riches, and uses them as the characters of the play; its nature is allegorical. It is didactic drama in the sense that it demonstrates some lesson. Although in its origins it was allied to medieval Catholicism, the morality is not confined to religion. Its first approach was ethical; later it conveyed the humanist philosophy, science, and educational theories of the Renaissance; most recently, in Philip Barry's *Liberty Jones,* it represented the conflict between democracy and totalitarianism. Its great charm, as well as its chief danger (in contemporary writing), is its naiveté. Its strength lies in its simplicity and concreteness, to which end it must employ easily recognized and plainly understood allegorical figures and references. In a contemporary work like *Liberty Jones,* obscurity is unavoidable the moment an audience is uncertain what a specific character or action symbolizes.

In production, the old moralities present no serious problem other than their dullness. (*Everyman* is an exception.) The characterization will naturally be broad, but this does not preclude the possibility of giving at least some of the characters (Riches or Good Deeds in *Everyman*) some distinctly human touches. Moreover, the allegorical figures can be portrayed in a manner that is topical rather than universal; they may be concrete rather than neutrally abstract. For instance, *Riches* could be represented as a sleek financier for our day, if this happened to be the director's intention. whereas he would have

been shown as an obese and grubby miser in the Middle Ages or as a sumptuously dressed merchant during the Elizabethan age.

(*f*) *Romantic drama,* is exemplified by the medieval mystery and saint plays, the Elizabethan drama, the adventure plays of the Golden Age in Spain, and later work like Schiller's, Goethe's, Hugo's and Rostand's dramas, and Ibsen's pre-realistic plays (*Brand, Peer Gynt,* etc.). Its major features with respect to form are extension and freedom of movement. It pays no attention to the unities of time and place; it is not even constrained to follow a single plot. It does not follow a strict unity of tone, but admits a liberal mixture of comedy, horse-play, tragedy, and melodrama according to the author's taste and discretion. It may employ considerable lyricism, witness the songs in Shakespeare's, Schiller's, and Goethe's plays, but the lyricism does not conform to a strict pattern like the classic choruses; it is not formal.[6] Its dialogue is ideal (characters express their thoughts and emotions as they would if they were endowed with a poet's faculties), the emphasis being placed on expressiveness rather than verisimilitude. To this end, all the non-illusionistic devices of the soliloquy, the aside, and direct commentary are used freely and without any attempt to justify their presence realistically. Naturally, this description applies both to tragedy and comedy.

Its contemporary variations, like Maxwell Anderson's *Elizabeth the Queen, Mary of Scotland,* and *Winterset,* are illusionistic; the soliloquy and the aside are not used arbitrarily. But the heightened, idealistic speech (although employed more discreetly than in the plays of a Schiller or Hugo) places work of this kind in the romantic classification.

The problem for contemporary production of the older romantic drama is primarily one of fluidity; the episodes must flow so freely and continuously that theatre magic will be insured. In that case, the audience will accept the conventions and will not even notice them: it will be steeped completely in theatre. This is primarily a matter of settings; these must provide a variety of acting areas whether through a permanent setting with different acting levels, an easily transformable unit set, a revolving stage, or a space stage with platforms and an ingenious use of light. Curtains, flats, and drops can also be employed, but the fewer times the curtain has to be lowered the better

[6] There is more formality in Spanish drama, but it is formality of expression and not formal organization of the play into episodes and choral odes.

For this reason, too, it is advisable to reduce the old five-act play form to two or three acts; the fewer act divisions the better, provided the audience is not exhausted and inconvenienced by having to sit through a three-hour performance. Orson Welles's *Julius Caesar* had no intermission, but then the script was drastically cut. The uncut *Hamlet* of Maurice Evans was divided into two parts. Which procedure is to be followed will depend on the resources of a particular theatrical organization and upon the dimensions and equipment of the stage available to the production.

Another problem for audiences conditioned by stage realism is the avoidance of excessive theatricality. Where flamboyance is present, it must be toned down somewhat in gesture and movement or psychologically justified. Flamboyance may be the special characteristic of some individual, like Iago in *Othello*, but even then it must be scaled down somewhat to meet the taste of the audience. Where the speech is elaborate, it must be rendered with moderation and naturalness, except in explosive moments which possess psychological justification at some point in the action. (For instance, the explosions in Evans' *Hamlet* are justified in moments of stress, despair, and disillusion.) Some compromise is also advisable with respect to the formal non-illusionistic elements of the play. Soliloquies and asides are better rendered as interior speech, as emanations of the character's inner emotion or thought, instead of being bluntly addressed to the audience.

(*g*) *Realistic drama* requires no further description. Its nature is well represented by the features of *illusionism*. It is to be noted only that strict adherence to illusionism in dramatic structure is nowadays open to modifications. *Ah, Wilderness* contains a scene in which the adolescent hero voices his perturbations in a long soliloquy. Nevertheless, the realistic effect of the play remains intact—because this scene is psychologically plausible. In one respect, *Strange Interlude* also retains a realistic quality. The exterior drama possesses complete verisimilitude. The interior drama, consisting of the interior monologues, also possesses verisimilitude once the device is accepted as an exhibition of unspoken feeling and thought; there is no distortion in the stream of consciousness, which is completely logical and realistic in sequence and expression.

Naturalism is merely an extreme form of realism. It adheres strictly to the peep-hole theory that the characters observed on the stage are non-theatrical. The effort to create verisimilitude attends to every

detail, and the details will be as unsavory as the author's intentions and the law allow. Naturalism, moreover, pretends to complete objectivity; it attempts to observe character, environment, and situation with scientific detachment as well as scientific correctness. Strindberg's *Miss Julia*, Hauptmann's *Rose Bernd*, and *Tobacco Road* are typical.

It is to be noted again that despite the implications and claims of realism and naturalism, they both arrange life on the stage; only they try to conceal that it is being arranged. The dialog is natural, and colloquial when the characterization and background require colloquialism or dialect. Nevertheless, even in this type of drama, speech is imperceptibly heightened, made more precise or more colorful than is customary in life, and full use may be made of justifiable moments of eloquence. Nor is complete objectivity or detachment possible. Sympathy for certain characters or classes, and even partisanship, may appear in plays which either their authors or their critics have considered naturalistic.

Production must create a sense of verisimilitude. Its arrangement of life on the stage must seem recognizable and plausible; whatever artifice or heightening is employed must be made to appear unobtrusive or natural. This is a matter of setting, costume, gesture, stage movement, and speech. Balance and restraint must be achieved; for example, a room that must seem cluttered up should not be filled with properties to such an extent that it impedes necessary stage movement. Care must also be taken that the effect is not too distracting. This may also apply to any particularly offensive stage business and stage setting, unless the dramatic justification for it is exceptionally strong. A case in point was the laundry scene in *The World We Make*. It was so horrible that John Mason Brown reflected an understandable sentiment in objecting to it as heavy-handed naturalism; but the author-director Sidney Kingsley could have claimed that it was necessary to represent the ugliness of reality in order to dramatize the escapist, neurotic heroine's ultimate acceptance of life on its own terms, very much as it is accepted by millions of normal people. One could have argued further that even this laundry was *arranged* by comparison with an actual one.

(*h*) *Symbolist drama,* as represented by much of the work of Maeterlinck and Andreyev, is basically suggestive. In its more moderate aspects, the effect is merely atmospheric, as in *Pelléas and*

Mélisande, with its suggestion of fate or destiny and of the half-reality of experience. The suggestiveness may be moderately symbolic in the sense that it *invites* symbolism through its combination of atmosphere and some points of external reference; this is the case in Maeterlinck's *The Blind*, in which a number of blind people are left stranded when their leader, the *priest* (symbolizing the church), dies without their being aware of it. In extreme form, symbolism frankly turns one or more characters into symbols of some force or factor, and their behavior is dictated by what they symbolize. In Andreyev's *King Hunger*, for example, hunger is represented by a figure (King Hunger—a symbol) who is sorry for the poor and incites the masses to revolt but later betrays the people, against his will. The play says in symbolic terms that hunger creates revolution but that starvation can also be used to keep the masses in subjection. In another play, *Black Maskers*, Andreyev's hero seems to stand for the human soul overcome by its guilty past and saved only by some drastic purification.

Symbolism can be illusionistic (*Pelléas and Mélisande*) or non-illusionistic (*King Hunger*, which is stylized, choral, and lyrical).

An intermediate type would be a play like Paul Osborn's *On Borrowed Time*. Here all the characters but one are completely realistic, but the gentleman Mr. Brink symbolizes Death.

The chief production (as well as playwriting) problem in symbolism is clarity; symbolic characters and actions must be clearly defined. The symbolic nature of the play must be conveyed early and atmospherically. It has been previously noted, of course, that some measure of symbolism may enter into the most realistic drama—the wild duck in Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, the sea-gull in Chekhov's *The Sea-Gull*, and the prize-fight ring in Odets' *Golden Boy*. But in these plays the symbol is not indispensable; the story would be clear without it. *The Black Maskers* or *The Lady of the Sea*, on the contrary, would make little sense without our apprehension of their symbolic meanings.

(*i*) *Expressionist drama* is the most frankly theatrical and non-illusionistic of the dramatic types. It frankly *arranges* all events and modifies character, dialog, and background in order to achieve the most expressive dramatic form for the content and meaning of a play. This is the lowest common denominator for all expressionistic plays.

Expressionism mingles the objective and the subjective freely. In *Emperor Jones*, the beginning and the conclusion of the play are objective; the intervening scenes, which dramatize the racial memo-

ries, fears, and imaginings of the escaping Negro dictator, are subjective. In Georg Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight* the first two scenes are objective. In them, the bank cashier is attracted to a strange woman, steals the bank's money in order to win her, and then visits her only to learn that she is a highly respectable woman. Henceforth there is no returning to the bank for him, and the ensuing phantasmagoric scenes dramatize his state of mind. In Strindberg's expressionist plays experience is largely subjective, with some symbolism thrown in for good measure.

The world, as seen in many expressionist plays, is distorted because it is sensed subjectively, or because it is refracted by the author's criticism of society. The latter is the case in Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine*, in which the depersonalization and mechanization of people by modern industrialism is represented through characters like Mr. Zero and his acquaintances, who are indicated by numbers and behave mechanically.

Speech is generally telegraphic, in order to give an impression of unreality or half-reality. Monologs, frequently of considerable length, enable the characters to convey their inner thoughts. Repetition, clichés, and uncompleted or incoherent thoughts in speech, mechanical movements, and distorted pictures of reality—these create an impression of a confused, chaotic, or mechanized world.

The main playwriting dangers are confusion, chaos, and sensationalism; it is not astonishing, therefore, that so many expressionist plays, which enjoyed their heyday between 1918 and 1925, have already fallen by the wayside. The main production problem is ingenuity. The director has to find ways and means for conveying expressionist conceptions on the stage; he may resort to masks, stylized or mechanical movements and speech, expressive lighting (for example, the tree that turns into a skeleton in *From Morn to Midnight*), and stage settings (for instance, the wall scrawled with numbers in Lee Simonson's setting for the same play).

A further development of expressionism (actually a departure from that style) has been the so-called *epic drama.* This is a broad and expanding term, employed by the noted German director Erwin Piscator. It conveys demonstrational drama; this may be seen in the "living newspapers" of the defunct Federal Theatre, and in the "learning plays" of Berthold Brecht. These differ from strict expressionism in being preponderantly objective, analytical, and documentary

rather than subjective and suggestive. But the dramatic structure does not return to naturalism; it is episodic, combines different styles, and is always directly expressive (presentational) rather than representational. A narrator may harangue the audience and explain the social meaning of the dramatic scenes, choruses may chant songs expressive of the ideas of the play, slogans from social thinkers may be tacked up, and statistical charts or graphs may be projected on a screen. The dramatic scenes will be short or stenographic (just sufficient to convey the essence of the episode), and they will be numerous. To illustrate an idea, the playwright may even employ bits of symbolism. When for instance, the little man Schweik in *The Good Soldier Schweik* is called up for service in the Austrian Army, all he sees is an enormous face, a caricature of the almighty and impersonal examining physician, projected on a screen! Epic drama tries to embrace the various facets of the economic and social world of our day, and to represent dynamic social forces. It sees characters not as individuals but as units of a socially conditioned world in which the individual is part of the mass. At present, epic drama has produced no plays of distinction with the possible exception of Piscator's version of Theodore Dreiser's novel, *An American Tragedy,* and *The Good Soldier Schweik*, which was based on a Czech novel. In modified form, without the slogans and films, it has appeared in Paul Green's notable *Johnny Johnson.* Its possibilities in the field of social theatre are great, although they are likely to meet with resistance from conservatives in both politics and esthetics.

The variant of "epic" known as "the living newspaper" has already proved its potency in such plays as *Power* and *One-third of a Nation.* It is to be distinguished from the above-described types in its completely documentary and expository form. It does not dramatize an individual's experience or a personal story but a general situation like the history of housing or the problems of public utilities in this country.

The production, as well as the playwriting, problem is largely one of *integration*, since so many diverse elements must appear on the stage. Useful for this purpose, in the "living newspaper," is the device of a narrator who holds the facts together and the inquiring little man (the Public) who is instructed by him (by means of lectures and illustrative dramatic scenes like a fire in the fire-trap tenements). Piscator has employed the treadmill, and in one instance a globe repre-

senting the world (in *Rasputin*) to secure continuity of the stage action in "epic." Orson Welles used an apron stage in *Native Son* to stage the trial that reveals Bigger's life, and a "brick" curtain to frame his personal episodes—with the intent of indicating that this young Negro is trapped by society.

Working with the Old Play

The aforementioned styles of drama, realized in countless plays, constitute the present theatre's richest resources, provided the texts of the plays are properly understood and staged in such a manner that they will mean something to contemporary audiences. Technical understanding must, of course, be supplemented by an understanding of background and content.

Few older plays of real distinction are inappropriate to our age, although they may not be feasible for some particular season or place, owing to external pressures, the state of public affairs, and local prejudices. In the case of plays from foreign languages, the most serious difficulty is often the lack of satisfactory translations. Sometimes these were adequate for their own age but their idiom has become dated. This is true of the Restoration and 18th century translations of Molière's comedies, which are better than most later ones. The selection of a translation that will seem most natural to our age is of paramount importance. For example, a Gilbert Murray translation from the Greek, once heralded as revitalizing the old plays, is certain to be set down as otiose and artificial by New York critics. Such new versions as those by Edith Hamilton[7] and Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald[8] are preferred.

Old plays abounding in topical allusions are admittedly difficult to recapture. This is true, for instance, of a number of Aristophanes' and Ben Jonson's comedies. In this case, as well as when the content needs a new gloss or when the form requires some easing of its conventional structure, adaptation is advisable. This was conspicuously successful in the Norman Bel Geddes production of *Lysistrata* (version by Gilbert Seldes) and The Theatre Guild's *Volpone* (version by Stefan Zweig). In revivals, the acting version is often of vital importance. The ideal adaptation sacrifices only the antiquarian elements in the original. But successful productions may result from

[7] *The Trojan Women, Agamemnon,* and *Prometheus Bound.*

[8] *Antigone* and *Alcestis.*

drastic deletions which leave only the original play's most meaningful elements; this was the case in Orson Welles's productions of *Julius Caesar* as an antifascist play, and of Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* as a democratic farce-comedy.[9] The aforementioned *Lysistrata* and *Volpone* were also distinctly reworked.

Working with the New Play

Each year our heritage is enriched by new plays. They fall into one of the previously described types and styles, and will continue to do so unless some new type or style is somehow developed as an additional mold for dramatic experience. Most of the new plays of any season will probably be forgotten, but some of them will become part of our heritage at least for a short time; and many of them are necessary experiments by writers who may make a contribution later, if they can be kept in the theatre by production. All new works, in fact, are in a sense experiments for the young writer. As a rule, new plays require revision up to the opening night; openings, endings, and intermediate scenes frequently require cutting, polishing or pointing, if not drastic changing.

No producer or director should expect to find new plays which are perfectly constructed and completely suited to the theatre. He should make an exhaustive study of dramatic technique, as well as develop an instinct for the manner in which elements in a play are transmitted to an audience. He should acquire an ear for dramatic speech, and should know what will sound creaky or forced. If he has this equipment, he may be able to help a playwright, through criticism and suggestion, to realize the potentialities of a script. Many a play attained success as a result of judicious work during the rehearsals and try-out periods. This was the case in such recent plays as *The Women, The Fifth Column, The Time of Your Life, Rain from Heaven, End of Summer, Awake and Sing! The Philadelphia Story,* and *The Male Animal.* A passive attitude toward a script may prove disastrous. It is possible to mention a number of recent plays that might well have escaped disaster on Broadway if they had received alert attention.

However, it is well to realize that plays can also be weakened and sometimes even be ruined by revision during production. A producer or director should be certain that he actually knows enough about playwriting before he ventures to make or insist on changes. In all

[9] Many excellent sequences were, nevertheless, sacrificed in both instances.

instances, he should strive to understand the author's intention; if he accepted the play for production, he must at least accept its spine and point. Only after this can he legitimately tinker with the script; he can then ask the playwright to support the spine as clearly and strongly as material and the style will allow. Moreover, the director's function is not to rewrite the play, but to criticize and suggest. Then, too, he must make certain that he does not assign the playwright a task which it is impossible for the latter to complete creatively or for the actors to master within the time that remains before the premiere. Failure to observe this rule may be catastrophic. It must be remembered that the playwright works under an extreme handicap when he has to fit in new parts; they may prove to be mechanical and spiritless if he has no time to pick up the threads creatively or to allow an idea to germinate. The ideal procedure is, naturally, to suggest and execute major revisions prior to going into rehearsal.

The worst possible reason for suggesting them is the desire to eliminate a set for purposes of economy; if any good ever comes of this, it is probably accidental. It is well to remember that some works actually need more than one set. For example, the late Sidney Howard's deeply realized play *The Ghost of Yankee Doodle* was much more exciting before it was reduced to a one-set play; in keeping the action within the confines of a parlor, the production eliminated at least one dynamic scene which was needed if the drama was to avoid discursiveness and was to be realized actively.

The Primacy of the Play

No production can be too painstaking in the selection and preparation of the play script. It is, after all, the prime element in theatrical production. This is true even when it is the production or the virtuosity of the actor that takes priority in the audience's and the critics' impression. Moreover, it is the script that obviously conditions the production. This has been observed in the history of the world's leading theatres, such as the Moscow Art Theatre, The Abbey Theatre, The Theatre Guild, and the Group Theatre. No matter how expert they may have been at production, they were rarely able to overcome the deficiencies of a poor script with mere theatrical ingenuity. They always looked their best as producers with a comparatively good play, and worst with an inadequate one.

In response to a request for some comment on the art of directing, George S. Kaufman, who is considered the ablest director of comedy in the professional theatre and revealed an almost equally potent talent for serious drama when he directed *Of Mice and Men*, graciously contributes the following note:

WHAT IS DIRECTION, ANYHOW?

Some years ago a young friend of mine, after a considerable apprenticeship in the theatre, finally directed his first New York production. The play was a failure, and that was that. No one mentioned the direction.

A few months later he directed another play. Again it was a failure, and again nothing was said about direction. Then came a success. It was a good resounding success, with two popular stars in it, and the reviewers were unanimous about the direction. They said it was wonderful.

There followed three more failures—not a word, of course, about direction. Then came another success, and this time the critics went to town. It was absolutely the best direction of the season.

Now I am not aiming any shafts at the critics—that is not my point. I simply feel that there is a natural tendency to confuse the direction and the script. Good plays have a way of being well directed. I am not sure that there are three people in the land who can sit in front of a play and tell you definitely just what is direction, and what is the play itself, and what is the performance. But everybody tries.

My own opinion—and I hope it will go no further or I shall certainly lose out on some jobs—is that the whole business of direction is overrated. I am not so fatheaded as to claim that it doesn't matter at all, mind you. Certainly if you put a theatrical ignoramus in charge of a fine play he will probably make a mess of it. But if a director has a competent sense of theatre and a bit of an ear he will turn out a success when the play is good and a failure when it isn't, year in and year out.

Personally I am always a little bit suspicious when the director is too highly praised. A play is supposed to simulate life, and the best direction is that which is so effortless and natural that it

simply isn't noticed at all. Once it begins to call attention to itself, something is wrong.

However, as this note also points out, direction is important. It is of extreme importance since it translates dramatic literature into living theatre. The rest of the book is devoted to the nature of theatre and its collaborative arts and crafts, their procedures, and their techniques.

THE THEATRE AND ITS STYLES

(*A*) *The Nature of Theatre*

THEATRE existed before a single play was written down. When primitive man first danced out a successful hunt or battle there was theatre. It still exists without a written play when a group of people act out an event without uttering a single word, or when Miss Angna Enters pantomimes a character sketch or political comment by a series of movements, gestures, and facial expressions. Theatre is simply the art of "acting out" something; it does not even need a special building and stage, for it can take place in a threshing circle, in a street, or on any piece of ground.

The complexity of theatre arises from the necessity of expressing complex matter such as appears in a well-defined play. Its content or story has to be translated by a constantly changing and yet distinct stage picture, and to this end the theatre develops individual acting, expressive ensemble performance, acting levels, and a visual background. By these means the content of the play is communicated to an audience that brings with it certain expectations, attitudes, and resistances.

The specific treatment of dramatic material has infinite variations. No two productions are exactly the same; they vary in different times and places, in accordance with the nature of the particular play, the personality of the performers, the physical conditions of the stage, and various other factors. However, there are two fundamental ways of translating drama into theatre, and these affect the basic character of a production.

(*1*) *Non-illusionistic, Presentational Style.* One procedure has been to enact the play purely as a theatrical experience, to project the content in a manner which will be primarily expressive rather than literal.

This kind of production is formal, and frankly arranged for expressive presentation; it is *presentational,* in the sense that it "presents" the story instead of representing it as it would happen in life. This is the method that prevails when, in oriental theatres, the property man changes settings or props in full view of the audience, when the actor straddles a stick to indicate that he is supposed to be riding a horse, when he takes a few steps and declares that he has traveled hundreds of miles, when he makes a fan serve him as a sword, when he stains his face a certain color to represent a certain mood. Here we have formalism, stylization, the use of the symbol for the actual object—in short, "presentation" instead of representation of content. It demands of the audience complete suspension of disbelief, a child's capacity for "make-believe." Theoretically, this extreme mode of presentation should seem foreign to the practical-minded people of the occident, but this has not been true in the past (witness church ritual, sword dances, Christmas mummings, as well as the fully developed classic, medieval, and Elizabethan theatre); and it is not true at present, as may be seen from the ready acceptance of Mei Lan Fang's performances, *Lady Precious Stream,* and *Our Town,* by the American public.

The outstanding presentational theatre of the Western World was the Greek. In tragedy, the actors assumed a larger-than-life appearance; they wore traditional padded costumes, shoes supplied with extremely high wooden soles, and masks elongated at the top. Their movements were slow and formal, their gestures broad, their speech rhetorical, sometimes veering into song. The ever-present chorus, which could overhear even confidential conversations, entered in ranks and files, danced, and sang. Most of the actor's work was performed on a low platform facing the chorus; the platform was backed by a permanent setting (the so-called scene building), but he was not within the set, which was therefore suggestive rather than environmental. Interior scenes were thrust out of the scene building on a special platform (*the eccyclema*) on which the actors formed a tableau; the ascent or descent of gods was effected by a crane or "machine" operated from the roof. No one pretended that these were not devices. Illusory elements were present in elaborately staged processions, in the adoption of some painted scenery, and in the use of masks indicative of disfigurement (the actor playing Oedipus could don a mask that showed his face blinded and blood-stained). But no one could pretend that the production as a whole was other than theatrical.

(2) *Illusionistic, Representational Style.* At the other extreme, we have the production which seeks to give the impression that it is not stylizing or arranging experience but *representing* it. It creates the illusion of naturalness, as though it photographed people who are unaware that they are acting a part. The characters appear in their normal dimensions, wear the clothes they would normally use in a given situation, and express themselves in natural speech and movement—all this in a setting that reproduces what would be their environment in real life. Such staging is "realistic" or "naturalistic." Of course, it too arranges the movements and the background of a play, but it seeks to conceal that fact from the audience in order to maintain the illusion of reality. Many objects on the stage may be "faked," few may be absolutely authentic, but the illusion of reality is maintained.

(B) *Standard Theatre Styles*

The degree to which either the presentational or the representational style was used varied in different periods. Modifications and mixtures of the two modes of theatre have been the rule. Some illusionism was present even in the classic and the Elizabethan theatres, while the presentational type of production has appeared even in the post-Ibsen period in which realism has been the dominant style. Moreover, the realistic style has itself undergone modifications. Today our theatre is the inheritor of many types of production which can be reproduced faithfully, modified for special purposes, or combined. Dramatic effectiveness has always been the ultimate test of production. Any style is acceptable to an audience, provided it does not seem distinctly inappropriate to the play's structure and content.

For inventory purposes, our heritage of styles may be conveniently classified as follows:

(1) *Oriental.* Without attempting to describe and classify the different approaches of the Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, Javanese, Tibetan, and Hindu theatres, it may be noted that oriental stylization and symbolism can be reproduced in all their diversity; the necessary information is accessible in various source-books. One has only to decide whether such reproduction is necessary or feasible, and to determine the degree to which a faithful reproduction will be clear to our audiences.

An utterly charming and highly praised production of the Chinese classic *The Circle of Chalk* was directed by James Light at the

Studio Theatre of the New School for Social Research with only a suggestion of Chinese stylization. The stage was divided into three main sections which could be successively or simultaneously revealed by raising the Venetian blinds that served as a curtain. The actors' behavior was neither stylized nor symbolic.

Adaptation of oriental conventions is also possible, whenever justified. This was the case in the New York production of *Our Town*, in which the narrator acted as property man and chorus; there was no curtain, a ladder was used to represent an upstairs room, a few properties indicated an interior. However, other properties, like the umbrellas in the funeral scene and the costumes, were realistic; nor did the actors stylize their speech or movements. The justification for this treatment lay in the informal nature of Thornton Wilder's play. In it the philosophical narrator gives us some details of the life of a typical little town and regales us with his comments on life and death. As the film version demonstrates, the first two acts of this play could be told in realistic pictures. But the presentational stage treatment was equally justified by the complete informality of the narration.

(2) *Classic.* An antiquarian reconstruction of an Athenian production is possible. Masks, tragic costumes, choral movement, dancing, gods from the machine, permanent setting, eccyclema, and other details can be reproduced. As in the case of oriental staging, the chief problem, once the feasibility of antiquarian production is granted, is the acting. It makes demands upon the contemporary actor which he is not trained to meet. This problem is not, however, insuperable, since speech can generally be substituted for song, and the dancing can consist largely of mimetic and formal movements.

Various modifications of the antique technique are possible. The high tragic boot is unnecessary in our small theatres; masks, too, can be dispensed with in the intimate, electrically-lit theatres of our day where facial play can be readily distinguished. Drops, flats, and curtains can be substituted for the permanent setting (the setting can even be projected on the back wall, if one wishes, by means of light); a sense of space can be attained by building various acting levels, and by ingenious lighting of the stage. The *eccyclema* can be discarded, since the interior tableau can be disclosed by drawing or raising a curtain. The actors' movements and speech can be fairly natural, although they should be more intense and formal than in the ordinary realistic play; the chorus and its speeches can be broken up, nor do

they have to be sung, unless this can be done competently. Modifications of Greek comic technique appeared in the Norman Bel Geddes production of *Lysistrata* on a plastic stage consisting of acting levels and a temple façade. However, Greek comedy can be reproduced quite faithfully in such respects as the grotesquely dressed and masked chorus (especially for such choral groups as the wasps and the frogs of *The Wasps* and *The Frogs*), the broad or *revue* type of acting, the singing, the crane for the gods, who can be "flown" entertainingly on ropes from the flies, and the eccyclema. (The crudity of the last two devices may actually increase the humor of the production.)

Elements of Greek production can be utilized for different purposes in non-classic plays. T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* requires a chorus; its movements were broken up and individual lines were assigned to different speakers in the Federal Theatre production, whereas the chorus was formally grouped and spoke in unison in the more ritualistic Canterbury Cathedral staging of the play. Masks were used in O'Neill's *The Great God Brown* to convey the dual personalities of the chief characters. An abbreviated chorus of townspeople appeared informally in *Mourning Becomes Electra*, and an elaborate chorus is, of course, a prominent feature of musical comedies and revues.

The problem of reproducing Roman staging is comparatively easy since, in the main, the action was simple, and was confined to the stage. There is no chorus in Roman comedy, which is the only extant Roman drama worth producing. Although the actors were masked and their behavior was presentational (they employed soliloquies and asides freely, and acted broadly), they did not indulge in quite as much extravaganza as in Greek comedy; interest is centered on domestic problems which are informally plotted as in modern comedies. The acting in a revival can combine vaudeville technique for the extravagantly conceived characters and, more or less, straight playing for the lovers. An architectural façade backed the actors who stood on a shallow acting area on which there was much more side-to-side than front-to-back movement. The façade, pierced by three openings, was a street setting, consisting of two houses with doors and a central opening which could serve as a side street. Entrances from the house doors, the side street opening, and from the wings (that could be used for arrival from a market place, harbor, or other parts of the town) facilitated stage movement. The action was intended to occur

in the street or in front of some character's house. All this, too, can be managed with a little carpentry and painting. The main modifications in our enclosed theatres will be modern lighting and the substitution of make-up for masks; although the latter can be retained for antiquarian effect or grotesqueness, they are no longer necessary.

(3) *Medieval.* In England the religious "mystery" plays were generally staged on large double-decked decorated pageant wagons. The lower compartment served as a dressing room, or whenever necessary, as the area for Hell; the upper story was the stage for practically all purposes, although the audience area in the street could be overrun by actors dressed as devils. No sooner was the little play finished than the wagon rolled away, and its place was taken by another pageant-wagon on which another one-acter was performed with appropriate settings on the stage platform.

Obviously, this type of staging is possible only out of doors, and is cumbersome, although it was once used in modified form by a mobile unit of the Federal Theatre. In our theatres, it is of course possible to set up a wagon suggestively and use it for different "mystery" one-acters. At the conclusion of each one-acter the curtain could be dropped, and the platform might be quickly redraped to look like another pageant wagon when the curtain is drawn up. Other devices are also possible.

On the continent, the prevailing procedure was to build a long platform stage with simultaneously seen little sets ("mansions" or "stations") in a straight line or a half-circle. At one extreme stood Heaven, at the other Hell, appropriately constructed and decorated. This type of staging presents no difficulty for the stage carpenter, but it restricts stage movement in our theatres and the necessity of focussing on some small corner of the platform is annoying. This difficulty is moderated when not more than two or three stations are used. Curtains dropped between two scenes may also solve the problem. The front curtain might represent all the stations, but when it is raised the audience would see only one station suitably centered on the stage floor.

The acting was presentational, some stylization was employed in representing angels and saints, and grotesque masks and costumes were worn by the devils. The acting was extravagant in the case of the riotous devils, boisterous or tender in the case of human characters, formal in the presentation of Deity. Some of the stage business and sound effects were realistic to the point of naiveté—even live animals

were used; thunder, smoke, and flames were employed liberally, and the details of martyrdom rendered faithfully.

Modified use of the pageant wagon will be found in the "floats" of a musical revue. This appeared in the Theatre Guild's production of *Parade*; since the unifying idea of this revue was a procession of workers, various floats could be used very appropriately. The simultaneous setting can be used as a staging device in a variety of ways. It appears in the familiar permanent unit set, in which different parts of the same building are used for different scenes; some of these sections can be blacked out or changed by lighting, or they can be modified or dismantled between acts. Orson Welles used the simultaneous setting effectively in his staging of *The Shoemaker's Holiday*.

(*4*) *Renaissance.* Renaissance vistas in a pierced wall, painted perspectives, architectural settings, and prescribed formal scenery for tragic, comic, and pastoral drama can be easily duplicated for revivals of such Italian renaissance works as Aretino's plays and Machiavelli's *Mandragola*. Since the renaissance theatre in Italy developed the proscenium arch, a modern production is saved the problem of how to compensate for the absence of a thrust-out platform or apron in our theatres. Renaissance operatic effects can be effectively managed by modern stage machinery.

Although the acting and the general production was mainly presentational, illusory elements become prominent because the Italians favored pictorial effects and developed the means for producing them. By framing the sets with the proscenium arch, they started the European theatre on its progress toward the illusionist realistic stage setting and performance. Renaissance production is, therefore, not remote to the modern theatregoer. Most of our theatres and settings stem from this tradition. It is chiefly by means of costuming, formal perspective scenes, decorativeness, and painted effects that we can suggest historical authenticity in a renaissance production.

(*5*) *Elizabethan.* The chief characteristics of Elizabethan production in the so-called public theatres[1] were rhetorical speech, presentational, broad, and vehement acting, and continuous or fluid staging. As most of the plays of Marlowe, Shakespeare, and other Elizabethan dramatists were produced in the largely open-air public theatres, this type of production is important to us.

[1] The above-described renaissance style prevailed in the smaller Elizabethan indoor "private"—university and court—theatres, which merely charged higher admission prices.

The theatre was constructed in the form of a square or octagon. The common audience stood unsheltered from the rain and heat in the center (the "pit"), which was surrounded by three covered galleries. The stage, shaped like a trapezoid or rectangle, jutted out into the middle of the pit; and it was not shut off from the audience by any curtain at the front. It was divided into three parts: (1) A large *forestage* on which most of the action was performed presentationally, without being surrounded or backed as a rule by any scenery (other than the general background); different scenes could be played on (at most, conventionally indicated) different areas on the forestage, with trapdoors used for special effects like the entrance or disappearance of a ghost. (2) An *inner stage,* separated from the forestage, by a draw curtain. Behind this curtain a scene would be set as a bedroom, throneroom, or other locale; it would then be disclosed, or, as the Elizabethans said, "discovered," by drawing the curtain. This inner stage was on the same level as the forestage. It did not occupy the full width of the platform, being flanked by two doors through which the actors could enter or make an exit. (3) The *upper stage* was located above the inner stage; it was also separated from the audience by a curtain and had a low railing in front. Elizabethan texts indicate this area with the term "above." It was used to represent high places like a hill, the deck of a ship, or the battlements of a castle or fortress.

It is plain, then, that the action on this stage could be kept flowing constantly, and it is clear why an Elizabethan play could be written in so many scenes without seeming awkward on the stage. It was unnecessary to stop the action or draw a curtain for the separate scenes; many of them could be acted continuously on different areas of the forestage without having to set up scenery for them; other scenes could be quickly "discovered" by drawing the curtain of the inner stage, still others by drawing the curtain of the upper stage. It is also clear why so much of the acting was presentational; most of it took place on the large forestage that was thrust out into the auditorium, so that actors were actually speaking to the surrounding audience while delivering an aside or soliloquy.

Lacking a forestage, unless it is specially constructed for a production at considerable expense, most of our present theatres present the director with a problem. How is he to ensure the continuous flow of an Elizabethan play without bringing the curtain down twenty or forty times, with resulting choppiness, while each new scene is set?

Several solutions are possible, depending on the number of scenes and their nature. The simplest type of staging is that represented by the Mercury Theatre's *Julius Caesar* which used no scenery other than the wall of the stage, which was painted red, and some suggestive lighting. This space-stage was highly appropriate for the grim, anti-fascist interpretation of the play in that production. Another procedure is to build a permanent set with various acting levels on which the action can flow continuously, each area suggesting a definite scene (without establishing it literally) and being capable of pictorial modification by means of small changes and by different lighting. If the play is divided into two acts and the curtain is lowered between them, larger changes in the set can be carried out during the intermission. Among other simplified adaptations, the most practical consists of dividing the stage into a downstage area for exterior settings like street scenes and an upstage area for interiors which can be easily set with appropriate flats and drapes while the curtain is down between the two parts of the stage. If the two settings can be alternated, this is an easily encompassed, and can also be an inexpensive, procedure. If such alteration does not provide a sufficient number of localities for the play, a further division of areas, separated by means of draperies and archways or multiple, formal stage levels (steps, platforms, etc.), is feasible. The main objective is to create enough playing space,—to enable the play to move from scene to scene without interruption. Since the production should be basically presentational, the illusionistic value of any acting area is of decidedly secondary importance; suggestion of locale is sufficient. In this connection, modern lighting methods can be of incalculable assistance; their possibilities have been only partially realized thus far.

In acting, speech is a prime consideration. The actor must be able to deliver both the meaning and music of the lines. Although it is inadvisable for him to declaim in the old-fashioned manner, which now seems false and artificial, he must achieve a lyrical and impassioned style—without, of course, sacrificing sense and an impression of natural feeling. In delivering asides and soliloquies behind our conventional proscenium arch, it is inadvisable for him to speak directly to the audience; he cannot do this plausibly when the picture frame separates him from the audience. But he can avoid, and must avoid, addressing himself to the other actors; his delivery must still be audience-directed. Since most asides and soliloquies arise from psy-

chological tensions, the actor can give them psychological reality by speaking as if the words existed in his mind; this, however, requires very effective acting and stage presence. His costumes do not have to be authentic if they will seem ludicrous (unless that is the intention—in presenting a fop, for instance) or if they will impede movement. He can wear Elizabethan costume or the costume of the time and place of the action of the play; he can be dressed in a somewhat later style, as was the case in the John Gielgud-Guthrie McClintic production of Hamlet, or even use modern dress, as in the Mercury *Julius Caesar*, and in the civil dress performance of *The Taming of the Shrew* by Basil Sydney. In short, a variety of compromises can attain the main objective of a modern Elizabethan production—namely, continuous and vivid dramatic effect.

(*6*) *Neo-Classic.* The fully developed neo-classic French stage, influenced by renaissance style, was essentially modern, in the sense that the action was played behind the proscenium arch and that the setting was pictorial. A curtain shut off the view from the audience whenever necessary. The scenery, consisting of side wings and back drops between them, provided the illusion of a specific locale, which might be a single interior (single because the unities were respected) for a tragedy like Racine's *Phaedra*, or an exterior representing a square flanked by houses from which the characters could come out or look out, as in *The School for Husbands*. This can be easily encompassed by modern scenic design. The acting was presentational despite the presence of the proscenium arch, the actors playing far down-stage and generally away from the set. The costuming was sumptuous, and ballets were often presented on suitable occasions, as in *The Would-be Gentleman*. In tragedy, the actor's performance was formal, although intense; in comedy, it could range from character acting to burlesque; fashionable manners were imitated and often exaggerated, young lovers were suitably naive and spontaneous in their behavior; commoners like the hero of *Doctor in Spite of Himself* could be gross and "naturalistic." The slapstick and spontaneous roguery of *commedia dell' arte*,[2] and the broad character types of Roman comedy (transmitted through *commedia dell' arte*) appeared in abundance on Molière's stage.

Although, as already noted, some naturalness appeared in the acting, it remained presentational in comedy, largely owing to tradi-

[2] Italian popular theatre, largely improvised, which harked back to the Roman theatre

tion and to the seating of select spectators on the sides of the stage. In tragedy, the declamatory style was even more definitely presentational; the audience was addressed by actors whose stock in trade was the delivery of the magnificent emotional tirades which remain the crowning glory of Racine's dramatic verse. Unfortunately, these sound so poor and artificial in English that it is almost impossible to do justice to neo-classic tragedy. Molière's comedies present fewer difficulties; although the acting and ensemble may be stylized to some advantage, they are not remotely formal. Spontaneous and limber acting is the main consideration. Thanks to the development of dancing in this country, incidental ballets can also be managed effectively.

(7) *Restoration.* Influenced by both the Elizabethan and the renaissance theatre, Restoration production provided a compromise between the platform style of staging and the modern picture-frame stage. The Elizabethan inner stage was enlarged to afford ample acting space and stage machinery; this was the curtained stage behind the proscenium. The Elizabethan forestage was retained in abbreviated form as an *apron* stage which jutted out into the audience and enabled the actor to retain some intimacy with the audience, making the performance presentational. The background perspective, composed of rows of painted side wings, or flats of painted canvas stretched on wooden frames, shut in at the end by a painted drop, was simple but pictorial. When the wings were drawn together, a portion of the stage could be closed; when they were pulled apart, a stage area would be disclosed revealing a scene that was said to be "opened." Scene changes were easily and conventionally effected, but this was not the dynamically presentational stage of the Elizabethans. It was, in the main, a pretty picture behind a frame.

In reviving Restoration comedy, the only type of Restoration drama that retains some vitality for us,[3] the presentational style has to be maintained (in moderation, however) and the atmosphere has to be comic, but the main problem is to convey light and precise dialog and graceful mannerisms. There is no need to reproduce the settings accurately, but it is necessary to create a delicate and playful background which does not enclose the actor too realistically, thus reducing the ebullience of the play. Screens and drops can be used ingeniously

[3] With a few exceptions like *Venice Preserved* and *All For Love.*

to this end. The same kind of staging can be employed for eighteenth century drama.

(*8*) *Realism.* Realistic staging has already been described. Here the apron stage is eliminated. All the action is played behind the proscenium arch or picture frame, and is therefore separated from the audience which is privileged to peep into the interior where the actors behave as though they were unobserved and completely detached from the spectator. The setting represents an actual scene, the action represents reality, and the actor is not supposed to be aware of an audience. The use of electric light enables the audience to observe the little gestures and the moderate facial play that characterize his behavior and reactions.

Naturalism, which followed realistic staging, merely accentuates realistic production, strives for greater verisimilitude, and exercises less selectivity so that the stage may be more cluttered up with details; and these may be more sordid than the discreet procedure of realism would allow. Actors may even play with their backs to the audience, completely ignoring the fact that they are playing on a stage. In both realism and naturalism, a strong effort is made to convey the reality of the background which may be a protagonist of the play in the sense that the social scene conditions behavior and affects the destiny of the characters. The realistic setting of a working-class home for *Awake and Sing!* is part of the life and struggles of the characters. It reflects their social and economic status, and it represents the narrow and unattractive existence against which they rebel.

The "truthfulness" claimed for naturalism is literal. In the early productions of Antoine this led to such extremes as the presence of real meat in a butcher-shop scene; in the heyday of Belascoism in America, it involved setting a facsimile reproduction of a Child's Restaurant behind the proscenium. This type of production still appears from time to time in our theatre, in such plays as Sidney Kingsley's where the director-author was intent upon conveying the impact of a conditioning environment—the gangster-breeding slums on the East River in *Dead End*, and the horrible conditions of labor in *The World We Make.* It also appears in *Tobacco Road* where an environment representing social decay was an essential part of the dramatic intent. The dangers of such naturalism are self-evident; the picture may be repellent and its sensational details may distract the audience. But the risk can be taken with some assurance of success

when there is sufficient dramatic justification for the effect. Naturalism in acting may, but does not have to, veer toward the commonplace. It has sometimes produced an effect of sensational obscenity which may be found morally repugnant, although this did not prevent *Tobacco Road* from being the greatest success of the modern American theatre.

(*9*) *Selective Realism*. The reaction that set in against the excesses of naturalism resulted in a type of production that selects its realistic effects. Only as much realism is employed as will ensure an *impression* of reality, and for this purpose representative details and selected behavior are sufficient. In staging *Rocket to the Moon*, it was not deemed necessary to include all the details of a dentist's office, which would have been represented by Belasco to the last forceps; nor was the dentist here shown in the act of operating on a patient's mouth. Only enough of the operating room was displayed to create an impression of his work, while the bulk of the action was enacted in the comparatively neutral area of his waiting room. Nothing was permitted to occupy the audience's attention to such a degree that the observer would be distracted from the essential drama of the man's personal struggle as a husband and lover.

The prevalent realistic staging of our day is selective. It requires common sense, taste, and a recognition that theatre creates the *illusion* of reality instead of duplicating it for the sake of duplication; above all, it demands that the production concentrate on the meaning or point (the "spine") of the dramatic experience and strive to express it economically and clearly. The acting concentrates on inner experience but employs realistic movement and speech.

(*10*) *New Theatre Styles*. Since the advent of realism, the modern theatre has developed, and is still developing, new styles. Some of them have been, and some may prove to be, abortive. Others are still germinating. But they have proved fruitful in various ways, and they have already extended the range and expressiveness of theatre greatly. The following main approaches are to be considered by the creator of theatre.

(*a*) *Symbolist Staging*. The reaction against naturalism went much further than "selective realism" in the nineties of the last century and in the ensuing decade or so. It took the form of Symbolism, a word of wide and rather indefinite connotations. Under the leadership of Appia and Craig, the theatre began to concentrate on style, atmos-

phere, and symbolization of reality—that is, of the inner reality of the play—instead of realizing a concrete background or environment.

"Style" meant the arranging of stage movement and the elements of the setting in order to create pictorial beauty. The symbolists therefore introduced the important element of pictorial balance or *design* into the modern theatre. Most productions now pay careful attention to design regardless of the type of play that is being presented. Design is a primary consideration in the work of the scene designer and the stage director; both of them try to balance effects on the stage. Much loveliness, though sometimes attended by a commensurate loss of energy, has resulted from this approach to production.

Atmosphere, achieved by the ever increasing miracles of lighting, binds together sets, stage movement, and the spirit or content of a play in a single expressive mood. The selection of significant or symbolic details makes a partially constructed object stand for the entire object, as when a few pillars provide the impression of a building; a series of weirdly slanted arches gave the impression of a Scottish fortress in the Robert Edmond Jones and Arthur Hopkins production of *Macbeth*. Lighting can be further relied on to paint a suggestive "symbolic" picture. The result is, of course, to withdraw attention from the actual environment and to concentrate it on the spiritual essence of the experience. The acting may be quite realistic by itself, but set against such a background and in such an atmosphere (and sometimes dwarfed and blurred by it), the acting also appears to be more suggestive than literal. Stage movement, gesture, and facial play cannot but be affected by this type of setting, and must be made to harmonize with it if esthetic unity is to be maintained. The chief dangers of this style are obviously the weakening of the dynamics of the drama, the blurring of its concrete or specific content, and the attenuation of many effects. For plays of topical vitality, for social drama which stresses the plain reality of common people and their environment, as well as for comedy which demands a sharp focus, realistic production is properly preferred to the symbolist style. The latter is most appropriate to poetic plays and fantasies.

(*b*) *Expressionism*. Carried to extremes during the turbulent years of the first World War and its aftermath, symbolist stylization led to expressionistic staging. This assumed various forms. One was the mechanization of acting and schematization of background to convey the mechanization of life by mass production. This appeared in *R.U.R.*,

and in *The Adding Machine,* which also indulged in some stylized travesties on the environment by scrawling numbers on the wall. Here the actors spoke monotonously and mechanically, and they moved about like automatons in a stylized manner. Another approach was simple vehemence and fiery declaration in the performance, with figures leaping down and running up platforms (*Jessnertreppen*: Jessner stairs, named after the director Leopold Jessner), or pyramiding themselves out of the darkness toward a solitary figure on the highest peak, as in the Jürgen Fehling and the Lee Simonson productions of Toller's *Masses and Man.* This style was particularly suitable for dramas of personal violence, social conflict, or revolutionary mass action. A third method, appropriate to subjective drama, was that of deliberate distortion and fantastication, as in the production of *From Morn to Midnight* in which a tree turns into a skeleton. The world was given a ghastly shape, reality was distorted into doors, windows and other objects crazily built and tilted or crumpled.

Most types of expressionistic stylization exhausted themselves rapidly. Distortion, however, has had its practical uses; it appeared for sound satiric purposes in the staging of Kaufman's and Connelly's *Beggar on Horseback* and in Paul Green's *Johnny Johnson,*—in such a scene as that in which the examining psychiatrist sits behind an enormous, crazily tilted table to convey the impression that it is he and not his patient Johnny, the man of good will, who is insane. Expressionistic treatment also appears in some musical comedies and revues, and in recent, fantastic music-dramas like Moss Hart's *Lady in the Dark* and Philip Barry's *Liberty Jones.* In the former, the heroine's fantasy life, and in the latter Miss Liberty's dream of her struggle with the totalitarian powers, justify the deliberate distortions.

(*c*) *Formalism.* All forms of expressionism were "theatricalist" in the sense that theatrical effect, and not realism, was the objective. Concerning the symbolist reaction it must be noted that even the symbolists were trying to create an illusion of reality; they merely strove to create it suggestively and spiritually. The trends that followed disclaimed illusionism; several appeared in addition to expressionism. One trend was *formalism,* which strove to reduce the setting to a merely formal background. This could be decorative and could be modified somewhat for different plays provided it remained formal, but the setting was subordinated to the playing area; the play was enacted on an unenclosed playing space, making the effect "theatre"

rather than a slice-of-life displayed in a box-set. Of various attempts at formalism, the most notable and successful was made at the *Théâtre du Vieux Colombier* by the director Jacques Copeau. Here the downstage area was elongated into an "apron," on which no settings were built, and a permanent set, changed for different plays, was constructed at the back as a formal setting. This theatre's successor, the *Compagnie des Quinze,* followed the same principle by using an austere setting of pillars in the back of the stage.

Modifications of formalism are still potent (1) when the stage background consists simply of draperies; (2) when the setting is provided by a few archways backed with curtains that can be opened to reveal some vistas (a terrace or garden) while the main action occurs in front of one or more archways. Theatres which lack sufficient scenic equipment or have a shallow stage may turn their limitations into advantages by tasteful formalism.

(*d*) *Constructivism.* Another movement was *constructivism,* practiced by Meyerhold in the early years of Soviet Russia and seen in this country in the Neighborhood Playhouse production of Faragoh's *Pinwheel.* Here the action was plainly theatrical; the settings consisted of numerous levels produced by ramps, scaffolds, stairways, girders, and floors such as appear in the skeleton of a building under construction or in machine shops designed purely for functional uses. Illusionism was banished when, for example, a forest scene was played on girders, ramps, and ladders (Meyerhold's production of Ostrovsky's *The Forest*). The actors' movements were frankly presentational, their behavior and reactions outwardly dynamic ("bio-mechanical") rather than introspective,[4] and the general effect was conventional instead of illusionistic. The theoretical justification for this approach was the belief that only in this manner could the theatre reflect the tense, active, and extrovert world of the machine age. This style was held to be particularly suited to Soviet Russia, which was trying frantically to catch up with the Industrial Revolution and regarded every new machine or factory as a step toward socialist construction. The style was also recommended to America because of its industrial civilization.

Constructivism was too strident and shallow, and it provided few gratifications for a playgoer who is never in love with industrialism

[4] "Bio-mechanics" extended the concept of the machine to the actor; he was regarded as a machine composed of many efficient parts. Physical vigor, rather than individuality and inner sensitivity, was stressed in his performance.

to such a degree that he doesn't welcome escape from it. This style never attracted the masses even in Russia, and it died out as a movement. All that remains of it, all that seems still serviceable to our theatre, is "modified constructivism" in settings which express streamlined modernism in architecture; for example, the modernist, metal and wood, hotel interior Lee Simonson designed for the Theatre Guild production of *Idiot's Delight.* A judicious use of stairs, ramps, and balconies may also be helpful in providing a variety of acting levels which promote effective movement and plasticity in acting.

(*e*) *Theatricalism. Complete theatricalism,* as exemplified abroad by the colorful work of Tairov, Vakhtangov, the Habima Theatre, Cocteau, and others, supply elements of interest to the director and scenic designer. To what extent they may be accepted or imitated, and to what degree a director will successfully veer in the same or in a related manner independently,—these are questions for which every creative artist must have his own answers. He may theatricalize in the Tairov manner, creating a symphony of movements and applying choreographic principles to the projection of the play by the actors. If the director adopts this approach for all plays, his work will seem conspicuously stylized and theatrical; if he adopts it only for a special kind of play he happens to be producing—a fantastic work like *Liberty Jones*—he will be merely giving an excellent production; his treatment will seem so appropriate, as was the case in John Houseman's direction of the above-mentioned work, that no one will hunt for labels to describe his work—one will merely accept it as beautiful and right.

If a director consistently employs the grotesque technique that characterized the work of the Habima Theatre between 1918 and 1924, his style will be labeled a "grotesque." If he uses it for a fantastic, folk-play like S. Ansky's *The Dybbuk,* the instantly recognized appropriateness of the treatment will be simply credited to directorial sensibility and intelligence. This is also true of the playful and colorful orientalism of Vakhtangov's work, as exemplified by the famous production of *Princess Turandot.* Here was complete and joyous theatricalism. Vakhtangov himself did not intend to apply this technique to every kind of play. Aptly used (as may be seen, with modifications, in the Negro musical fantasy *Cabin in the Sky*), it may be singularly effective for certain purposes.

The simple fact is that contemporary theatricalism can be infinitely

resourceful. The danger lies only in allowing it to harden into a formula instead of using it where and how it is most justified. In this country, in particular, production formulae are viewed with suspicion, and style employed solely for the sake of style is considered pretentious. Ours is a playwright's theatre, and theatricalism is accepted only when it expresses the play in the most appropriate manner.

(*f*) *Demonstrational style.* The latest, and most successful, application of theatricalism illustrates this. Our "living newspaper" style was frankly demonstrational, availing itself of every device of the theatre so long as it served to exhibit and clarify social or economic matters. Here, in short, was theatricalism with a purpose, rather than theatricalism for its own sake.[5]

This was also true of the larger style, of which the "living newspaper" style is a subdivision,—namely, *epic theatre.* Unlike the "living newspapers," "epic" told a story about central characters, but these were seen as exemplifying, and surrounded by, larger social situations. The acting was mainly presentational, and was sometimes even stylized for purposes of satire. Since it is the larger milieu that is of paramount interest, and this milieu is seen to consist of many facets and to exemplify many related trends, it was represented in numerous, widely dispersed episodes. Thus far, esthetic unity has therefore been a secondary consideration in epic style. Different styles of treatment have been employed for different episodes; one of them might be symbolic, another factual (with statistics or documentary films flashed on a screen), another nearly realistic. Many of these episodes could be rolled out on a treadmill frankly as demonstrations of some point; much of the unity of a production like that of *The Good Soldier Schweik* lay in the fact that the treadmill was unrolling socially related vignettes. The object was to embrace the visually diverse but socially related aspects of contemporary trends and struggles. The stage effect, as a whole, was therefore presentational and theatrical, but, above all, *functional* rather than esthetic (in the symbolist sense of that word). Since, moreover, epic theatre was *intended* to be func-

[5] So-called *agit-prop* production, in which some social comment or incitement to social action was promulgated, was similarly theatrical, but with an other than "art-for-art's sake" purpose. This was seen to best advantage in a short montage, *Newsboy,* during the middle 'thirties; and in modified, more artistic, form in Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* and *No for an Answer,* notable for the simplicity and presentational nature of the staging, as well as for the music which added an expressive dimension to the stage action.

tional and dynamic, and because the world it presented was the modern industrial one, this style manifested a predilection for mechanical contrivances and it made no attempt to conceal mechanics. (In the Theatre Union production of Gorky's *Mother,* for instance, the electrical lighting equipment remained unmasked throughout the performance.)

Because of this intention of employing every technical means to project the present world, the leading exponent of *epic* as a technique (rather than necessarily as a particular social ideology),[6] Erwin Piscator, required an expensively equipped theatre for his productions in pre-Hitler Germany. In the following note, *The Theatre Can Belong to Our Century,* written for this book, he calls for a theatre equipped to present "epic" dramatizations of the present world and the activity and thought of people in it:

To what century does the "modern" theatre belong? It is housed in last century's opera house. In the busiest theatrical center of the Western World, "modern" theatre, in rented buildings, is crowded into the byways while the film palaces flourish prominently.

The latest new theatre building in New York is the Center Theatre. "Center Theatre" is a wonderful name! But its potential purpose has never been fulfilled. Rockefeller money created a house for the theatre as beautiful as the one for cinema. But no real drama is played there most of the time. The public does not go to it as a dramatic center; it is not the place which could be the home for a great people's theatre, with repertoire from Sophocles to Shakespeare, from Ibsen to Elmer Rice. But the public flocks to Radio City Music Hall.

A film palace in Radio City is the symbol of the people's theatre today. When audiences go into this vast building they find a magic wonderland, complete on a one-dimensional screen. Modern science and technology are freeing the visual imagination. Using all the technical devices supplied by research, the film can cover earth and sky, and dwell under the sea. It can project its message into every corner of the house, reaching those farthest from the screen, "hitting home" with close-ups or with the increased power of voice, music, and sound effects.

But when audiences enter the vast modern Center Theatre, they find the stage set with scenes and actors on the same unimaginative scale used

[6] Epic treatment does not have to be harnessed to any particular kind of politics, so long as it follows the philosophy that theatre can—and should—convey the various elements of a social complex.

since the proscenium box-stage emerged from the sixteenth century renaissance theatre. At most we have musical-comedy splendor on that stage. So little have the old forms changed in a new world! How then can the substance and poetry of our drama help but lag behind our changing ways of life? The last important invention for the theatre was the turntable, first used in the 1850's. And used today for musical comedies! The closed-in stage of naturalism, boxing its little domestic dramas, remains almost immovable. It will not expand, turn, open; it will not be budged. In this rigid frame our dramatists must set a time of storm and change, fall of dynasties, revolutions! Everything has been changed by new techniques; the waging of wars, our behavior, even our thinking. Everything but the stage! Even Shakespeare, using several different parts of a stage to base a world on, unbound by time and place—even he seems more revolutionary today in his use of the stage than do our modern directors. He has more in common with this century than they!

Research in sound holds out unimaginable possibilities in the use of music and voice effects in the theatre. Film projections, the color organ, the interchange on stage between light and "film light," complete motorization of the stage—through these, and how many other, innovations modern creative science can supplant the ancient peep-show. And what would happen if it were to introduce a wholly new architecture, making the stage a *play-machine*, a wonder-world, an arena for battling ideas, perhaps even setting the audience on a turntable, dynamically bursting the static illusion of the present stage? I do not say that new techniques will be the savior of the theatre. I merely say that they can express new dramatic contents by liberating the creative forces of playwrights, directors, and actors.

Pressed by the need for new forms with which to express new ideas, Meyerhold tried to overcome the old static stage by forcing acrobatic movement on his actors. Instead of freeing his stage, he forced his actors into a system of bio-mechanics that often distorted his expression of ideas. Suppose an actor in the Meyerhold theatre had to deliver a long monologue while ascending a staircase. Mere physical limitations would prohibit natural movement; therefore, Meyerhold imposed on the performer a series of contortions to fit the movement to the staircase.

We, however, must learn to fit the staircase to the movement as it were, by overcoming the limitations of the proscenium box-stage. We must become the free artists who can use the physical properties of the stage even as a painter freely mixes colors on his palette. In such a way we would use treadmill, turntable, sunken stage raised and lowered for changing levels,

moving escalator, motorized bridges, elevators. Film and television would be used in combination with the stage, for stage close-ups. Imagine the other fields, both psychological and epic, such combinations would open! Contrasts between the conscious, spoken thought and subconscious thought could be revealed. Monologs could be visualized; the inner colloquy could be externalized, the actor talking to his own screen image. Asides made visible, motives traced to their sources,—all this could be done by contrasting new over-dimensional material (by means of projections referring to the outside world) with human material (the actors on the stage, the actual scene). Film could be used as atmosphere for fantasy, or as moving background, or as chorus: interpreting, prophesying, philosophizing.

This is but an indication of the wholly new theatre which is possible—a theatre that would really belong to our century. Drama can once more be made to function in the lives of great numbers of people, as did the Greek theatre. Once again it can be a place of fascination through exemplification of truth. The education of audiences, optically trained by films, can be used to tremendous advantage. As the background for drama is enlarged, history and our times can be brought to make a drama as epic as our best novels and even as the events in our newspapers. Abstract symbolism, which creates a theatre for the few, could give way before the onrush of illuminating and thrilling expanded new type realism. Artists, their fantasy and their intelligence given fresh inspiration, and their rightful audiences restored to them would then develop a great modern theatre. Does this seem a dream? Vision has often created reality.

Epic style is still in an experimental stage; how it is to avoid laboring a point, piling Pelion on Ossa, and creating a jumbled effect, are problems still to be solved in individual productions. To what extent great plays of the past need more epic expansion will, moreover, remain open to debate. (The tendency is to feel that a masterpiece already says everything worth saying artistically in the theare. For instance, critics of the recent New York Experimental Theatre production of *The Trojan Women* almost unanimously maintained that Euripides' play was a self-sufficient expression of the tragedy of conquest; that, therefore, the Experimental production's costuming of Menelaus and the Greek soldiers in German uniforms and the addition of a prolog by Robert Turney on the conquest of the Netherlands were superfluous.)

It is possible, however, to adapt the "epic" style or to incorporate

some of its elements in comparatively conventional productions. This has already been evident for some years in such work as the Group Theatre's staging of *Johnny Johnson,* Jasper Deeter's treatment of *An American Tragedy* at the Hedgerow Theatre, and Orson Welles's presentation of *Native Son* as a demonstration of a system on trial through one of its alleged victims. (A platform or "apron" on several levels in front of the stage served to represent the trial; the stage behind it, surrounded in many scenes by a brick wall, served for the demonstration, through scenes from the hero's life and struggle.)

Theatre, it will be seen from this chapter, is infinite in its resources. It is by now a flexible and still developing means of expression. Its many styles and their modifications, which every creative director augments or transforms to some extent, are the specific ways of translating the written play into breathing and moving visual drama.

Regardless of style, however, theatre is always an effect that cannot come into existence without the fusion of a number of elements. These consist of a *stage,* generally, though not always, in a theatre building; of the *theatre arts*—scenery, costuming, and lighting, as well as of their mechanics; of *acting*; and of *directing.* Since, moreover, elements of production involve the services of many collaborators, whose work must be co-ordinated, theatre involves *organization.*

An understanding of these elements is necessary before the theatre can be understood as a functioning organism. They will be reviewed in the following chapters as a preliminary survey of production. The actual work of the various theatre workers will, however, be taken up again by practitioners in the field who will demonstrate how they proceed practically.

THE ELEMENTS OF THEATRE

1. *The Stage and the Theatre Building*

THEATRE takes place in a specific place, which consists of an *auditorium* for the public and of a *stage* for the action. Both can be, and have been at various times, almost pristine in their simplicity. The auditorium can be nothing but a field, the rising side of a hill, a street, or a city square; the stage can be nothing more pretentious than a threshing circle, a blocked off piece of earth, a wooden floor raised a few inches or feet above the ground, or a wagon with a deck for the actors. Given that much, and no more, theatre is already possible, provided the actors and the audience are there.

The habitation of theatre becomes more complex in response to a variety of factors—to the increasing abundance of a particular society which wants better accommodations for the audience, to the growing sophistication of that audience, to the progressive complexity of the plays that have to be transfigured on the stage, and to an increasing interest in mechanization and illusionism.

The simplest types of auditorium and stage are frequently co-existent with the most complex. Between 1930 and 1935 in America, for instance, theatre was housed in elaborately complicated plants in Broadway, college and community buildings, but, at the same time, so-called "agit-prop" theatre was being created in streets, lots, and meeting halls by ardent young people who were protesting against the plight of the unemployed or expressing their belief in a new social system.

(*A*) *Simplified Stage.* This type of stage requires little. In the streets it may consist of nothing more than a portable platform large enough to accommodate a few actors. In a room or hall, visibility has to be ensured by a raised acting area or by an elevated arrangement of

seats for the audience. To this must be added some accommodation for actors to make their entrances and exits, as well as some lighting apparatus which will focus attention on the performers and possibly promote the expressiveness of the play. Ingenuity is always helpful in creating effectiveness, but the means employed involve no technical complexities. It is to be remembered only that such staging, like any kind of production, affects the choice of play (and if a play is especially written for it, the structure and quality of the play), and determines the kind of action that is needed. For instance, the "agit-prop" play was short and simple, stage movement was reduced to a few steps and some posturing by the actors, few props were called for, and the characterization required no particular accommodation to a stage environment.[1]

Minor modifications are entailed in better equipped but little theatres. For instance, a small, shallow stage may restrict the actors' movements, and may limit the number of settings to be used. Accommodation to such stage conditions may consist of a division of the acting area by means of light, or the use of screens, drapes, or draw curtains, or a permanent setting with different levels, instead of constructed, multiple sets. For a play in many scenes it may be necessary to resort to a permanent background such as Barnard Hewitt constructed for his production of *Twelfth Night* at the Montana State University. Behind a zone effected by a curtain a short distance behind the footlights, which he used for the seashore and the street scenes, he erected a half-hexagonal permanent unit consisting of three arches (two small ones and one large one in the center), each fitted with draw curtains. When these were closed, the area was used for Olivia's house; when the curtains in the central arch were opened, he had the Duke's palace; when all the curtains were opened, revealing a narrow platform with a sky backing (and small trees between the platform and the sky), he had an area for the garden scenes; when he inserted a little set piece into one of the smaller arches, he provided the stage with the cell in which Malvolio is confined when he is considered insane.[2]

(*B*) *The Theatre Plant.* The Montana State University theatre,

[1] For a modified simplification of production in the college theatre, see pp. 555 ff. which describe Professor Glenn Hughes's Penthouse Theatre.

[2] See the description and illustrations in Barnard Hewitt's excellent book *Art and Craft of Play Production*, pp. 183-185.

however, is already a theatre building in the modern sense, and most productions today are given in edifices which, regardless of their size, are a plant and not a simple platform for a passion. They are intended for indoor performances, for plays of considerable complexity, and for the mechanics of modern scenery and lighting. Most of them are an outgrowth of Renaissance architecture, and are intended primarily for illusionistic staging. This limits their usefulness for non-illusionistic plays, and makes them inadequate for the kind of theatre Mr. Piscator calls for (pp. 90-92). Still, the presentational style can be encompassed by means of some compromise or can be ensured to some degree by erecting a platform beyond the proscenium arch if the expense can be afforded. In the most modern houses this can be supplied automatically by means of an elevator platform; when not in use, it can accommodate orchestra seats, but when these are taken off the platform can comprise a forestage for Greek or Elizabethan plays.

As most theatre buildings are constructed for real estate purposes, or for a variety of collegiate or community services, rather than for some director's special uses, one has, however, to take the building as it is and make the best use of it. When new buildings are built today, the architect can, if he is permitted, make substantial modernizations, but this is an architectural problem that cannot concern us here. Moreover, regardless of the trend toward new theatre building, and regardless of its achievements, the fundamental elements of an indoor theatre are not affected for the purpose of this book.

The building which the practical theatre worker is called upon to use consists of two parts: the *auditorium* and the *stagehouse*. The former affects him by its size, its acoustics, its shape, and the seating arrangement that determines the sight-lines. If its capacity exceeds from one to two thousand seats, it requires adjustments in acting, settings, and lighting to assure visibility. If the sight-lines are bad, so that a portion of the stage is cut off from the view of people seated at the extreme left and right, the set should not occupy the full length of the stage or the acting area should be closer to center. The depth of the auditorium floor must also be considered; if the front seats of a staggered auditorium are sunk too far below the stage, their occupants will not see the bottom of some of the sets and will be looking at the actors unnaturally, as well as uncomfortably. It may be necessary to use steps or platforms in the back area of the stage in some cases to ensure effective visibility.

Auditoriums can be a constant source of vexation to the audience, and must be carefully examined by the producer. Some seats can be removed. Bad acoustics can be improved by using panels, drapes, and some sound-absorbing material. Nor is the problem merely a matter of visibility and acoustics. Some degree of comfort is necessary for the public. Sufficient space between the rows of seats, a large lobby, adequate rest rooms, and particularly ventilation should concern the producer in selecting a house for his play. Where no choice is possible, and where improvements cannot be made without expensive changes, at least the ventilation should be made adequate. Moreover, the mood of a play can be adversely affected by the auditorium and its decorations. There are houses in which it is difficult to play tragedy; imagine playing *Mourning Becomes Electra* in an auditorium embellished with Cupids. There are other houses in which comedy is seen to a disadvantage because the atmosphere is too formal, austere, or depressing. The least that can be done is to repaint the interior and gauge the degree of darkness which is feasible.

Even more important, however, is the *stagehouse*. It is preceded by a pit, a sunken area in which the orchestra can be concealed. It contains the stage floor which starts at the proscenium opening and ends at the backwall. It is divided into two variable parts: the section on which the settings will be built or the playing area, and the section where the scenery not in use will be stacked. The playing area should not be constricted, but the space for stocking scenery and props should also be adequate. It should be large enough, moreover, to have enough off-stage space for the circulation of actors, stage-managers, and stagehands. Lee Simonson suggests that the total width of the stage floor be at least twice, preferably three times, that of the proscenium opening; and that the depth of the floor be from one and a half to two times the width of the proscenium opening. An actor who leaves at the right of a set and has to appear a minute later at the left should not be impeded in his movements. Passages underneath the stage also provide easy access from one side of the proscenium to the other.

To ensure such space beyond the set, much of the scenery (those flats that do not have to be stacked on the stage floor because they are too cumbersome to be flown or because they are not parallel to the footlights) has to be flown when not in use. The ceiling must therefore be high enough for aerial storage; the space should be sufficiently high

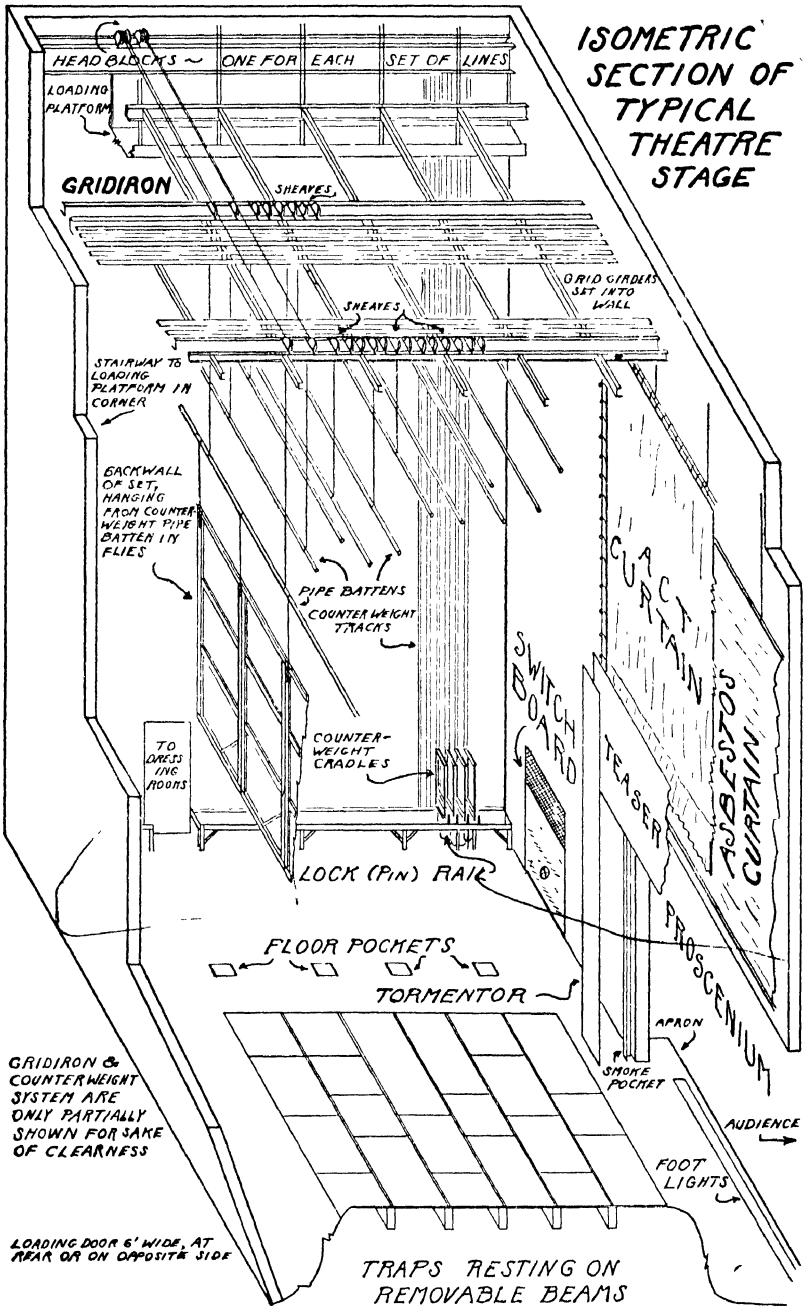
to take the highest pieces of scenery out of sight.[3] Drops are hoisted by three lines or cables running through slots in the gridiron (a wood or steel framework for the pulleys) at the top of the stagehouse. A pin rail (on a narrow gallery or fly floor) on which the lines or cables can be tied, and a counterweight system, to reduce the strain in hoisting the objects, are necessary. Since the modern stage prefers to use architectural forms even for non-illusionistic production, and these cannot be flown, the stage may be supplied with sliding or rolling platforms (*wagon stages*) from about 6 to 9 feet high, each as wide as the proscenium opening. Different sets, complete with furniture and fixtures, can be placed on these platforms and rolled into place whenever required. This device can be best accommodated by a wide stage. Underneath the stage floor, which is largely made of soft wood and contains trap doors for sunken stairways in the basement and for ghostly visitations, disappearances, etc., there is often also a *dock*, a large room for further storage of stage scenery, which is accessible from the carpenter's shop and other areas. Workshops and dressing rooms adjoining the stagehouse further facilitate the work of production.

Since lighting is a prime requisite, every modern theatre also contains a switchboard by means of which the lights in the auditorium and the stage are controlled. It is placed on one side of the proscenium arch, sometimes on a platform so that the operator can see over the walls of the set, and it faces upstage so that he can look at the stage. Where a remote control switchboard is available the operator is placed in a booth in the auditorium, which provides the best vantage point for seeing the entire stage.

Also a part of theatre equipment are the curtains. Behind the proscenium arch and immediately before the front curtain, is hung a *valance* or drapery which cuts down the height of the arch to whatever size is needed by the settings. Behind the front curtain (house or act curtain[4]) hangs a *teaser*, a dark-colored border or drapery that cuts down the proscenium opening and further serves to mask the flies (the space above the proscenium for the ropes and the flown flats) that the sight-lines might otherwise reveal to a portion of the audience. On

[3] Lee Simonson suggests that the height be 2⅓, and preferably 2½ times the width of the proscenium.

[4] This may be of the *drop* or *draw* variety. A *fire curtain, of asbestos,* covers the act curtain.


ISOMETRIC SECTION OF TYPICAL THEATRE STAGE
HEAD BLOCKS ~ ONE FOR EACH SET OF LINES
LOADING PLATFORM
GRIDIRON
SHEAVES
GRID GIRDERS SET INTO WALL
SHEAVES
STAIRWAY TO LOADING PLATFORM IN CORNER
BACKWALL OF SET, HANGING FROM COUNTER WEIGHT PIPE BATTEN IN FLIES
PIPE BATTENS
COUNTER WEIGHT TRACKS
ACT CURTAIN
ASBESTOS CURTAIN
SWITCH BOARD
TO DRESSING ROOMS
COUNTER-WEIGHT CRADLES
TEASER
PROSCENIUM
LOCK (PIN) RAIL
FLOOR POCKETS
TORMENTOR
APRON
SMOKE POCKET
AUDIENCE
FOOT LIGHTS
GRIDIRON & COUNTERWEIGHT SYSTEM ARE ONLY PARTIALLY SHOWN FOR SAKE OF CLEARNESS
LOADING DOOR 6' WIDE, AT REAR OR ON OPPOSITE SIDE
TRAPS RESTING ON REMOVABLE BEAMS

both sides of the stage opening are placed the *tormentors*, vertical borders or screens that mask from the audience the wings or the downstage rough, outside edges of the scenery. They can narrow the proscenium opening when moved nearer to stage center.

The teaser and the tormentors form the inner frame for the stage picture. Because they can be adjusted, they make the inner picture frame adjustable to the size and nature of the settings. Because they conceal everything that belongs outside the set (flies, lights, etc.) they are indispensable to illusionistic productions. A sky drop or a *cyclorama* —a large curtain hung from a horizontal U-shaped frame from the gridiron—encloses the back and sides of the playing space.

The theatre building is, in short, a plant, with most of its machinery and devices in the stagehouse and accessory "shops" adjoining it. It must be supremely functional, and wherever it falls short of sufficient functionalism it requires ingenious adjustments. And, naturally, some familiarity with its structure and plan, as well as a knowledge of how its various parts are to be used, is essential to the theatreworker—to the director who conceives the production, to the scene designer who has to put up his sets on a particular stage, to the lighting technician who has to set and regulate his lights, to the stage-manager and the stage-crew.

Theatre Arts: The Setting

Accessory to both the stage itself and the production as a whole are the theatre arts—the setting, the lighting, and the costuming. It is specialized work, sometimes undertaken by a single person, sometimes by several separate specialists. They have a common aim, however; it is their function to promote simple visibility, to create a sense of environment, and to express the play visually. Scenic design and lighting have, in addition, the important responsibility of providing an acting area or, rather, a variety of acting areas.

Except when exhibited on a bare stage, which is never really bare since the configuration of the stage itself is a set and is made more so by light, every play is supplied with a setting. It may be as simple, architectural, and suggestive as the Greek permanent setting—a stone temple front with wings (paraskenia), supplemented by the outdoor landscape, supplied later with revolving prisms on which suggestive scenery was painted, all this serving as a background for the platform

on which the actors stood and the dancing circle which contained the chorus. It may be as self-contained and literal as a naturalistic box-set which duplicates a room to the very last detail.

There have been many theories of scene design, as many as there are theatre styles in general. In good practice, however, there is only one approach—to express a play's content and meaning effectively. Whenever the set calls attention to itself independently or its values are at odds with the play's values, we have inexcusable virtuosity.

A basic division of principles is posed when some writers on design maintain that the setting must create the specific environment of a play while others insist that it must express its soul or spirit. Actually there need be no conflict between these points of view. The spirit of a play is frequently inseparable from its environment; the Moscow Art Theatre's meticulously realistic setting for *The Cherry Orchard* was the "soul" of the play for this particular production. An Adolphe Appia setting of abstract masses would not have been the play's soul, for its characters were considered the product and reflection of life in Russia. The designer who expresses the spirit of a play will have to evoke a concrete, realistic environment for one kind of work and an indeterminate, abstract picture for a different type of play.

Nor is there any conflict between those who stress environment and those who swear by visual beauty. A concrete background can be beautiful, and a beautiful one can be as concrete as the nature of the play requires. Moreover, beauty in the theatre is expressiveness. No set that is truly expressive can fail to be beautiful, because expressiveness has force, definition, and precision—in short, form. If certain naturalistic sets have been ugly, it is not because they expressed an ugly environment but because they *failed* to express it; they merely represented it. It is one thing, for example, to *reproduce* a cluttered up room; it is another to *express* the state of that room.

There can be no prevalent singleness of style today because we are the inheritors of centuries of theatre, we produce plays written in different styles, and our playwrights themselves do not create all plays in a single mode. Appropriateness is the real principle of scene design, since its sole function is that of illuminating and interpreting a dramatic theme. Beautiful form that does not promote the meaning of a dramatic work or loses it in tenuous abstractions may enjoy a brief moment of glory but is essentially futile. Formal concepts of

beauty are theatrically usable only insofar as they help to reflect and vivify drama; and "drama" in any play is not an abstraction like, let us say, "struggle" or "self-assertion," but the concrete expression of "struggle" or "self-assertion" with respect to particular desires and issues, and generally in a specific environment. Only an abstract play justifies extreme stylization, an expressionistic play an expressionistic design, and so on: otherwise we lapse into sterile estheticism or sensationalism. Otherwise scenic design steps out of the collaborative circle of theatre-making. The décor may distort the play or even reduce it to insignificance, as would be the case if a little comedy were supplied with a Gordon Craig setting. Stylization, moreover, can go to extremes; as Stark Young noted, "Of this kind of décor we may say that if realism in décor can sink to mere photographic repetition and tricky claptrap, this other extreme can drop to mere obvious allegory and platitudes of stylization. . . . The trouble with symbols and stylization is often that, the symbol or motif once found, it is not used with imagination, so that as soon as we have found the key to it, it begins to grow flat and unexpressive."[5]

Appropriateness, indeed, assures expressiveness. However, it is to be noted that appropriateness is to be taken not merely in the absolute and static sense. For audiences in different times and places the settings will be different, because the orientation of the particular audience has to be considered. A speaker will express the same ideas differently to different audiences; he will consider their age and intelligence level, their outlook, and their experience. A setting for the same play will be different in Budapest and New York. Lee Simonson noted this in connection with *Liliom*, which was said to have been more beautifully staged in New York than in Budapest. In the Hungarian capital the background was familiar, and the merest suggestion was sufficient. For the Theatre Guild's audiences the same background had to be "created," it "had to be designed, in order to make it live vividly as part of Liliom's life." Besides, what is familiar for one audience so that it is concretely realistic, may be expressible only as a symbol of universal reality for another. As Simonson noted, ". . . the impulse to invest the tawdry squalor of his [Liliom's] world with beauty was based upon the fact that to the Theatre Guild the play was something more than the story of a thief, amusing bits of first-hand information

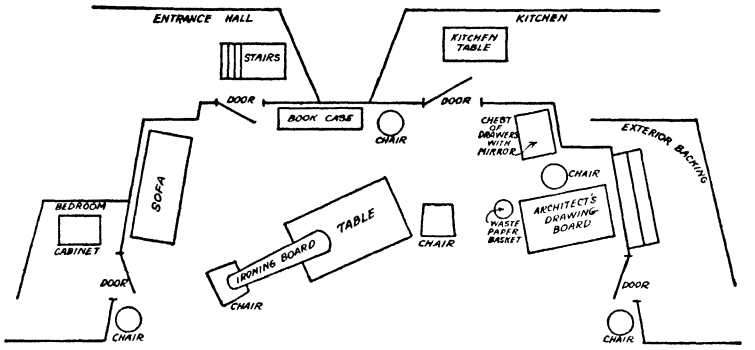
[5] *The Theatre*, pp. 142, 143.

twisted into a highly sentimental ending. Liliom was less recognizable as a fact than as a symbol. The play was worth doing . . . as an expression . . . of a romantic faith in human compassion, eloquent enough to make its poignant allegory."

For the same reason, continental European settings for O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* were more distinctly stylized and visually beautiful than the American design. For its European public the play occurred not on a familiar New England farm but in the soul of man —in his passions divested of much of the characters' local habitation. The remoteness of the environment of French plays and operas like *Don Juan*, *Carmen*, and *Camille* to Soviet audiences justified expressiveness in Meyerhold productions through elaboration and stylization. Finally, settings of the same play will differ in the same country in accordance with what that particular play means to those who produce it. If production A interprets *The Hairy Ape* as the tragedy of the working-class striving to rise out of its submerged state, and production B sees this drama as expressive of the man's struggle toward real humanity, the play will have to be scenically invested in two different manners.

Meaning, then, comes first in the scenic artist's work; and with meaning, which is relative to time and place of production, are associated mood and spirit. Expressiveness or styles of scenic expressiveness stem from an intelligent and relativistic interpretation, and the valid result will necessarily possess "dramatic beauty" for the purposes of the production.

Still, although dramatic beauty is not to be subordinated to formal beauty, it is naturally related to it. Dramatic design will utilize the principles of all good design. Design *balances* masses and colors interestingly (mere symmetry is too monotonous, of course); it arranges light and shade; and it creates attention values by giving prominence to significant objects and spaces. For the last-mentioned purpose, for example, one may arrange some scenery in triangular form with the important object at the apex, or one may focus on the object by other means. For balance we may oppose a series of small objects on one side of the stage to a single large mass on the other side; a small table and a few chairs may balance a large Steinway piano in another corner. A diagonal arrangement will prove more interesting than a horizontal one. Variation and balance is seen in the following:



SCENE DESIGN ACT I SCENE I
"CLASS OF 29"

Unity of effect will be achieved by selecting those scenic details and forms which supplement each other because they are visually or functionally related; they may have the same features, may belong to the same period style (unless the opposite is to be expressed, in which case another kind of unity may be employed), or may contribute to the making of the same environmental idea (of a sumptuous, a merely comfortable, or a poverty-stricken home; a New England, or a Southern home, etc.). The composition will acquire *rhythm* if geometrical figures are subtly repeated in different parts of a set, repeated with enough variation to avoid obvious and monotonous formalism. The geometric form of an arch picked up in various ways in different objects like doors, windows, and chairs; the same or related color, picked up by different objects, like curtains and carpets, the same design in drapes and wall-paper—these and other repetitions of form and color, subtly introduced and contrasted, will keep a setting pulsating visually. Scenic design will create a visually gratifying *form*, even if it is created not for the sake of form itself. Form is possible not merely when the set is appropriately abstract or symbolic. It is just as present when the set is atmospheric, suggesting the mood of a scene, and when plainly environmental, conveying the manner in which the characters live, their means, habits, and dispositions or personalities, the time, the season, the climate, the weather, and the geographical location.[6]

[6] For this purpose authenticity is far less important than the *suggestion* of authenticity. Therefore, beauty of design is possible even in the most realistic mode.

However, scenic design is neither easel painting nor interior decorating. The fact that the setting is made up of different substances and objects, that it has mass, and that it has to be built, calls for practical considerations. The construction of the set must be comparatively easy and economical; it must be possible to assemble it and dismantle it easily; it must be possible to shift it with ease. For these reasons, the scene design must translate itself into such segments as *flats* (flat pieces or screens for walls, ceilings, etc., made of light frames covered with cloth, some of them *cut out* to suggest exterior scenery), three-dimensional *set pieces* like landscapes, stairways, or rising ground, and *drops* consisting of curtains, drapes, and painted canvas which are generally fastened to *battens* (horizontal pieces of wood or pipe) and hung from the flies by means of ropes and pulleys. Since the actors are to move on the set, platforms and stairs must be practicable, and the design cannot ignore mobility by blocking doors with furniture.

Since, however, the scenery must be visible if it is to be of any value to the audience, the design must meet the practical problems posed by the size and shape of both the stagehouse and the auditorium (sight-lines, etc.). The shape of the set may have to be altered by *triangulation* in order to make a side wall visible to the audience when the proscenium opening is narrower than the seating plan of the auditorium. If the stage is narrow, a triangular setting may present only a corner of a room. For better focusing, the upstage part of a set may be pulled together by *jogging* some portions (pushing them in toward the center); portions of the set may be placed on a slant or *raked*; or the floor of the set may be built up on rising platforms. Doors have to be provided at points where entrances and exits can be most effectively produced. Indeed, the variety of practical considerations that must be wedded to esthetic ones is well-nigh limitless.

In short, the set has to be designed not as a static picture to be looked at, and not merely as an acting and environmental area, but as a machine that will function efficiently; in a multi-set play, a machine, moreover, that is transformable,—that can be taken apart, replaced by another machine, and arranged to respond to the different requirements of different scenes. Wagon, elevator, and revolving stages are simply means for realizing the stage design as a machine. Perhaps it is even more accurate to say that the design becomes a plant, increasing in functional complexity with the requirements of the particular play.

The scene designer is not merely a painter but an engineer and architect.

This may be illustrated by the frontispiece drawing of the mobile plant that comprised the settings for Maxwell Anderson's *The Star Wagon* in Guthrie McClintic's New York production. (In this case, the means for creating that plant were physically possible and could be afforded. Where this is impossible, simplifications must, of course, be attempted; whether for better or worse, must be individually determined.)

When Russell Collins and Meredith grasp the handles of the time machine from which the play takes its name—it's a complicated mechanical invention, half refrigerator, half safe, covered with dials, switches and gadgets with a luminous dome of opalescent glass—they are whisked back thirty-five years to a bicycle shop wherein as juvenile enthusiasts they weighed their opportunities in life and love and plotted their futures. In backstage parlance all scenery and properties which, when not in use, are pulled up to the fly gallery on ropes and cables, are said to "fly." The bicycle shop in *The Star Wagon* flies in its entirety, both the set and its properties, with a single exception, simultaneously. Settings of such scope and weight as this one rarely fly but the scenic expanse and complications of *The Star Wagon* is such that it must fly to expedite the manipulation of prior and subsequent settings. That there may be no mishaps as it takes off in its flight, all the properties—old tires, cans, tools, and bicycle frames—are nailed to the set.

The property exception which flies independently of the set is the vintage automobile, proud creation of the young inventor impersonated by Meredith. Cynics to the contrary notwithstanding, this automobile, provided with both a whip-socket and a self-starter, moves under its own power when the inventor gives a demonstration for Hallie Arlington and her ambitious father. It goes careening off-stage at the desired moment, impelled by a dry battery. Once it passes from the view of the audience four stagehands fall upon it, twist its nose about to face the entrance, through which it has just come and, on cue again, the triumphant Meredith re-enters, the car still functioning on the battery. Mr. Meredith and his passenger, the eager Hallie, cannot essay a turn

offstage. They might wind up in the property room, so cramped and littered is the off-stage area. . . .

The breakfast room scene which starts and concludes the play remains intact throughout. On its own platform it is pushed offstage when not in use, together with its properties and furnishings. Both the picnic and the laboratory settings are dissembled immediately as the curtain falls on the final line said in them. Portions of them are carried offstage left, the rest stage right. While the choir rehearsal scene is being played the picnic with its grassy mound and its sylvan cave is being assembled behind it. Once the choir scene is at an end, it is hustled off to the left and the picnic pushed into its place. The choir effects and the attendant décor spend the rest of the night in the property room.

The distance between the proscenium arches at the Empire is about thirty feet, but because a full setting always lies immediately offstage, either to right or left, to replace the visible one, the players are always framed by a scene but twenty feet in width. However, so excellent are the sight lines at the Empire that, despite the limited area in which the players perform, they are always in full view of every member of the audience.[7]

It is because a set must provide an acting area with entrances and exits, and because it requires construction (even, as we have seen, "engineering"), that the scenic designer cannot consider his task completed when he has drawn a pretty picture. In collaboration or with the approval of the stage director, who has the final say in the matter, he must make *ground plans* which will allow for doors, windows, fireplaces, and suitable furniture; he must draw *elevations*; he must make *scale drawings* with all measurements and all specifications for materials and colors. Since the furniture, furnishings and on-stage properties are part of the set, he must in addition specify those that have to be built and those that can be purchased; he must generally make the purchases himself or at least supervise the purchases. And since all this involves expense, he has to budget himself, get estimates, and even bargain with contractors and shops. He is not only an artist in practice but a practical person.

If he also designs the costumes, he must make additional sketches,

[7] Reprinted from "What the Audience Doesn't See at the Empire" by Richard Maney, in New York Herald Tribune, October 17, 1937, with the permission of the author and the New York Herald Tribune.

fitting clothes to figure and personality, and adjusting shape and especially color to the set. When clothes are bought he must combine artistry with practical knowledge of values and prices.

If he also has to light the show, he must, finally, acquire another specialty which although it can be the most expressive of the theatre arts involves a formidable amount of technical and practical knowledge. Even if he does not light the show, he must understand the use of light and its multifarious effects, for ultimately no set and no costume is completely realized until it is bathed in a particular light. If the lighting is changed, the set and the costumes can be decidedly transformed, defeating the designer's purpose and the visual effect of his work. In the modern theatre it is the electrician who is the magician. One cannot create a design without prescribing or at least knowing what he will be doing to it with his magic lanterns harnessed to electricity and controlled by a switchboard on which he will be playing as though it were a piano and pouring visual music on everything that exists or transpires on the stage.

Theatre Arts: Lighting

Light became important when theatre moved indoors. Even before the marvelous development of electricity, efforts were made to control light by placing and arrangement, by regulating intensity in so far as possible, and even achieving some color. This began during the Renaissance. With the advent and progress of electric lighting—so easily controlled, modified, and molded for expressiveness—theatre acquired another dimension. Stage action and stage setting became laved in atmosphere. Moreover, both could now be picked out or blotted out, shaped or softened, made distinct or hazy, in accordance with the intention of the director. Light could now even become a substitute for a good deal of scenery, since it can trace out areas and shapes, make a complete picture out of a few pieces of wood, and even turn one object into another. Imagine the flexibility and phenomenally rapid creativity of light when it can suddenly transform a tree into a skeleton before the eyes of the cashier-hero of Georg Kaiser's expressionistic *From Morn to Midnight.* No technique since the beginning of the theatre has added so much controllable expressiveness to stagecraft. Thoughts, inner tensions, and fancies can be almost instantaneously suggested by light until it becomes a veritable music of the soul. If the stage requires projections of statistics, cartoons, news-

paper headlines, or excerpts and documentary pictures, these too can now be supplied by modern light.

As in the case of scene design, the esthetics of lighting is related to the style, mood, and content of both the play and the director's interpretation of the play. Interpretation through light (which, incidentally, should never disregard the visibility of everything that needs to be visible!) is therefore highly individual. In so far as generalizations can be made, it can be noted only that different types of plays require different general treatments, with many gradations within the general approach.

Thus tragedy generally calls for low-to-medium visibility, with the background suggestive rather than literal, since the tragic mood implies spirituality and universality. Some accord between the tragic mood and nature is feasible, since man's destiny is viewed as important and as therefore related to the world. Since man's inner storms and stresses suggest natural phenomena, nature itself is seen through the lens of the mind's eye, through human temperament, aspiration, turbulence, and passion. The lighting may well localize the individual, picking him out strikingly in accordance with the significance, grandeur, and singular individuality which is his right as a tragic figure. His tensions, crises, and, above all, his climaxes require emphasis through intensification, contrast, and selectivity by light. The general effect should not be depressing but impressive, sometimes austere, and in some respects awe-inspiring. For the milder nuances of what we have called *serious drama*, the effect can be more intimate, more distinctly environmental than atmospheric.

For comedy, the lighting will be brighter, with a visibility from medium to high. Buoyancy and playfulness must be effected in proportion to the presence of these qualities in the play. For farce, the light may be "broader" than for comedy, and since subtleties are less evident the visibility may not have to illuminate the actors' features for revelatory facial play as much as in comedy. In comedy of wit and manners, the light should, as a rule, be sharp and brilliant, though contrasts may have to be indicated; for romantic comedy, suggestive without being weighty; for character comedy, sensitive to the inner state of the characters and therefore more variable. In plays that combine seriousness with frivolity, or tragedy with comedy, variability of lighting is naturally indicated. In fantasies, or fables, atmospheric effects and silhouettes can prove helpful; the shadows in the Theatre

Guild production of *Porgy* provided one of the most memorable moments of the play.

Naturally, too, light must reflect the style of play and production. This is the case even when the light must convey a definite atmosphere and picture. Light, for instance, will not pick out the details of environment sharply for the classic and formalistic styles; it will achieve simplification and formality, and in placing the source of illumination one will have to pay less heed to the natural source of light than to the formal requirements of the play. For the realistic style, on the contrary, the environment will be illuminated scrupulously, and also naturally; that is, the illumination will come from those sources from which it would normally emanate—from lamps, windows, doors, sky-lights, and so on. In romantic or symbolic drama, atmosphere is a prime requisite, and natural illumination will be subject to some arbitrariness and even distortion. *Faust*, for instance, would be lighted to accord with the hero's soul state and particular situation. Different locales will be realized atmospherically or suggestively rather than realistically; in the Walpurgis-Night scene, for instance, light will create eeriness or unnaturalness. In expressionist work the lighting will help to present nature through the subjective state of the character or through the commenting mind of the author, and may distort reality in proportion to the author's symbolic intention. In theatricalist productions, light may be decorative, playful, and rich.

In all types and styles of drama, the audience and the auditorium must be considered. Too much darkness may strain the eye as it tries to pick out the actors; too much glare may be painful, annoying, and distracting. The light must focus attention on the actors rather than on the set, except at those moments when the set has special significance, which generally occurs at the beginning of a play, act, or scene. Different acting areas must be intensified or toned down in accordance with their importance at a given time, depending upon how much attention is to be drawn to an actor or group of actors on some part of the stage. The audience, in short, must be led to the main points of interest, and conversely led away from points of reduced interest. The auditorium, moreover, may be lighted more brightly for comedy prior to the rise of the curtain and during intermissions, and may be proportionately darker for tragedy. The carnival spirit can be induced in an audience by the kind of light that the auditorium contains while

the play is not in progress, and in some cases even while it is in progress—as in a musical comedy or review. When the curtain falls between scenes of the same act, the temporary lighting up of the auditorium must be sufficiently moderate not to take the audience out of its spell. On the other hand, long dark waits between scene curtains are generally too depressing even for tragedy. No audience comes to do penance or to depress itself in the theatre.

The setting must be considered. Light can even substitute for much scenic detail on a space stage, which will contain nothing but a few platforms. Picked out, colored, and shaped by light, the effect can be more than sufficient. This was the case in Orson Welles's production of *Julius Caesar*, and in the Group Theatre's production of *Waiting for Lefty*. In such cases, light can even supplant curtains, since changes of scene can be effected by blackouts and selection of a different—larger or smaller—area for the next scene.

Equally important is the play of light on a constructed, realistic set. Light must convey the color intended by the scene design, must realize the qualities of the materials of construction (or transform them, if necessary), must retain or even provide the shapes of objects as required by the scene designer (since light can cut off portions of a shape or even transform contours). Light can also determine or modify the effect of depth or shallowness. This is, for example, achieved when two different areas are independently lighted by different sets of lights varying in intensity or visibility and in color. There may be many zones of lighting in a play, some dark while others are bright and still others have medium intensity (and these may reveal, in addition, distinct variations of color), provided, of course, that the zones are not arbitrarily separated, and shade off and mingle at the edges. Unless there is a special, expressive, or environmental reason for sharp and unblended division of zones, the effect will be forced and will suggest inexperience or incompetence. The direction from which the light strikes the set or some portion of the set will also modify it; it will, for instance, be flattened out by unlocalized illumination such as is supplied by footlights, whereas localized lighting, as provided from above by spotlights, will create a sense of dimension or plasticity by producing light and shade in the stage picture. Using different colors and lighting a portion of the stage from different angles or positions will also promote dimension.

Finally, light of different intensity, color, and direction affects the

stationary and moving actor or acting group. It will determine the effect of his costume, its contours, material, and color. A complementary color will tone down the costume, the same color in the lights will bring out the color in the costume. Lighting that reduces the visibility of a portion of the body or highlights some part will give different emphasis to the costume design. Make-up will be affected; for instance, red in the light will pick out a healthy, normal complexion; green will convey an impression of unhealthiness, when this is required. The shape of the face will also be modified by directional lighting. It is, however, easier to accommodate the make-up to the lighting, than the other way round, since the lighting has to serve many purposes while the make-up affects only the actor's face.

The performer's presence, his body, is of course the main problem in lighting the actor. He must appear as a three-dimensional person, and to this end must be lighted completely (unless, of course, only a portion of his body has to be seen, for a specific purpose). Equal lighting of all planes will tend to flatten out a figure. Highlights and shadows will effect the necessary plasticity, if his body is illuminated from different angles and from lights of different intensity. The conventional way to achieve this is to combine footlights which illuminate from below and variously placed border lights which illuminate from above; plasticity will be effected by lighting from above while the footlights, properly adjusted, will blend the light and tone down the shadows. Crossing light rays from windows and doors will also lend dimension to the actor's face and body.

For all these purposes, the various elements of light must be utilized to the full, very much as sound is used in music or line and color in painting. The basic qualities of light are *visibility*, *intensity* (the amount of light reflected or transmitted by objects), *color* (the saturation of the object and its brightness), *form* or the distribution of the light and shade, and *mobility* or change of visibility, intensity and color.

A knowledge of how natural light affects our impression of objects is helpful for most purposes. *Composition* uses the various qualities of light to determine their use, to blend or to separate light and color, and to arrange the lighting of a play into an expressive pattern whether this be expressive in an absolute or spiritual sense or in a natural well-motivated, realistically justified one. The lighting of the stage produces a design as much as a set, and here again it is well

to remember that the composition is to be dramatic. Indeed it will be even more dramatic than scenic design because light is a more mobile and dramatic element than flats and curtains, and can therefore be more expressive of moods and states of mind. Light can be somber for tragedy, intense for anguish, ironic by casting a cold glare on a scene, and so on.

Contrast is a particularly dynamic method because it can grade the intensity, meaningfulness, and reality of different scenes or parts of scenes. This is especially evident when a realistic act or scene veers into dream sequences or fantasy as in *Lady in the Dark*, revues, and expressionistic plays.

Contrast, moreover, can become something more than contrast; it can become *conflict*. Light can pulsate with tension, darkness can create agony and dread, juxtaposition or succession of colors (and intensities), or of light and shadow can convey violence and struggle. Light can become a symphony such as the genius of Feder can play out on a switchboard, as if it were an orchestra, with each lamp serving as an instrument. The "livingness" of light can create, as Robert Edmond Jones has said, "an intenser day," a sense of awareness, discovery, and wonder; not only lucidity but also penetration and lyricism, for, again as Jones has said, both in realistic and visionary drama[8] "the world of the theatre is a world of sharper, clearer, swifter impressions than the world we live in."

The poetry and drama of light, however, cannot be effectuated by vision, no matter how inspired. They can be realized only by mechanical and practical means. Lighting is a specialty, a craft and a science that can be acquired only after considerable study. To select and arrange the apparatus of lighting calls for much knowledge and resourcefulness. The nature and the use of lighting instruments have to be mastered practically. A stage is lit with special equipment, which is being constantly improved and augmented.

Conventional equipment consists of: (1) *Footlights*, for general illumination and toning the setting, placed in a trough on the stage floor, or sunk in it, in the front of the curtain. They also illuminate the curtain when it is down. (2) *Borderlights*—lamps hung on a batten (strip of wood), providing general illumination from above,

[8] *Theatre Arts*, February 1941. For purposes of clarity or emphasis, even realistic lighting has its conventional qualities; the sky on the stage will be bluer than in reality, the moon will have a richer hue than normally, the grasses will be greener, the horizon more distinct.

and covering large areas of the stage. (3) *Striplights*—lamps placed in sections behind doors or under sky drops for simple illumination. Also, border striplights blend acting areas. (4) *Floodlights*—hung from battens or upright on stands, capable of flooding portions of the stage locally. (5) *Spotlights*—lamps with small openings and condensing lenses, hung, clamped or placed on a stand at strategic points behind the set, as well as located in false beams in the auditorium ceilings, on the front of balcony, the sides of the house or even in the footlight trough, and used to illuminate any specific area and any specific object, even when it is in motion. Each area, which should be carefully marked out on a lighting plan, is lighted, as a rule, from two directions, one spotlight being supplied with a cool color and the other with a warmer one, in order to produce plasticity.

In addition, many instruments are used for fixtures, room lamps, wall brackets, flickering fireplaces, etc., for special elements of scenery, and for directing rays of sunlight and moonlight on the set. For the last-mentioned purpose there are *projectors*, which can be set at a distance. Projections are specially required to create the effect of clouds, rain, snow, and other atmospheric details. Projections for a short distance are effected by means of a Linnebach projector. For longer distances, use is made of a lens projector of the stereopticon type. Different accessories to this type of projector will convey the desired atmospheric picture. A variety of gelatins is employed to give the required color illumination. Other, more progressive methods of lighting a play are being developed (see pp. 360 ff.).

Lighting also involves considerable practical management of color. The elements are *hue* (color), *brilliance* or *value* (the illumination which intensifies or reduces a color to a *shade*), and *saturation* or *intensity* (the degree to which a color is undiluted or free from its complement). *Mixture of colors* in light produces other colors in accordance with well established laws; for instance, a combination of red and green gives us yellow, of red and blue produces magenta. Complementary colors mixed unequally will produce an unsaturated color, as when a mixture of yellow and blue with blue preponderating will result in an unsaturated blue. *Absorption and transmission,* as when a blue medium absorbs all the colors that compose white light and transmits only blue, are also a factor in the production of color on the stage. For instance, if a yellow medium and a magenta medium are used together, the color that is transmitted will be red. (The red that

is one of the components of yellow will be transmitted by the magenta; green, which is the other component of yellow, will not pass through because magenta can transmit only one color in addition to red—namely, blue.)

An understanding of the nature of color is indispensable to lighting a play. Colors can be produced by mixing, as when two differently colored spotlights are directed at the same area. Directed at some property or part of a setting, the color of a spotlight will be selected and transmitted by the color of the particular property or set. When, for instance, a spotlight directs a yellow light on a magenta-colored sofa, that property will appear red; and when the spotlight throws red light on a blue chair, the chair will appear black (because the red will be absorbed). It will be seen, then, that a great deal of care must be taken in the use of color.

Color in lighting is achieved by the use of *color media.* These may be made of glass, gelatin, cellophane, and other substances.[9] In working with color media attention must be paid to the loss of light entailed by their use. Media of primary color will transmit only a fraction of light. Unsaturated colors, however, transmit considerably more light and are therefore preferred.

Finally, lighting requires *control.* Some regulation can be achieved by the use of accessories in spotlights to change the size or the shape of the area that has to be illuminated. Among these devices is an *iris,* by means of which the diameter of the opening in the spotlight can be reduced from the whole size of the lens to smaller openings. Another device is the *mask,* a piece of cardboard or metal that reduces the size or changes the shape of the light area by modifying the size or shape of the lens opening. Still another, is a *funnel* or black metal cylinder which prevents light from spilling outside the area to be illuminated.

These, however, are minor and local devices for control. Lighting control consists of attaching all the apparatus to switches on a *controlboard*—that is, a *switchboard,* by means of wiring from outlets. A variety of controlboards are in use, and no doubt others will be

[9] Good glass does not break easily, resists heat, and does not lose its color. Gelatin, held in frames in front of the lighting apparatus, is inexpensive and is produced in a great many colors. The color fades rapidly and is easily ruined by moisture or strong heat. Cellophane has so— advantages—it is inexpensive and the color is more lasting, but often several thicknesses have to be used. Other media have been developed—transolene and transpara. Progress is still being made in the field of color media.

developed in the future. They consist of three main parts: (1) *switches* on a board, for opening or closing the electrical circuit; (2) *fuses*, to protect the circuits from blowing out; (3) *dimmers*, for changing the intensity of the light that strikes the stage. The latter are rheostats of different types for creating resistance to the current; by varying the resistance it is possible to vary the intensity of the light. (For types of equipment see Handbook.) By using *master dimmers*, it is possible to modify the intensity of many lamps simultaneously, instead of handling the dimmers separately, which would increase the size of the electrical crew.

Controlboards may possess *direct* or *remote control*. In the former type, which requires many large switches, the total current passes through the switches. In the latter, the switches carry only part of the load, and can be small enough to be handled easily; a considerable part of the current is carried by *contactors* placed elsewhere in the stage-house. *Pre-set apparatus*, by means of which the lighting switches and the dimmers can be pre-set for several scenes, and can be turned on with a single switch, are now also available for producing organizations that can afford them.

By means of the lighting equipment, color media, and controlboards, many desired lighting effects can be achieved. But this requires a carefully planned procedure. A plan for the effective and harmonious placing of the instruments by the crew responsible for the lighting of the show is essential. The plan may have to be altered somewhat, and it will require considerable testing. These changes will also be recorded and made part of the *light plot.*

The notations should include information concerning: (1) the instrument that is to be used; (2) electrical connections for the instruments; (3) special adjustments of the instrument by means of modifying equipments, called *cut-offs* (because they cut off a portion of light), such as irises, masks, and funnels; (4) the color mediums that are to be used; (5) the wattage and voltage; and so on.

Especially important is the *mounting* of the instruments so that they will focus on the designated areas. This does not mean merely the floor of the stage but includes a space of at least five feet above the stage level to ensure that the actors' faces will be lighted. After all the instruments have been connected to their circuits, notations should be made for the switchboard in order that the switchboard operators

may carry out their work efficiently. Finally, when all cues have been established, and when all changes and corrections in the position of the instruments, intensities, and colors have been made during a *lighting rehearsal,* the notations are definitely set. The position and direction of all equipment is carefully marked down on the plan, cues are written down for the switchboard operator, who is trained to respond to them, and all switchboard readings of the intensities finally considered satisfactory are recorded.

There are, in fact, several main stages in the creation and recording of the *light-plot*: (1) the *preliminary plot and cue sheet* for every scene; (2) the *corrected plot and cue sheet* after the lighting rehearsal; (3) the corrected plot and cue sheet *after a technical rehearsal* of the shifting of the scenery, properties, and lighting instruments for the different scenes, including adjustments of color in the lighting so that it will bring out the colors intended by the designer for the sets; (4) the corrected plan *after the costume parade*—the actors going through their business in their costumes—when further adjustments to the color of the costumes and to the makeup of actors are made; (5) the *final light plot and cue sheets* after the dress-rehearsal and try-out (if any).

The recording of the light plot must be absolutely precise. *Ground plans* and *vertical sections* of the stage should contain indications of the light distribution and the location of the instruments, including those which are not on the stage but in the balcony, in the false beams of the ceiling, or elsewhere in the auditorium. A record, preferably in the form of tables, may also be made of all instruments and their use.

In recording the *spotlights* the following headings should be employed: (1) *Item Number* (each spotlight should be numbered). (2) *Make* (the make of the instrument—Kliegl, Century, etc., and the kind of spotlight—baby spotlight, standard size spotlight, or large spotlight, giving the *size of lens*). (3) *Lamp,* giving wattage and voltage. (4) Control or *Cut-off,* indicating what device—funnel, mat, iris, etc.—is used to control the intensity, apart from the control achieved through dimmers. (5) *Dimmer Readings.* (6) *Color.*[10] (7) *Mounting Position,* indicating where the spotlight is placed—whether

[10] There will have to be many notations on color, in the case of spotlights, depending upon the number of scenes and acts.

Item No.	Make	Lens	Lamp	Cut-off	Dim-mer	Color	Mount-ing	Out-let	Additional Notes

in a beam or attached to some batten, etc. (8) *Outlet* for the instrument.

A record of the *floodlights* and *striplights* should include: (1) *Item Number.* (2) *Make* and special type of instrument, including the *number of units* in each floodlight apparatus. (3) *Lamp.* (4) *Reflector* —the type of reflector used. (5) *Dimmer Reading.* (6) *Color.* (7) *Use,* indicating what effects the floods are supposed to achieve. (8) *Mounting Position.* (9) *Outlet.*

Instruments for special effects like projections, chandeliers, desk lamps, and fireplaces should be similarly recorded, but should also contain a notation on the accessories used for the particular effect.

In addition, for the switchboard dimmer, readings for scenes and on cues should be put into table form, as well as all matters relating to the control of lighting.

The formidable amount of technical knowledge required for lighting is merely skimmed in this review of elementary information and efficient procedure. More will be presented in Mr. Feder's account of the approach and procedure of the specialist in light. No amount of discussion can, however, save the practitioner the actual travail of experience, testing, and trial and error. Like all crafts, lighting cannot be mastered without continual experience. As an art, lighting is a matter of personal interpretation (in the theatre, collaborative interpretation, conditioned by the conceptions and accomplishment of the director, scenic designer, and costume designer). As a craft, lighting is a complicated practical execution of esthetic conceptions, for no matter how much esthetic effect appears in a production, theatre art calls for, and is conditioned by, practical execution.

Theatre Arts: Costuming

Clothes make the man, at least in the theatre. They reflect the time and place in which the character lives, his social standing, his present circumstances, and even his emotional state. They are therefore important to the expressiveness of the production.

However, they cannot be used literally on the stage because they may have to be heightened or modified for purposes of expressiveness, as well as for effect on an audience that sees them at some distance from the stage. Moreover, they must be, in one way or another, part of the general design of the production; they must harmonize with its style and mood, and with such elements as the settings and the lighting. Historical knowledge—knowledge of period costumes—is essential, and can be acquired by research in books and visits to museums. But literal transcription is rarely effective by itself. Adaptation to the conditions of theatrical production, to the particular staging of a given play, and to the color of the light used on the stage is necessary. Costuming the play is therefore one of the theatre arts. It is practiced by specialists and by scene designers like Lee Simonson and Miss Aline Bernstein who have added that specialty to their attainments as designers of stage settings.

Costumes generally have to be designed more broadly than for ordinary wear at home; for visibility or projection from the stage, the lines may have to be more pronounced, certain elements of the design may have to be made more noticeable, the colors may have to be modified, and the areas they cover may have to be larger. The clothes must also help to promote the effectiveness of the actor's movements. If these have to be rapid, the material should be light and flexible; if slow and dignified, heavier or stiffer. Especially in the case of period costume, departures from accurate duplication may be necessary in order to avoid impeding movement, since the actor is unaccustomed to many older forms of accessories of clothing. The outlines of his body must also be considered. The necessary shape can be achieved to some degree by astutely designed apparel; the effect of shortness and thinness can be compensated, the impression of obesity can be reduced, and so on.

Individuality can be achieved by proper selection. A character can be picked out and made specially prominent by what he wears and the degree to which it contrasts with the other characters' clothing in

color, design, and the quality of the material. His general attitude or his particular mood will likewise be expressed through dress. Too much attention cannot be given to clothes and accessory details. A man wearing spats or an exceptionally "loud" tie creates a particular impression the instant he appears on the stage. A woman wearing tailored clothes or fluffy, "feminine" ones quickly establishes herself in the audience's mind. By the same means different groups can also be differentiated on the stage.

Dramatic effects may be decidedly aided by costume. Conflicts between groups, as well as individuals, can be supported by marked contrasts in clothing. Alternations between comedy and tragedy, or between farce and romance, in the structure of a play, can be promoted if the designer is selective. Where the characters are symbolic or allegorical or are fantastic figures, the quality and the color can be suitably suggestive. When a mood for the entire play has to be set—for the carnival gaiety of *Twelfth Night* or for the bleak reality of *Desire Under the Elms*—the lavishness or austerity of the clothes is a further consideration.

Costumes can often be rented or borrowed. When this is not possible or feasible, they have to be made according to the designer's specifications. After the performance, they can be stored away and used in other plays. Small changes and dyeing often effect remarkable transformations. Making a pattern, choosing textures, cutting, pinning, basting, fitting, and sewing are practical processes requiring some skill and considerable care, although colleges and little theatres do not necessarily have to rely on professional services.

Designing, however, requires talent, which is largely a matter of sensitivity and insight. The famous designer Valentina stresses (1) the importance of conveying, emphasizing, and vitalizing the wearer's personality, his "uniqueness, a never-repeated psychological and external pattern"; (2) the creation of an effect with costume or introducing the actor to the audience before a single line is spoken by him; (3) concentration on "the essential, the incisive . . . that will etch itself sharply in the imagination and memory of an audience"; (4) imaginative reflection of period costume rather than prosaic duplication, and the utilization of period suggestions such as appeared in her *Amphitryon 38* costumes, for which she indulged in "free play with the flutings of a Doric column or with the cursory line of an Attic vase-painter."[11]

[11] *Theatre Arts.*

THE ACTOR'S ART

THE relation of the various theatre arts to the realization of a production has been sufficiently stressed. However, no element in the theatre approximates the importance of acting. The actor is the most essential figure among the collaborators who create theatre. After all, a play is basically expressed through *his* body, his voice, his gesture, and his movement—through the sum total of his responses. All the forms of décor, as well as the physical nature of the stage, have only one fundamental function—namely, to provide the best conditions for his expressing the play.

The Actor's Accomplishments

His accomplishments must have a wide range. He must master, to the best of his physical endowment, the ability to convey feeling and thought through his body. He must provide a presence and an appearance suitable to his part. In this connection he will be aided by such external means as make-up and costuming (even such obvious means as high heels), and by the extent to which his imagination and his identification with the role can temporarily transform his appearance. He must be capable of expressive movement, and here again his response to his part is an effective factor. Dancing, from elementary to complex forms, may be required of him. He may be called upon to perform vigorous actions such as fencing, wrestling, and even acrobatics ranging from the simple act of leaping over a prop to more difficult feats. He must, in short, possess control over his body. This extends to his voice, which needs flexibility as well as richness. To this end he must have the ability to relax, which he can promote in a variety of ways. His senses and his sensibility must be acutely developed; he must be keenly observant, have a powerful memory not merely for his lines but for his sense impressions (*sense memory*) and

for emotions (*affective memory*). To these qualities he must add general alertness, which will enable him to hear and respond to others, and even to improvise whenever necessary, when cues are missed or when something fortuitous occurs on the stage. He must possess imagination, the ability to live other lives than his own. Finally, he is called upon to perform the paradoxical feat of behaving as if he were speaking spontaneously in a given manner for the first time and yet repeating his behavior night after night as long as the run lasts.

The actor should, of course, know how to use the stage setting—to assume effective positions and take care not to disturb the illusory effect of the set by too close a proximity to the background. Unless the opposite impression is required, he must walk gracefully and effortlessly, starting to move with the foot closest to his objective, and economizing on the number of steps he takes. He must manage different stage levels with ease, standing, walking, or, if necessary, leaping with assurance on platforms, ramps, and stairs; be at home among the furniture (he should skirt it economically and use it easily), and handle doors, windows, and numerous props naturally. He should avoid conspicuous movement or distracting gestures when the attention of the audience is riveted on another actor. He should approach objects that he will handle and doors and windows he will open or shut with as few minor movements as possible.

The actor must know that distance from the audience calls for broader or more expressive movement, gesture, and facial play than in life. He must know that he can make himself conspicuous in some positions and inconspicuous in others. (Downstage center and, when he is facing other actors, upstage center will be emphatic positions.) If he wants to be inconspicuous, upstage left and right are to be used. If he wants to retain some effectiveness there, he will have to find some compensations like raising his voice or moving about energetically. He must know how to use the entire acting area of any scene interestingly, spacing out the stage so that the whole set will be used when he and his fellow actors are on it, thus creating a good picture. He should stand where he can focus on other actors or enable them to focus on him, at the same time providing the audience a view of his face (generally by facing about three-quarters front).[1] His adjust-

[1] Generally, the three-quarter position is avoided when the intention is to create an effect of realistic behavior or unawareness of the audience. But when there is a sound *dramatic* reason, an approximation of this position can promote theatrical expressiveness

ments of focus must be inconspicuous, natural, and easy. Finally, he must be able to draw attention to an object or to another actor by concentration with his eyes, and he must know how to listen to other characters' words as if he were hearing them for the first time—unless he wishes to give the impression that he has heard them before or is bored. In all this, the stage director will be his guide; but the actor can save much work, assist, and execute through his own understanding of the conditions of projecting a play to an audience and through his acquired facility of movement. When the stage has a special shape or character—when it consists of nothing but ramps or is placed, for instance, in the center of the auditorium, as in Okhlopkov's theatre in Moscow or Professor Glenn Hughes's Penthouse Theatre in Seattle, —he must be able to make a quick adjustment to the new conditions of production.

He must manage his voice with the same facility and flexibility, varying his pitch and the quality of the voice in accordance with the requirements of the character he is portraying or of the emotional state demanded of him in a given situation. (Apart from response to situation, it is advisable to vary inflections more frequently than in life because the voice has to be listened to at greater length and under special conditions in the theatre.) He must know how to articulate clearly, how to use his breath for the speaking of long sentences, and how to project sound through controlled resonance. He must be able to phrase his lines, organizing them into groups of related words separated from other groups by pauses of variable duration. He must acquire an instinct for subordinating unimportant words in syntax, like prepositions, conjunctions, and articles; for emphasizing verbs and nouns; and for employing modifying words (adjectives and adverbs) with whatever intensity pertains to their immediate qualifying function. In short, he must phrase according to the sense of the sentence or phrase. (In the sentence "Move to the nearest exit," for instance, the verb "move" calls for the greatest emphasis; the noun "exit" is next in importance, the adjective "nearest" is less important, and "to the" least emphatic. However "nearest" would require more emphasis than "exit," if a character were walking to the farther exit during a fire or fire-drill and were re-directed or reprimanded.) At the same time the music and rhythm of the line must emerge from the actor's delivery, and he must know how to convey the music without jeopardizing the meaning. The sum total of these accomplishments may

become a personal endowment that makes an actor's speech gratifying to an audience.

The above-mentioned speech details, which may be multiplied greatly, cannot, however, be put into effective operation except through feeling for the role, the individual situations, the play, and the style of production. Otherwise all these points can be dismissed as purely academic. The chief requirement is that the actor must speak the lines as if he had never spoken them before; as if they arose spontaneously, regardless of how they came—whether instantaneously or fumblingly, in accordance with the character and situation. Speaking that creates "the illusion of the first time," however, is never a device. It is always the result of emotional identification with the character and the situation. Miss Marian Rich sums up the problem when she points out that an actor triumphs most with his voice when it remains unnoticed as a separate endowment, that "when the voice is entirely attuned to the character it should pass unnoticed."[2]

It is incontestable that the actor needs training in rhythmic movement, gymnastics, voice, and phonetics, as well as some practical knowledge of the stage as his platform and environment. For this reason the present book includes a brief review of "supplementary training," consisting largely of statements of purpose and procedure by specialists in their fields. This training is, however, merely preparatory to more fundamental matters in the actor's art. These pertain to the *creation of character.*

Character Creation

In its largest sense, the creation or evolution of a character by the actor is "living in terms of the theatre." There are two parts to this excellent definition by Mr. D'Angelo, an instructor at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. They are "living" and "theatre." Turning to the latter first, it is obvious that when an actor "lives" his role—and no matter how completely he lives it!—he is living "in terms of the theatre." This has already been noted, in part, in connection with the adjustment of his movement to the stage space and to the fact that he is observed by an audience even when, in realistic productions, he must pretend to be oblivious of the spectators. The patterning of gesture and movement, the timing and special projection of speech, and the repetition of the same behavior during the run of the play

[2] New York Times, May 4, 1941.

make of even the most "naturally" cast person (like Miss Blair who played the young and innocent heroine of *The Beautiful People* in Saroyan's production) an actor not in life but in the theatre.

It is impossible to deny that there are, and there always have been, actors and actresses like Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Gertrude Lawrence, and Katharine Cornell who have only to appear on the stage to be impressive. They have a stage presence, a radiance that belongs to theatre; if they have the same quality off-stage, this merely means that they are theatrically vital personalities inherently. (They may have acquired such personality not without much training and experience, but at least by now that personality is inseparable from their character.) If they were nothing more (or less) than themselves as they stood in front of an audience, they would prove more satisfying to an average audience than many an actor who transformed himself completely for his role. ("Glamor" and "personality" are theatrically appealing apart from acting art.) Occasionally they do precisely this—up to a point! All Miss Cornell had to do in *The Doctor's Dilemma*, according to some enthusiastic reviewers, was to be herself in a period costume, and the result was entrancing. Even when such actors transform themselves, it is doubtful whether an audience loses or even cares to lose the experience of seeing Miss Cornell or Miss Fontanne. There are radiant, magical personalities that the audience enjoys retaining as personalities, and if this lends magic to the theatre it is idle to protest that the actor should disappear in his role. Here the role disappears in the actor's personality, so to speak, but the effect is still "theatre." This is not "life" but "living in the theatre" to a very high degree. In an important sense, in fact, no interesting actor ever loses his personality; he simply builds a character or role on the foundations of his own personality.

Nevertheless, even with the possession of a radiant personality, *an actor evolves a character.* Good actors are never merely themselves or merely posturing. They merely add the extra dimension of their personal magic to their role—theirs is acting *plus*, they too evolve a character. Sometimes this seems almost no acting, because the performer has had to undergo no apparent transformation—as in Miss Cornell's playing in *The Doctor's Dilemma.* (Actually there is, of course, much acting even in this role,—arrangement of movement, timing, intensification, and so on!) Most often, however, these personalities also take great pains to transform themselves and identify themselves with

their role, and their most notable achievements come when they make this transformation and identification most completely—as in Alfred Lunt's performances in *Idiot's Delight* and *There Shall Be No Night,* and Helen Hayes's in *Victoria Regina.* In any case, an actor succeeds in a role—whether he is playing formally (that is, in some stylized manner, from expressionism to Meyerhold's "bio-mechanics") or realistically—to the degree to which he becomes for the audience the character he is playing. (In stressing the phrase "for the audience," we call attention to the fact that the degree of identification of the actor with the role depends on the audience's standards of naturalness. Many an excellent actor of older times, whose acting struck his own audiences as the very quintessence of naturalness, would appear affected and unnatural to us. His declamatory style and posturings, which were accepted as a matter of course by his own audiences, would seem extravagant to our own playgoing public, which is attuned to a different attack.)

How can an actor become a character for others unless he becomes that character for himself? To what degree can he, and must he, become that character, by what means can he achieve such identification with his role? It is these questions that modern students of acting try to solve.

Related to this question is that of *feeling.* Should the actor feel, and to what degree? This has been widely debated by different authorities, and different answers have been made by many actors. Diderot, in his *Paradox of Acting* (1770), Coquelin, Gordon Craig, as well as some contemporary actors, maintain that the actor does not have to succumb to feeling—that he does not have to feel as his character feels in order to make the audience feel. Talma, Duse, Salvini, Stanislavsky, Nazimova, and others maintain that he must feel.

The argument vanishes, however, when one talks of imaginative, artistic feeling. "Because the realization of character is a flesh and blood embodiment of an imaginative being, the accompanying feeling must differ from that feeling derived from life contact with people and things. . . . The actor's feelings are in a sense real, but imaginatively real, and spring from the selected and perfected life of the stage."[8] That may be the reason why an actor will not be so choked up with feeling in an emotional scene that he loses mastery of his body and voice, which is precisely what might happen in off-stage life; why he can

[8] *The Actor Creates,* p. 60.

condense a character so that only its essentials appear; why he can repeat his reactions at will. But, as Coleridge pointed out when he distinguished between "fancy" and "imagination," imaginativeness involves a basis in recognizable experience, in reality. Imaginative feeling is possible when an actor bases his stage reactions on actual ones, not imitatively but creatively. (See *sense* and *affective memory.*) In imagining a being other than himself, he expresses that being through his own body and mind. Neither his body nor his mind is a *tabula rasa*, an absolutely clean blackboard on which one can write what one pleases; it resembles more nearly a *palimpsest*, on which much has already been written by previous experience. The actor's imaginative creation draws upon his own resources of reality. That is perhaps the most general basis for his identification with the character he plays. This is true both when his nature bears a strong resemblance to that character and when it does not.[4]

An actor's voice will mean more than it utters, his body will remain dynamic even when stationary, his reactions will be spontaneous to the extent of creating the "illusion of the first time," his expression of his part will seem genuine only when he draws upon his inner resources for the imaginative creation that characterizes his art. But this achievement cannot be, as a rule, easily, and never casually, achieved. The ensuing chapter on the actor and his basic approach attempts to clarify the problem and the procedure. Because good acting is primary in the theatre, and because it is the element that is least readily available to the non-professional stage, it receives comparatively extended discussion in this book. The best preparation for the production of plays is to train the actor as well as time and circumstance permit. For convenience this training will be considered under two categories: (a) training for the evolution of a character, and (b) general training of the body and voice.

[4] Mr. D'Angelo expresses this when he writes "Life is the storehouse from which theatre draws its nourishment. . . . Even though forgotten, an experience may lie dormant in memory. All it needs is some other experience to restore it to consciousness." *The Actor Creates*, p. 57.

ACTING AND THE TRAINING OF THE ACTOR

Lee Strasberg

Nature and Development of Acting

THERE can be no adequate facing of problems in the training of actors unless we possess some sense of values and standards—some sense of the kind of actors and acting we wish to create. In the other arts, we are fortunate in possessing those standards not through a unanimity of expressed conjectures, descriptions, anecdotes, and opinions, but in the actual works of the masters of the craft. The original treasures are open to all students. Despite his own pre- and misconceptions, each student—say, of music—is able to examine all the treasures, make his own evaluations and comparisons. But of even more importance is the ability to evaluate the immediate contemporary activity in the light of the accumulated experience of the past. Imagine the growth in our appreciation and understanding of acting if we could see and compare not only the outstanding performances of this season but at the same time other performances, such as Pauline Lord in *Anna Christie*, Ben-Ami in *Samson and Delilah*, Lionel Barrymore in *Laugh, Clown, Laugh*, John Barrymore in *Hamlet*, etc., and if to that we could add Edmund Kean as Shylock and Othello, Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth, Garrick in *Lear*, and so on. Lacking in this possibility, we are inevitably thrown to the mercy of popular response, which is no true indicator of values and is besides often very misleading.

It is easy to solve the whole problem by saying that we are interested in "good" acting. This means no more than that the acting we like we call "good." Acting, however, has an objective history, a growth, and a development. We have found out things in acting. We

have made inventions and discoveries. People fought and worked for these changes. The audience did not necessarily accept the changes as easily as we might imagine. The elements in acting we now take for granted, people had to struggle, fight, and starve for. "Good" acting did not always exist. It is not a spontaneous development, but is derived from the concrete activity of people in the acting profession who had to struggle for what they believed. The struggle is not yet finished.

Modern theatre starts with the Shakespearian theatre. Other influences before it have valuable lessons to teach us. The Greek theatre has had a vital effect on our own. The Oriental theatre and the preliterary *Commedia dell' Arte* offer instructive suggestions. But the Elizabethan theatre or primarily Shakespeare—the master playwright —is still the central pillar of living theatre throughout the world. The rise of the modern theatre is also the rise of modern acting, to an extent hitherto unsuspected. We are accustomed to quote Hamlet's speech to the players as an abstract universal statement of what acting is. Would Shakespeare, who a moment later castigates the clowns for *ad libbing* "though in the meantime some necessary question of the play be then to be considered," have stopped to make a generalized statement of the art of acting? Actually the speech was both more and less. It was not intended as an abstract statement. It was the fighting speech of a protagonist taking sides vigorously in the rise of modern acting. It was propaganda for a new kind of theatre and acting. "Hamlet's advice to the players before they acted his plays was a natural opportunity for observation on the rivalries of the Chamberlain's men (Shakespeare company) with other companies, and Shakespeare used it to state the dramatic creed of his own company and for an attack, hardly disguised, upon Alleyn (the rival leader) and his hyperbolical methods."[1] Shakespeare is also concerned with his competitors, the aristocratic art of the children's companies, "an aery of children, that cry out on the top of questions, and are most tyrannically clapped for't! These are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages,—as they call them,—that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come hither." Shakespeare knows and recognizes that his other opponents—Alleyn and his company—are in high public favor. "O there be players that I have seen play—and heard others praise, and that highly," and he appeals his case to the judicious,

[1] G. B. Harrison. *Shakespeare Under Elizabeth,* p. 273.

"the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others."

What were the main characteristics of Shakespearian acting as opposed to that of the rest of the Elizabethan theatre? For it is becoming ever more clear that Shakespeare has been considered too much as an individual artist! He must share his repute with the theatre and company he was a part of, which presumably had a distinct style and merit. "The children could hardly have acted satisfactorily Tamburlaine or Shakespeare's Richard III."[2] "Tho there is no doubt whatever of the excellence of boy actors in women's parts and of their power to give them life."[3] On the other hand, while Edward Alleyn's "technique of robust declamation and grandiose gesture" were suited to the parts Marlowe wrote for him, we have seen what Shakespeare thought of his style. "When the actors have posed and moved and spoken their lines magnificently they will have done all Marlowe asks for," adds Granville-Barker. Obviously, Shakespeare demands more. For Shakespeare is not satisfied to have his lines "mouthed," to have his actors "tear a passion to tatters," to see them strutting and bellowing even though successfully. He sees all life in terms of action and character, not as acting and bellowing. To Shakespeare everything is alive, and active. The moon instead of being just wan, silvery, watery, inconstant, fruitful and so forth becomes "The visiting moon." Verbs are used about objects which are motionless or abstract:—

I *stole* all courtesy from heaven
And *dressed* myself in such humility
That I did *pluck* allegiance from men's hearts.

So weary with disaster, *tugged* with fortune.

I was never so *bethumped* with words.

How he did seem to *dive* into their hearts.

That pale, that white-faced shore,
Whose foot *spurns back the ocean's roaring tide.*

Where the Norwegian banners *flout the sky*
And *fan* our people cold.

H. Granville-Barker and G. B. Harrison, *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, p. 19.
Ibid, p. 20.

His description of the behavior of people off stage is perfect:

> Why he stalks up and down like a peacock—a stride and a stand: ruminates like a hostess that hath no arithmetic but her brain to set down her reckoning: bites his lip with a politic regard, as who should say "There were wit in this head, and t'would out".—*Troilius and Cressida* III, 3.

He visualizes completely a scene that takes place off stage as in Ophelia's description of Hamlet's behavior to her (II, 2). He writes dialog for an off-stage occurrence as in Lear IV, 3.

> Once or twice she heaved the name of "father"
> Pantingly forth, as if it prest her heart;
> Cried Sisters! sisters!—Shame of ladies! sisters!
> Kent, father, sisters. What i' the storm? i' the night?
> Let pity not be believed!—

He writes a complete description for a number of people speaking and acting as in *Love's Labor's Lost* V, 2.

He knows what Romeo is doing when he is quiet and it is through the words of his partner that we learn he lies grovelling on the ground. (*Romeo and Juliet* III, 3). He knows the difficulty actors face at the reception of sudden news, and always helps them. When Macduff receives the news that his family is slain, he remains quiet. It is through Malcolm's words that we know what Macduff is doing. He has pulled his hat over his brows in a gesture of inexplicable pain and restraint. (Macbeth IV, 3). He marks the passage of time in his scene, he knows when the actor is putting on his armor and the time it will take him, and gives him the necessary speech to cover it. In other words he sees *characters in situations*, and that is why his plays are actor-proof. The character and the situation are written into the words, or rather, as Meyerhold has put it, the words spoken from the stage are only the patterns woven on the canvas of movement. Shakespeare knows the actor's tricks to excite the audience:—

> [To] quake, and change thy color,
> Murder thy breath in middle of a word,
> And then begin again, and stop again,
> As if thou wert distraught and mad with terror?
> Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedians;

> Speak and look back, and pry on every side,
> Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,
> Intending deep suspicion: ghastly looks
> Are at my service, like enforced smiles;
> And both are ready in their offices,
> At any time, to grace my stratagems. (*Richard III*, 5.)

But that is not what interests him; to him all the world's a stage, and "the purpose of playing, whose end both at the first, and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature." It is not that Shakespeare takes exception to his competitors' ranting and bellowing because he has a more *effective* way of acting. Alleyn, leader of the rival troupe, was the richest actor of his time. It is not that he demands that the speech be spoken "trippingly on the tongue" because it is a more effective way of acting. He realizes well the appeal that the strutting and sawing of the air has to the "whole theatre of others." But he has blazoned forth a new slogan, one which is not necessarily more effective but is *truer*. "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action." In other words: do not act to overawe and excite your audience, but act in order to create for them the image of truth, of nature, of a man, "in gait and accent." With Shakespeare and his fellow craftsmen modern acting is born. This does not mean that acting has no more to learn or that Shakespeare's actors were like our modern ones. A long time is to elapse before the slogan inspired by Shakespeare is universally accepted. And even in our day, while its principle is completely accepted verbally, it is in practice still too often denied. And the struggle which went on when modern acting was being born, still rules: acting for effect—and acting that aims to create the image of truth; acting for outward show—and acting from inner conviction.

The next great advance in the history of acting comes with Molière. Molière was not only, like Shakespeare, a member of his own company but was its leading actor and its director. Reams have been written about the actor Molière, about his derivation from the *Commedia dell' Arte* and the effect of that style upon his playwriting. Sentimental pictures have been woven about the glory of France, "every inch an actor," who lived and died upon the stage and was refused burial by the unsympathetic church. But that Molière was a rebel not only against the rest of the world but within and against the

existing standards of his own profession, has not been clearly enough indicated. While the facts are simple and well known, they have not been sufficiently utilized either in an evaluation of Molière the playwright, or of their significance in the history of acting. The opposition of Molière to his competitors was not based on the difference between the lowly farce actor and the protected King's tragedian, but assumed artistic proportions of which both Molière and his opponents were keenly aware. The struggle was not between "good" and "bad" actors or successful and unsuccessful ones, but between *different kinds* of acting. "To what company," says Molière, "will you give it [the play]? What a question! To his Majesty's servants [Molière's rivals]; they alone are capable of doing justice to plays, the rest are ignorant persons who recite their parts just as they talk, and do not know how to make the verses tell, or to pause at a fine passage; how can people know the fine passage if the actor does not emphasize them, and thereby indicate that a burst of applause is expected."(*Les Précieuses Ridicules.*[4]) Mind you, we know that the rivals did receive the applause they coveted; Molière could not, therefore, complain because they were ineffective. We know that Molière was also not averse to receiving applause for his efforts, so that the difference between his style and the conventional one lies entirely in the methods utilized—a difference in *artistic* behavior. Molière as the actual head of a theatre, seems more aware of it than Shakespeare, or, at least, is more outspoken about it. He has left us in *The Impromptu at Versailles* a fairly complete picture of what he did not like in his opponents' methods.

As for what he himself stood for, it is only generally clear, as in explanations like the above where by inference his own procedure is evident. But we are in the fortunate position of possessing a description not of Molière himself but of a pupil of his, the famous actor Baron, who was besides more successful than Molière himself in utilizing these methods not only for the playing of comedy but also for tragedy, in which field Molière himself never succeeded. This description of Baron is from the pen of an Italian actress who describes a farewell reappearance of Baron. One part of the Parisian public wanted him to be hissed because "He *speaks* and does not *declaim*. . . . He always listens to his fellow-actors, a thing to which actors, as a rule, pay little heed, and his attention is accompanied by such move-

[4] Carl Mantzius, *A History of Theatrical Art*, Vol. IV, p. 123.

ments of face and body as are required by the nature of the speeches to which he listens. [cf. Shakespeare!] When speaking, his talk is real conversation. For instance, in *Polyeucte*, where he speaks of the persecution of the Christians, or in *Les Horaces*, the first scene with Curatius, which is nothing but a friendly interchange of polite speeches, he conversed with the most delicate naturalness . . . He tries by every means to avoid the rhyme." To which Mantzius, from whom the above is quoted[5] adds: "The struggle which is ever breaking out afresh between grand declamation and natural speech, here for the first time finds its distinct and conscious expression in France, and what was generally said in praise of Baron was repeated in almost similar words of Talma about a century later." To this it may be added that the struggle is much more than one between "grand declamation" and "natural speech," for these different ways of *speaking* are essentially two ways of looking at humanity. And the actor is concerned with his method, not because one procedure will bring him more immediate success than the other, but because one is true and the other false. One is right and the other is wrong; the better is the one which is truer.

The next great advance in acting was again made in England in the middle of the eighteenth century, by David Garrick. With him we reach the crucial point when the acting which we may for want of a better term call "Shakespearian" becomes the most critically accepted, if not the most actually practiced. In the eighteenth century, people begin to think of human beings not as members of a social stratum but as individuals, and the emphasis is placed on individual characterization. This is the problem actors are called upon to face. The actor faced it before any of the other artists, and he achieved it sooner perhaps than the great English novelists who created the tradition of the realistic novel. Acting is now based on a deeper understanding of man and man's emotions. We possess a number of descriptions of Garrick as King Lear, and through the things that are prized in it we get a sense of what the people of his day saw. We are fortunate also in possessing Garrick's own notations as to why he did certain things, and how he came to do them. Someone describing him says, "It was Nature herself wrought into it. He sustained the feeling of the character without ever once departing from the simplicity of Nature." This type of description is very vague. But we have a descrip-

[5] *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 240 ff.

tion by Garrick as to why he played Lear's madness as he did, and through it we get an idea of what that really meant to him.

It seems that Garrick was acquainted with a man who had a daughter of two. One day this man was playing with the baby by an open window when suddenly he accidentally let her fall through his hands down to the courtyard below. He let out a horrible screech and never recovered his senses. Since he happened to have a considerable fortune, he was allowed to remain in his house the rest of his days. Here he spent his time playing with an imaginary baby, letting her fall through the window and screeching horribly. Garrick often went to watch this scene at the nursery, and that is what gave him his first idea as to how to play Lear's madness. Therefore instead of portraying madness with the usual outburst, he portrayed it after studying the nature of madness. He gave no sudden starts or violent gestures, but misery was depicted on his countenance throughout. He presented a pitiful picture of woe and misery. That came from observation, necessitated by the fact that the actor tried to portray an individual and not a stencil copy of madness. He did not play merely for the sake of the audience applause but to create a true being. That form of acting is concerned not with the conventional gesture that goes with a certain line but with making each line sound alive and truthful—by creating the situation from which the words stem. Garrick became a symbol of naturalism to artists all over the world, as someone who opened their eyes to the whole of reality. He had the greatest influence of any artist of his day, and it extended into the arts of painting, music, and literature. Garrick, says Burke, "was the first of actors, because he was the most acute observer of nature I ever knew."

The achievements so far described are utilized up to the present. The actor acts as a character, he speaks instead of declaiming, he reacts to what his partner does and says, and he tries to create the illusion of a real person. *But the co-ordination to the rest of the stage is still weak*. The idea that the actor is only part of the whole creation and that he has obligations to the other actors, and that the final artistic result can be achieved together with the other actors and not by himself alone, is still to be realized. This realization started about the period of the French Revolution, about 1780-90, and is most clearly represented by a group of actors of the classic German Theatre. We possess the minutes or protocols of the actors of the Manheim Theatre for study. This theatre was under the patronage and direction of Baron

von Dalberg. An actor's council was formed consisting of the five leading actors of that theatre, and in the council they discussed their grievances and problems. Every trifle, every petty detail as to a certain actor's temperament or wardrobe, was discussed, but that was not the main thing. Count von Dalberg would set the actors various tasks. He made them study, think, and discuss various phases of the art of acting and the relationship of what was happening in the world to acting. He would, for example, give them the following problems: "How are French plays to be done in order to be performed for a German audience?" "Are there rules for acting?" "Are there rules for pauses?" "What is the better reaction, applause or no applause?" "What is Nature?" This discussion about Nature is one of the most interesting because it is still vivid and true today. One of the actors made the important distinction that Nature can be interpreted in two ways. When one says of an actor "He is natural," it means that he is quite relaxed, speaks easily and conversationally. But if one says "Only Nature could create it," it means that it is something very extraordinary which not every one could do. It is not natural but *something difficult, something we have to create. And the kind of nature (or reality) we want on the stage is that which is not only natural but which only Nature can create.*

From now on, the development moves in two streams: On the one hand, an intensification in the use of the actor's interpretative faculties, and a concern with the creative processes—especially the subconscious emotional resources; and on the other, a steady co-ordination of the individual actor to the whole, to the play, to the unity of production. The one stream leads through the great star performances of the nineteenth century—from the virtuosity of Mrs. Siddons, Edmund Kean, Salvini, Duse, and others, to the collective accomplishment of the Moscow Art Theatre. The other leads through the producer-actors —from Macready, Phelps, Charles Kean, the Meiningen Theatre and Antoine to the Moscow Art Theatre.

It is no accident that the Moscow Art Theatre is considered the first theatre of the world; for in it meet the two streams of theatric development—the concern with the development of the individual actor, and the problem of the actor's relationship to the play. These are the twin problems—*creation* and *interpretation.* The achievement of Stanislavsky and his actors does not derive out of thin air. It is the summation of the achievement of individuals and groups during

the whole course of theatric history from Elizabethan times. Stanislavsky's concern with the actor's craft and creative processes is no isolated manifestation. Faced with the problem of organizing actors into a permanent association, he simply faced the problems others had worked on before him; he merely did this more consciously and more coherently. Faced with the problem of creating in terms of not only the individual virtuoso but the collective talent, Stanislavsky laid the foundations of our modern technique. This he did by rediscovering for himself practically every rule of actor's creativity and co-ordinating these principles or procedures into a reasonable structure.

If the development sketched in the preceding paragraph is somewhat condensed, it is only because I hope on a future occasion to enlarge upon it. The achievements of the earlier periods have by now become part and parcel of actor's thinking, if not of his practice. The achievement of the more recent periods is still to be properly digested. Clare Eames once divided acting into three dimensions. The average actor gives us *the line the character is supposed to speak*. The good actor gives us *both that line and also what the character is thinking* about when he speaks the line. But all of us have not only a conscious thought behind our words, but *an unconscious, or, rather, subconscious emotional thought.* This emotional undercurrent, this subconscious life of the character "adds a third dimension to the art of impersonation, and, in my experience it is a new thing." It was this illumination Coleridge may have referred to when he spoke of Kean's acting as "reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning." The earlier periods made most of their advance along the first two avenues; the more recent periods have contributed most to the third dimension.

The Actor's Training

If the history of acting, as we have outlined it, has been a story of growth, struggle, and development, what about the training of actors? Has it kept pace with the development of acting? Unfortunately not. Most of the advance was made by individual talents. Their work was dependent upon their highly personal talent and therefore did not lend itself easily to imitation. When efforts were made to make their discoveries available to the acting profession generally, they ended in codification of mechanical rules and principles which often had to be swept aside before any new progress could be made.

The training of actors has remained about where it was over two

hundred years ago in the pre-Garrick tradition. The earliest acting instructions differ very little from their modern examples. The earliest English discussion is probably contained in Ch. Gildon's "The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton, wherein the action and utterance of the stage, bar and pulpit are distinctly considered," 1710, of which it has been said that "In the pages of this book is to be found half the reason for the decline of English tragedy toward the end of the seventeeth century."[6] Can the same terrifying judgment be made of most of our present acting manuals?

Here is what Mr. Gildon tells us:—

> To express Nature justly, one must be Master of Nature in all its appearances, which can only be drawn from observation, which will tell us, that the Passions and Habits of the Mind discover themselves in our Looks, Actions and Gestures.
>
> Thus we find a rolling eye, which is quick and inconstant in its motion, argues a quick but light wit; a hot and choleric complexion, with an inconstant and impatient mind; and in a woman it gives a strong proof of wantonness and immodesty. Heavy dull eyes, a dull mind, and a difficulty of conception.
>
> Eyes inflamed and fiery, are the genuine effect of choler and anger; eyes quiet and calm with a secret kind of grace and pleasantness are the offspring of love and friendship.
>
> The demission or hanging down of the head is the consequence of grief and sorrow.
>
> A lifting or tossing up of the head is the gesture of pride and arrogance. Carrying the head aloft is the sign of joy, victory and triumph.
>
> A hard or bold front or forehead is looked on as a mark of obstinacy, contumacy, perfidiousness and impudence.
>
> Eyes lifted on high show arrogance and pride, but cast down, express humbleness of mind.
>
> Denial, aversion, nausea, dissimulation, and neglect are expressed by a turning away of the eyes.
>
> Lifting of one hand upright, or extending it, expresses force, vigor and power.
>
> Putting of the hand to the mouth, is the habit of one that is silent.

[6] R. G. Ham, *Otway and Lee*, p. 35.

Now compare this in one of our elementary manuals of acting printed in 1934 by one of our reputable publishing houses:—

> The student will realize the importance of the eye in expression, if he will think of it as the show window of the individual mentality.
>
> In anger and jealousy, the eye is constantly in motion, looking out on all sides as if on guard against an attack.
>
> In shame, humiliation, mortification, despair, remorse, despondency, melancholy, and indeed in all emotions that result from a depressed condition of mind, the eyes are apt to look downward with drooping lids; whereas the ecstasy of all those emotions that arise from exhilarating sensations, love, joy, hope, adoration and other benevolent emotions, is likely to turn the eyes upward. . . .

And here is another example from a handbook that has many correct ideas and intentions printed in 1934, reprinted in 1937 and widely used:

> The eyes and the mouth are the only two features capable of independent posturing—though the nose can move to some slight extent, in sniffing, for example . . .
>
> Physical and mental states are reflected clearly in the posture of the head. When the head is held erect, self-esteem is manifested, when it is dropped, the indications of pride are removed . . . A hero or heroine with slumped head and shoulders loses spirit. One cannot in this posture give the impression of lungs filled with "vital air."

This lack of development in the actor's training has for its reason the simple fact that the theatre had developed no need for it. The actors who made the advances felt no need to pass their methods down to other actors. With the rise of the ensemble-idea in the middle of the last century and the creation of a permanent group such as the Moscow Art Theatre, the need for training arises within the theatre itself, and the basis for the modern training is quickly created.

Another distinct drawback has been the principle upon which it proceeded. This has been the assumption that "it is with the characteristic outer manifestations of an emotive reaction that the player is chiefly concerned, because in them only lie those elements of the expression of feeling which are visible to his audience. All he can do is select

and rehearse in advance a few of the more effective manifestations which have come under his observation."[7] This has led to the manuals which saved the player the need for observation and gave him ready-made pictures of the postures and gestures for the expression of any thought or feeling or emotion, and graphs for his vocal pattern.

This whole approach, already beginning to go out of style when the modern realistic theatre arose, was suddenly bolstered in the early years of this century by the James-Lange theory of emotions, which not only laid the stress upon the outer manifestation but claimed that the consciousness of these outer manifestations was the emotion . . . "You are afraid because you run—not you run because you are afraid." This proved such a wonderful cushion for the teachers of acting that it has distilled itself like poison as a basic premise, despite the fact that research in modern psychology has gone far beyond it. The theory has not withstood the test of experimental evidence; and in the cognate field of the expression of emotions, experimental work tends to show that there is no expression typical of any situation—that "the same bodily responses in different situations will be called by different names on other than the emotional attributes of the entire situation."[8]

While it might seem that from the actor's point of view the possession of purely external media for the expression of emotions, neatly catalogued into illustrations, should be a great boon, the exact opposite is true. An actor's impulses and resources are completely choked by a predetermined physical pattern. Many actors become completely unable to act if they are shown exactly what to do. "The moment a director starts to act out Miss Hayes' part for her she becomes self-conscious" even if what she has been shown is perfect. Miss Ina Claire "would 'dry up' if a director tried to show her what to do."[9] While there is as yet no complete theory of emotion and emotional expression that has been accepted in psychology, the work so far done by Cannon and Carney Landis and others has many valuable lessons for actors. But the James-Lange theory and its unconscious acceptance can do no more than lead the actor back into the wilderness of outmoded and conventional attitudinizing, than which there is no greater hindrance to creative acting.

[7] S. Selden, *A Player's Handbook*, Crofts, p. 20.

[8] Philip Bard and Carney Landis, in the *Handbook of General Experimental Psychology*, edited by Carl Murchison, 1934.

[9] See Morton Eustis, *Players at Work*.

An Approach to Acting

The modern training of actors starts from diametrically opposite principles. It does not seek to create a system with detailed illustrations as to what the actor should do in any given situation. It aims at giving the actor a method, a means by which he will evolve for himself the proper results. It aims at awakening those particular elements in a person which make him act without setting a predescribed form in which they must appear. It therefore utilizes each individual's specific possibilities and tries to develop them. It does not give talent to the talentless, but it trains talent to its utmost achievement. It works with very simple principles, all of which can be tested.

The actor's greatest enemy is physical or muscular tension. This derives not simply from nervousness or inexperience but from a fundamental problem which all actors face.[10] A person comes into a room. He looks at the room, at the people in it, with whatever degree of interest he has in each of the objects. If something distracts his attention he reacts to it. His senses function normally. He has come to ask a favor. He is refused. He feels himself becoming angry, but tries to restrain himself. Now, when an actor performs this same scene his activity is the exact opposite. He comes onto the stage. He notices a chair or a light wrongly placed. But he must not permit himself to react to that. He tries to ask the favor, knowing all the time that he is supposed to grow angry. He tries to make every effort to grow angry. In his mind at the beginning of the scene is an image of the result to be achieved and towards which he is working. His senses therefore do not perform normally and he becomes tense. Tension is misplaced energy. *When there is tension in a body one cannot think or feel.* To test this, do the following exercise. Try to lift some heavy object—a table or a piano, something difficult to lift. At the same time give yourself a simple mental problem, multiply 162 by 5. You will find that it is impossible to perform the mental task while the body is tense.

Now try another simple exercise. Among a group of actors ask one to rise and walk around—that's all. (The exercise obviously should be tried with someone unaware of its purpose.) Now notice his walk. The actor if he is inexperienced is self-conscious. He does not know what is expected of him. He keeps on looking self-consciously at the one who put the problem to him. He does not know whether to walk

[10] See C. Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares.*

slowly or quickly. His walk is artificial. If he is experienced and has confidence in himself, he puts on an act. He walks briskly. He pretends that he is not self-conscious. Every now and then he steals a glance at the rest of the group. The rhythm in which he walks is artificial but definite. Now give him a simple mental task to perform: to think of the movies he has seen during the year, or how many interesting plays or what interesting experiences happened to him, or a mathematical problem, etc. Make sure he actually performs the task by checking on the answer. This task is to be performed while he continues to walk. Now watch him. The transformation is magical. The actor's face becomes expressive. His body relaxes. He walks now slowly, now quickly depending on his thoughts but at all times easily and naturally. He pays little attention to the group and when he does glance at them there is no embarrassment because he has something else to think of. You can follow the changes in his facial expression not because he is doing anything deliberately, not because he's trying to act, but because of what he's thinking. He can walk around for a long time without feeling the need to stop, that is, without becoming self-conscious. He seems human, alive, real, interesting and natural, in the sense of being convincing.

This is the simplest exercise, but one that contains the most fundamental lesson. *The actor to appear alive and real must really think on the stage*; he must not only make believe he thinks, he must really be doing something.

Try the following simple test. The first task, *mental*: try to think of where you were at a certain time yesterday, perform a mathematical problem, etc. Then the second task, a muscular effort: perform any muscular act you give yourself the order for. Third, sensory or emotional: smell smoke in the room, try to be hungry, be angry, hate, or feel jealous or indignant. You will find the following result: the first two tasks are easily performed even though you are not aware of the reason for them. All you have to do is command yourself to perform a mental or a muscular deed and you can do it. You carry it out without being worried or concerned with the question as to how you are doing it. But when it comes to the third category, problems begin to appear. You become worried over what exactly is required of you. To smell smoke—are you supposed to do something with your nostrils?—to be hungry, what are you to do, make some movements of the mouth and throat, or perhaps get up, turn up your coat-collar and

hold out your hand, or what?—and as for being angry, all would be well if you had some lines that you could read in an angry tone, but without that perhaps what is wanted is a tensing of the eyebrows and the mouth, a sullen look, etc.? In other words, you will find that while you can directly at the command of your will control the functioning of your mental and muscular energy, there is very little you can do with your senses or with your emotions.

They are not within your direct control. And yet the senses are our "windows to the external world." It is through them that we acquire not only our actual (not verbal or mental) knowledge of the world, but it is through them that we react to our environment. Acting, technically speaking, (i.e., putting aside the sentimental and inspiring poetic definitions, such as "Acting is the life of the human soul receiving its birth through art") from a purely craft point of view, acting is the *ability to respond to imaginary stimuli.* We ask from the actor not that he do something unusual, but *that he react as he himself would if he were the character.*

Modern Training: Sense and Affective Memory

There is nothing particularly special about this reaction. In ordinary life the simplest mortal finds himself blushing when he would prefer not to, growing angry despite all efforts to control his resentment, becoming melancholic when he would prefer to be gay. On the stage these are very difficult to perform, even though we understand their motivations. The point is that in real life there is always a stimulus that sets off our reaction. On the stage the stimulus does not exist, or rather, is unreal or imagined. Even when there is an apparent stimulus, it does not mean to us what it would in real life; that is, it does not set up that chain of conditioned reflexes which the whole life of a person subconsciously creates for him. Therefore the reactions and behavior, which in life are created by the real stimuli, must on the stage be created in response to imaginary stimuli. It is only on this understanding that we can explain the extraordinary difficulty which even good actors have with the simplest objects. To put on your coat, to light a cigarette, to move a chair, to pick up an object, to do any of these things naturally and convincingly is one of the most difficult acts on the stage. Therefore the actor's real problem is not concerned with his reactions, but rather consists in *training himself to make these imaginary objects or stimuli real to himself as they would be in*

life, so that they will awaken the proper sensory, emotional, or motor response.

The training of the senses to react to imaginary stimuli as they do to real objects is one of the major tasks in the training of the actor. This is accomplished through the use of *affective memory*, i.e., sense memory, or memory of experience. Every human being possesses not only mental memory (like the memorizing of lines), muscular memory (like the handling of a certain tool or machine), but also *sense memory*. We experience sense memory when, for instance, we smell smoke without seeing it, or when in coming into a room where something unpleasant had once occurred we re-experience the original feeling.

There is a difference between a mental or abstract memory of a state of feeling, wherein we *know* the sequence of events and intellectually think of them, and the affective memory of the same experience in which we actually *re-experience* the entire occurrence. Most people when they say they remember, allude to an abstract picture of the event. "It was hot." "I was hungry." "I had a sharp pain." They think conceptually of "heat," "anger," "pain," rather than feel the particular, specific details—where exactly it hurt, how much, what kind of pain, all this in terms not of a chart, but in terms of the specific part of the body which experienced the pain.

Affective memory or emotional memory is nothing special or new but its use from the acting point of view is perhaps best characterized by the fact that in Stanislavsky's article in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* where the word is used, it is constantly misspelled and becomes *effective* memory, which makes no sense whatever. The use of affective and sense memory is the discovery of Constantin Stanislavsky, and it is the corner-stone of the modern method of training the actor.

The means by which this sense memory and affective memory—the difference between the two will be made clear below—is trained, is the same as that by which we train any act of memory. In memorizing a poem, we hold a copy of the words before us, we read the words and try to remember, hiding the words and referring to the text to check our remembrance. We do the same with *sense memory*. We work with the actual object, and then test ourselves by putting the object aside and seeing whether we can *recapture it without actually using the object.*

Be careful that it is not just a pantomimic rendition. Most people

when they are told to pick up a cup and saucer will carefully watch how they hold their hands and the shape they take. But this is only an imitation. One should try to recapture the particular muscular effort of holding the cup, the sense of the weight, the touch of the material, and how it registers—and in what part of the hand.

It is amazing to see what happens when an actor is asked to perform a simple habitual act, such as putting on shoes and stockings, with imaginary shoes and stockings. The actor is completely unaware of the many sensory and muscular experiences which make up this activity. How much more must this be true of the imaginary characters he is called upon to act! He makes long lists and analyses of the character he is to play, his general appearance, carriage, features, age, health, posture, movement, speech, habits of thought, and so on, without absorbing these ideas into his mind, and without creating any incentive for his own body and apparatus to act. If knowledge or observation of that superficial kind were the essentials of acting then the psychologist, the novelist, the author of the play, the director, and, not least, the critic should make the best actors. That this is not so, simply indicates that it is the possession of a peculiar kind of sensory apparatus able at will to act out an event, which is the essential need of the actor. Lip service has been given to this idea for a long time: great actors have always possessed, and have on occasion shown, an awareness of its importance. But the technical means by which this faculty could be exercised and developed and put within the control of every actor—this is the distinguishing characteristic of our modern methods of training.

Now try another simple test: take a match box and set it before you. Examine it carefully for three minutes, trying to register all its details, size, specific shape, printing, make-up, colors, size of letters, distance of decorative parts from one another. Now put it aside for a few minutes. Then write down what you remember. Compare your memory with the object. You will be amazed at how much has been unobserved. If this is true of an object which is, after all, not difficult to comprehend, which we understand and of which we know the use, it must be even truer of objects we know much less about—the characters we wish to act. For the work we perform in acting demands a much greater concentration than that which we ordinarily use. What we are doing on the stage is supposed to be the most important thing

in the world at that moment, and our ordinary attention is not sufficient for that task.

To summarize and synthesize:

The actor's training is divided into two sections: *work on oneself*, and *work on a part*. From the systematic point of view, working on a part should not be started until the actor has worked sufficiently to acquire the means with which to carry out his intentions.

Work on Oneself

Work on oneself is divided into three parts: mental, physical, emotional.

A. Mental work is concerned with the knowledge of Man in all his manifestations. This knowledge must, however, not remain mental or purely intellectual, or it has no value whatsoever for the actor. It is not enough for the actor to know about the Stone Age or the Iron Age. He must actually try to experience the difference it made in people's lives, in the handling of objects, etc. It does him no good to know the dates and historical details of the Elizabethan period, unless he can re-create for himself a kind of life which a modern student has suggested is much nearer to the "native bazaar of an Eastern city. A fortnight spent in one of the less accessible cities of Iraq or India teaches the historian more of Tudor London than a decade spent in the Record Office."[11] The actor's knowledge of Freudian psychology will be meaningless if he does not try to use some of it on himself. The actor, in other words, must be concerned with a *"living through"* of history rather than with a mere intellectual abstraction. A knowledge of the other arts is vital to full development, but he must experience the difference between Greek behavior and Italian gesture or his knowledge is empty.

Finally, a knowledge of the theatre and drama is a real practical concern. It is not a list of names, dates, titles of plays, and mechanical formulas, but what was done, how, and why, and an ability to do some of it himself. It is "reliving" of what the form of the stage meant to the acting, of what the change in the manner of writing meant to the actor, of the difference between the methods of the Chinese or Japanese theatre and our own. No advance in theatric style can be made without knowledge of this kind, and reinterpretation of classic

[11] G. B. Harrison, *Elizabethan England*, p. 76.

plays demands this ability to re-create the historical environment, not academically but by "reliving" it.

B. Physical work is, in turn, divided into body work and voice work. This type of activity, while it makes up the major part of the work done with actors at the present time, seems to me the most poorly organized and systematized in relation to the theatre. People simply bring their system of dancing or training of the singing voice into the theatre. The aim is to produce a physically developed body and a good voice, rather than an expressive body and a dramatic voice. The body and the voice are treated as if they had to win prizes at a fashion show, instead of being made flexible and fluent to convey any thought or emotion which the actor experiences. Systems of movement and systems of reading emphasis and intonation patterns are completely stultifying. I would suggest, on the basis of the work done in various theatres, that a form of physical training composed of gymnastics, acrobatics, historical and social dancing, fencing, and sport will be found most actually helpful. A group of actors who had really been trained to fence would turn the street scene in *Romeo and Juliet* into exciting adventure, and what a Hamlet and a Laertes who were brilliant swordsmen and put on a real exhibition would do to their duel scene would create exactly the effect Shakespeare intended.[12]

The aim of the body work should not be to set patterns of physical movement, but to create a body that is flexible, agile, rhythmic, and able to dance and perform tricks where necessary. This is what the theatre demands from the body, rather than "good" movement. As for the training of voice, the major concern should be with strengthening the voice, and the resonance, and clear speech. Beyond that, most of the present methods of voice training from the theatric and dramatic point of view are a hindrance, as they try to build a process of acting through the voice.

C. Emotional Work: The third section is of course concerned with the main phase of the actor's training. While the first two help to give the actor a clear and educated brain and to train the tools he uses, this one is primarily concerned with what one of my teachers, the late Richard Boleslavski, called "the knowledge and practical living-through of all soul states."

The approach to this work is through exercise in concentration and

[12] See J. Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet.*

the training of the senses. Since all work which employs the attention on an object aids concentration, we start with the *sense exercises.*

Without the use of the actual object, practice putting on shoes and stockings, combing your hair, picking up a cup and saucer. These exercises are prepared with the actual object, carefully noting the impression it makes upon one, and the change in muscular energy; and then one performs it without the object. Do not be concerned with whether you are conveying the object to your audience, but concern yourself entirely with bringing it alive to yourself.

Pick different exercises for the various senses: Listen to a fog horn, a train whistle, a subway, jazz music, classical music, etc. Do not be concerned with what you are showing to the audience, but with what you are hearing. Don't make faces to try and indicate the music you are listening to, but pick a definite tune and try to hear it.

See a picture on the wall.

Taste vinegar, lemon and other citrous fruits. Start with sharp tastes which are more easily remembered. Do not be concerned with your pantomime but with the taste.

In the above it will be noticed that I have constantly warned against any concern with the showing of the reactions and have emphasized the stimulus and the effort to recapture it. This is because in a recent useful manual which makes use of some of the same procedure we find instructions in reproducing the taste to exaggerate slightly the mouth, and in working on objects related to the olfactory sense to observe one's reaction with a mirror and then present one's reaction to the class. This is incorrect. This will train observation but not the senses. The purpose of these sense-training exercises is to awaken the actor's *impulses to respond*, for the higher purpose of *awakening the actor's creativity.* Once we become concerned with the reaction and not with the object, the impulse is stifled and we train ourselves to imitate rather than to create, to observe rather than to experience.

At the same time, start working with exercises where the object is seemingly less defined, as for instance, heat, cold, rain, and pain. Do not act generally—i.e., trembling with cold, doubling-up with pain, relaxing with heat. Pick a specific pain in a definite part of the body, say a toothache. These exercises are often helped by recalling a particular time when you were hot, cold, had a pain, etc., and by trying to remember the specific sense impression. The student also should try each day to recall the outstanding sensation of that day. A general

heightening of the actor's sensitivity and awareness is the inevitable result.

After working with one object, add another one; in other words, drink tea or coffee while you read a book, listen to music while you smell a flower, etc. In these exercises you must be able to perform one of the tasks so that your conscious concentration can be trained on the other. The mind can think of only one thing at a time consciously; the other tasks are performed subconsciously. Therefore first practice with one of the objects before adding the other. This is a general rule, only too often disregarded. While the human being is able to perform a number of tasks at the same time, consciously he can think of only one thing at a time. The others are carried out subconsciously or by habit (training).

A third stage of working with objects is then to create a whole little scene based on objects, where by performing a series of exercises a whole scene is created. For example, try to act out the following: take poison. The effort to do this usually ends in some vague grimaces or in some effective muscular contortions. Now try the following. Do an exercise tasting aspirin, or vinegar, or lemon. Then do an exercise of a specific pain. The two done continuously will create a very real picture of a poisonous substance being imbibed. I shall never forget the picture of the famous actor Grasso in the scene in *Morte Civile* where he takes poison. The chewing of the tablets and the attempt to rid the tongue of the remaining grains was so simple that it was frighteningly real. In Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking scene the desperate efforts to wash away the blood stains, and the despair at being unable to do so are more pertinent to the scene than any monotonously delivered rhetoric. In Juliet's potion scene, the concern with the strange and frightening vial she must drink from, the taste and the smell of the potion, might do more to create the actor's justification for the scene Shakespeare has written, than the posturing and whimpering that usually take place.

Perhaps this is the occasion to point out that the above line of attack also contains the answer to the question "Does the actor feel his part? And if so, how can he play a murderer without having murdered, how can he do a death scene, a scene of poisoning, etc. without having experienced these situations?" As to whether the actor should feel, perhaps the simplest answer is the one Max Beerbohm gave to Coquelin, who believed that emotion should not enter into

the part. "Coquelin," wrote Beerbohm, "in the last act of *Cyrano de Bergerac* was a shining refutation of his own belief. All the paraphernalia of emotion were in that memorable passage of acting—were there most beautifully and authentically, but emotion itself wasn't there; and many a duffer could have moved us far more than Coquelin did."

The actor, however, does not have to create murder by murdering, death by dying, and so on. He must simply be able to create the mental, physical, sensory, and emotional activities that alone convey the sense of these events. And every human being has either been very ill or has had a nightmare in which he felt he was dead and struggled against it. Everyone has felt the spirit of destruction descend upon him sometimes as response to an object as minute as a mosquito (as Boleslavski described it), and everyone has at times imbibed something that was "worse than poison." The actor's activity is the result of the imaginative use of his resources for the solution of problems set by the play, and is therefore not simply a question of living the part but one of creating it in terms of experience and imagination.

Continuing the work we have begun, practice entire scenes made up of sensory problems. For instance, you are coming home late at night. You don't want to wake anyone in the house because you were forbidden to leave. But you have a headache. In the dark, you go to the medicine chest, get some aspirin, and take it. After a short while you feel pain in your stomach. You recollect that there was another bottle that contains poisonous tablets. Note that you are not being told what to do. If you act this scene out in terms of the objects which comprise it you will be impelled to find a finish.

Another type of exercise where the same task is performed under changed conditions may be noted. For instance, you are getting dressed to go out on an important occasion with someone you are fond of. You receive a 'phone call that the person is very ill and you will have to go alone. You continue dressing. Obviously there is a change in the way the same problem will be carried out.

Some people find it difficult to plunge immediately into this work with imaginary objects. A preliminary stage may therefore be utilized, as follows: Put a hat on the table. Look at it and handle it as if it were a cat, a rat, a dog, or any other animal. Make use of the actual elements of the hat, shape, size, color, etc., to suggest the attributes of the imagined object. Now, treating it as a dog, pick it up, play with

it, and hand it around the class. The other people must make an effort to retain and to adjust to the characteristics of the animal set by the first performer. Thus if one side of the hat has been established as being the head, do not let the next person handle it as if it were the hind part.

Since acting is a collective art, and the reaction of an individual is decided by the behavior of his partner, *group exercises* are a necessary part of the fundamental training. These start with very simple tasks, and become progressively more complicated and more dramatic. To test their real awareness, ask two members of the class to rise and immediately start acting a scene without telling them anything more than just that. Neither of them of course will know what to do. They make embarrassed efforts to begin, try to make up some hypothetical characters and situations. They always try to devise something that doesn't exist, and that could only be acted, if at all, after thorough preparation. They invariably end with inability to arrive at any convincing experience.

Now ask them to try to carry out the same problem, i.e., for the two people to start acting. But ask them to start with themselves as they really are, and their embarrassment and the truth of the situation, which is that they don't know what to do. They may not even know each other well, or they may be very good old friends. Regardless of what they have been asked to do, and it was deliberately vague and indefinite, *they* themselves and their actual feeling at that moment are real. Once they accept that premise, start talking about that, wondering what they might be doing there, finding out who they are, etc., they lose their self-consciousness; they become alive and convincing; they have no difficulty in finding what to speak about, and often develop very interesting dramatic scenes. Do not go on with this scene for more than a few minutes, as its purpose is not to develop a scene but to prove that once the actor starts from his real self, he becomes active and creative, begins to think and feel and behave, and has no difficulty even with the vaguest of tasks.

The order in which the group exercises should be carried on is somewhat as follows: At the beginning the emphasis remains on *objects*. Thus, for instance, a scene of a picnic is improvised. Everyone brings bundles of food and fruit with him. To reach the picnic grounds a small stream must be crossed. Concentration in this exercise is entirely on the handling of the objects, passing drinks around,

distributing the food, perhaps gathering wood for a fire, etc. In crossing the stream, if the actor picks definite spots on the floor, uses them as stepping stones, tries to balance on them, etc., the action is most easily achieved. This exemplifies a simple principle: that it is not necessary on the stage to be looking at the specific object demanded by the play, but it is necessary really to *look at something*. The actor, to look out of a window and see a fire going on, needs to choose a series of specific points, lines, or objects offstage, as if that were the outline of the fire. His senses then continue to function and make it possible for him to think and feel.

The second step is to pick *simple situations* that do not demand dramatic intensity but do call for simple reality and relation to situation—for example, a number of students dissatisfied at being kept in after hours. To do more than just talk, it is necessary that each student choose a specific adjustment; one has a toothache, another has an important appointment, a third was up late last night, etc. In trying to relate to the teacher, choose things to do, rather than just talk about your reactions. Another type of exercise: you have heard of a very good job available. You go there before anyone else hears about it. You find the other members of your group who wander in one by one, with the same idea. Here again, choose specific adjustments for yourself. As soon as you do that, you acquire the impulse to do something, to act. Otherwise you wait for someone else to start in order to find something to do.

Another set of problems should deal with the *beginnings of characterization* on a very simple plane. You are a group of refugees, applying for visas; a group of farmers celebrating a joyous occasion; a group of soldiers, Indians, workers, etc. Make the situation itself a simple one. The important thing is to choose *one characteristic that defines the person*. The rest is simple adjustment to the rest of the people, being really concerned with who they are, what they are doing, and what they mean to you.

The third phase in this early group-work is concerned with objects and situations that begin to assume more *dramatic proportions*. For example, you are a group of refugees smuggled to the coast where a boat is supposed to pick you up. The boat is overdue, but finally appears on the horizon. As it comes closer, fire is seen to break out, then it seems to disappear behind the waves; finally it reappears, and suddenly there is an explosion on the boat. The rest of the scene de-

pends on the imagination of the actors. In this situation, the best results will be attained if the actors do not anticipate the final outcome; if they first concentrate on who they are, what has happened to them, where they plan to go, and then choose some individual characteristic which they perform almost like an exercise in sense memory; and, then, if they try to watch the boat and see what is happening to *it*, instead of worrying how to react. This should be performed with the same attitude as the exercise in which the hat was supposed to be a dog, i.e., with no effort to act but with the intention of bringing the thing alive to oneself.

Since all the preceding types of work depend on *concentration and relaxation*, exercises to achieve this should go on at the same time. For concentration the simplest activity is the one where you choose some small object to concentrate on, while the class tries to distract the attention of the performer. A more complex and picturesque one is described in Stanislavsky's *An Actor Prepares*, where the actor sits on a dark stage, then lights begin to be flashed on, which start from the immediate environment of the actor and which begin to describe larger circles, which embody the actor's growing awareness. The exercise can, of course, be modified, and be performed without the lighting effects.

For relaxation, the most elementary work is one that should be started early and continued for some time until one can carry it out fully and easily. First, try to relax while seated in a chair. Relaxation is that position of the body in which it would be possible for you to go to sleep. Watch not only that your muscles are relaxed, but especially the nerves at the temples, the bridge of the nose, and the mouth. Now start to tense or tighten the muscles, starting with the toes, then the feet, then the ankles, and so on, until your entire body is tense. If you are able to do this, you will also be able to relax anywhere in the body. Now practice with just one part of the body tense, and the rest normal. Sit, walk, perform different activities, retaining that tension. The results of this type of work are apparent only when they are continued over a period of time and when they prepare the actor for dealing with problems of physical characterization.

We now come to a phase of the work to which, thanks to the schooling of my teacher, Madame Maria Ouspenskaya, I attribute unusual value. These are exercises in animal characterization which seem

to contain, to a heightened degree, those elements of concentration, observation, and imagination which it is our object to develop. In observation of human beings, our attention tends to be somewhat blunted. We note not the most important but the most obvious details, and tend to lose the difference between one individual and another, because we have the feeling that they aren't very much different from ourselves. In working on animal characterization, we are immediately and sharply aware that if we do not isolate the element most characteristic of the particular animal we are impersonating, we shall be unable to project it. Also our will is strengthened because we know that we can't just be ourselves, but must do something in order to act the animal character. We must, however, not stop at the physical manifestations, we must seek for the cause of the walk, the manner, the behavior, in other words, the feeling of the animal. Thus in imitating the walk and rhythm of the tiger, the feeling that goes with it and the cage that encloses him are important. Here, starting from the outer manifestations, we try to discover the *inner impulses.* We can then go one step farther, and act a human being characterized as a tiger, a monkey, and so on. This type of work is very suggestive and stimulating for actors, as the image of the animal by its sharpness and definition spurs the actor's imagination.

While all the actor's work contributes to the development of the student's imagination, there are exercises for the special training of this faculty which bring out the actor's mental, physical, and emotional agility. The actor is given a word which he must embody without words. He is given a minute to think of something and perform his scene. I remember the occasion, in the second season of the Group Theatre's activity, when experimental training work was being done under my supervision, that an actor was given the word "America" to enact. After a moment's thought, the actor began. He went to sleep. He awoke suddenly, looked at the alarm clock (imaginary) and then began frantically to dress. He then rushed into an imaginary subway into which he crowded. He next entered an office, hastily took off his hat and coat, sat down at his desk, lit a cigar, and then —leaned back in his chair, put his feet on the desk, and placidly smoked on with nothing to do. Perhaps this was an early playwriting effort of the actor—who happened to be Clifford Odets.

These exercises are carried out without words, as their main task is *to activize the actor,* rather than merely to make him describe a

scene. Another type of problem is to give two or more actors a series of three irrelevant words. The actors are given a minute or two to make up a situation which contains the three words, but in an imaginative context. The words should not be used in a literal sense, simply mentioning the words, but an attempt should be made to invent unusual meanings and situations. Only the fundamental elements of the scene are decided upon, the rest is left to the actor's skill in relating to what happens in the scene which the actors proceed to perform. All these scenes are acted without actual objects, so that not only the imagination is called into play but the actor at the same time practices his craft.

We now come to one of the central elements of the actor's work—"The knowledge of and *living-through* of all soul states." This is what we should mean when we talk of the actor's experience, and not the number of years he has been on the stage. While few people possess any scientific knowledge of emotional behavior, all people contain within themselves, in their own experience, a knowledge truer and deeper than any they are aware of. It is one of the amazing sights not only of acting but of life to see what passes as true feeling among most actors, and then by drawing on their own emotional experience to see what they really ought to know about it because of what has happened to them.

Every human being contains within himself the keys on which to play all types of emotional experience. The means by which we are able to avail ourselves of this experience of ours is through the process of emotional memory, or memory of experience. This is *affective memory as differentiated from sense memory* which deals with objects and other specific stimuli. The training of this faculty starts with simple exercises. Pick any unusual event that has happened to you. It should not, to start with, be too dramatic, but should be something sufficiently unusual to have made an impression on you. Now be sure not to make any effort to remember your emotion; do not be concerned with your emotional response. Just try and remember all the sensory phenomena, i.e., the objects as they occurred and how they looked, sounded, tasted, felt, etc. Do not give a merely journalistic recital. Don't say "It was dark," because you have a mental recollection that it was so, but try to remember how it looked at that time, what you remember seeing that makes you say "It was dark." Don't say "It was a large building," but make an effort through your sense

of sight to remember the building, how it appeared, how high it was, etc. In other words, don't recall it merely in a narrative way, but try to tell it to us as if it is *happening* to you. Don't worry about your choice of words, but try to remember the objects you are concerned with. Make no effort to recapture the emotion itself, but only the object and event that caused it. If this is followed out, you will find that without any other effort on your part, the emotion associated with the particular experience will come back to you and take possession of you.

Mentally go through your entire life to find the events that happened to you in the past that still move you. Not all of them will. Some that seemed very strong and important when they occurred mean nothing to you now. Others that you had almost completely forgotten may turn out to be powerful motors for your feeling. The longer an experience has lasted, the stronger it is likely to be. Childhood events are among the most powerful. Go through and re-experience events of suffering, anger, illness, horror, fear, excitement, adventure, joy, happiness, humor, etc. If you repeat an exercise more than once, as you should, be sure that the second time you do not begin to anticipate the final emotion, the tears, the joy, the excitement, the fear, because, although it will always recur, it will never be quite the same. If you set yourself for it, looking for the same feeling, or for a specific manifestation, such as tears, you lose your concentration on the objects, and the emotion may not appear.

In the early stages, to test whether you are performing the exercise properly, the experience is verbalized. But after a while, that is not necessary. Now choose some simple task, such as cleaning the room, and perform the exercise with inner concentration and without describing what you are doing. Finally choose some lines of dialog. Start the exercise, and then speak the lines, trying to retain the affective experience. Thus little by little the actor is able to bring his own experience and substitute it in scenes where he needs sudden or strong emotional expression. After a while, the actor becomes so conditioned that he can command himself to experience almost any emotion. He has created new conditioned reflexes for himself. The actor is now able to control his mental, physical and sensory and emotional behavior. He can even mix them, performing physically an act that looks gay, while he can create within himself the mood of pain or suffering. This phase of the work should be done only with quali-

fied supervision, for the results obtained depend on an understanding of the exact mechanism.

It has probably been noticed that in the above procedure little has been said about *words or dialog*, which at present usually forms the basic material for the actor's training work. Most of the elementary manuals concentrate on the gathering and selection of literary extracts for practice. Our failure to mention dialog is not due to a desire to minimize its importance. It has perhaps never been quite sufficiently pointed out that the realistic effect achieved by a theatre such as the Moscow Art Theatre rests upon an unusual concern with the interweaving of speeches, and detailed work on emphasis and value of the phrase.[13] But the function of the word is first of all to disclose the play, the scene, the situation.

"The play's the thing," and the words are the author's effort to show what is happening, what is being done, and not just what is being said. I remember vividly on one occasion looking forward to my first view of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. In preparation for this, reading descriptions of classic performers in this part, I was particularly struck by the description of Garrick's performance of the scene in which Lear awakes (IV, 7) and does not recognize Cordelia. The details of the struggle between "imperfect reason and recovering senses" was so far beyond what I had gained from a reading of the lines of the scene, that I looked forward to seeing this acted on the stage. What was my disappointment when the moment seemed to come and pass without my recognition. The scene was cut! But as I found when I checked on what I had heard, the words *were* there, but the scene had practically been cut, because the *situation—what was taking place*—had not been acted out. *King Lear* is a picture of what happens to a person, and to people, under certain circumstances. The knowledge of the outer events is less important than the vision of the character's behavior and change. It has therefore suffered probably more than any other play from the actor's failure to plumb the depths of human despair and feeling, thus giving aid and comfort to Lamb's famous pronouncement that Lear was not to be acted.

I often wonder whether the discussions which rage about *Hamlet* are not at least partly conditioned by the unclarity of the stage picture to which we are accustomed. I have never yet seen the simple sequence of situation brought out so that it makes a progressive

[13] See J. Gregor, in Gregor and Fulop-Miller, *The Russian Theater*

continuity: Hamlet's normal sorrow over the death of his father, his even greater bewilderment at his mother's sudden marriage, his contact with the ghost that must first be tested, his rising suspicions but lack of proof, his effort to make sure, and the like. Actors rush so avidly at the image of the "melancholy Dane," that it becomes difficult to understand why Hamlet, who seems to know and be sure of the murder from the first moment we see him, hesitates to do anything about it.

Another playwright who has suffered from the fact that actors think in terms of words and their logical meanings, instead of in terms of situation and action, is Chekhov. And the "melancholy of the Russian soul" is often simply the excuse for the theatre's inability to make clear what is taking place. The simple factual situation that in *The Three Sisters* the sisters and their brother have been stranded in a provincial town by their father's death, and that their only hope for escape rests in their brother who has prospects of a professorship in the capital, is of utmost importance to the play's clarity. But the actors are so enamored of the chance to paint "the frustrations of the soul" that they rarely take time to make clear what is happening except that people are suffering. "Just the opposite," writes Stanislavski, "they seek life, joy, laughter, courage. . . . They are active and surge to overcome the hard and unbearable impasse into which life has plunged them."[14]

Perform a short test exercise: Choose two actors, a man and a woman. The woman is in the house cleaning up. The man enters. He says, "Hello," "I didn't expect to find you home," "How have you been?" "Would you like to do anything?" "How about taking a walk?" First, act the scene without any specific problem in mind, the two actors as themselves. Then, keeping the same words, change the situation. The two are engaged and have been planning to be married. Today he received notice that he was to be fired from his job. Now go on with the words. Then have the same people play a different scene. The two are engaged, and have been wanting to be married. Today his wages were raised. He comes home to tell her. Now go on with exactly the same words. Then act still another story. The two were engaged to be married. He had been in prison. She went to a different city hoping she would never see him again. Now start with exactly the same words.

[14] Quoted in John Gassner, *Masters of the Drama*, p. 519.

Many variations can be played on this scene. But one thing is obvious: while the words remained the same, their meaning changed, but not only the meaning but what was taking place was always different; and yet it was conveyed through the same words. The actor therefore to approach the acting of a scene, thinks in terms not of verbal meanings or readings, but of *given circumstances*, and *action*.

"Given circumstances" is the situation that took place before the actual scene on the stage starts. These should not simply be verbally analyzed or thought about, but *should be acted out.* In fact rehearsals are often concerned with finding and creating the given circumstances from which the actual scene stems. I have seen many renditions of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy. Acted for better or worse, its meaning to the audience was always the same. But I have never yet seen what it actually meant to Hamlet! Finding the immediate situation that took place and that makes Hamlet at this particular moment start to think this particular thought, might add a zest to his speech which it has rarely had.

I remember a particularly illuminating instance while working with a young actor and actress on the scene in the *Sea Gull* when Nina returns after having left home in order to become an actress. The problem before them was to act out everything which could happen before the words became necessary. The results not only from the acting but from a directorial point of view were astounding. The actor playing the part of the young author who loved her and had stayed behind played out the entire scene in which he tries to find the proper expression for his thoughts. He started a number of ways, only to crumple the paper and throw it aside on the floor, on the desk. He was frantic. At this moment Nina entered. He was overjoyed to see her, but tried to keep the evidence of his frustration from her. Without attracting her attention, he tried to pick up the pieces of paper from the floor, to hide what he had on the desk. Somehow this pitiful effort to hide his ineffectuality brought the scene alive in a way that I had never before seen on the stage. He followed her around like a dog, just looking at her from afar, hoping she had come back to him. When it was clear to him that she did not and never would belong to him but to his rival, his doom was sealed. For the first time I actually experienced why he commits suicide in the play. In the first scene of *Arms and the Man* the acting out of the "given circumstances," of what has happened be-

fore the curtain rises, proves of inestimable value. Try changing the given circumstances and seeing what new meanings, colors, and actions result without any effort. Choose a poem that you like and try performing it with different "given circumstances," and notice how the entire performance changes in organic relationship to the situation or character which gives life to the words.

The reverse of this problem is to set yourself a given sequence of behavior and to find the *justification* for this behavior. Simple exercises in justification consist, for instance, in striking a pose and holding it. Now try to find out what activity the pose could indicate. Thus let us say you start with a sudden movement of your hand held high. Perhaps you decide you are reaching for something. As soon as your pose changes to activity, the attitude itself becomes less tense, more real and convincing. As Stanislavski has described it: "I took a certain pose on the stage. I did not believe in it physically. Here and there I weakened the strain. It was better now. I changed the pose somewhat. Ah! I understand. When one stretches himself in order to reach something, thus, my whole body and after it my soul, began to believe that I was stretching toward an object which I needed very much." This point of "justifying" what you have to do is most important. While in the early stages of training the emphasis is on the formula "If you were in this situation, what would you do?" in the later stages of work, the formula is "Given the following activity to perform, what must have happened to make it necessary and possible for you to carry it out?" The first formulation leads to realistic and truthful results. The latter is most necessary for imaginative productions.

If the given circumstances are properly chosen, the action of the scene follows from it. *"Action"* in this sense does not describe the "business," or physical behavior of the part, but is the inner motivation and activity of the character; it is the reason and necessity for the actor's appearance on the stage. Action should be described by a verb, instead of the infinitive "to be." It is not always easy to find the proper verb to describe the particular activity, and this is my reason for preferring to emphasize the use of "given circumstances" in a somewhat broader interpretation of that term than is common. Young actors have a tendency to become lost and theoretically involved in trying to find the proper action; and reference to what has

happened before they start tends to stimulate them into the proper direction.

In making use of "action," three steps are necessary: (1) *action,* what are you doing; (2) *motivation,* why are you doing it; (3) *adjustment,* under what circumstances. The last decides the form in which the action is carried out. Thus if you have come to borrow money, in order to go to a New York dramatic school, the presence of somebody you dislike in the room will affect the way in which you carry out your task.

It has been pointed out in reference to emotional experience, that the description of the inner and outer manifestations of a person in a state of grief, quoted by James from the description of the Danish physiologist Lange, takes up, "in small print," a page and a half of James's book. It has been properly assumed that it would be impossible for an actor on the stage in the midst of a scene to remember "the three or four dozen correct manifestations." From this the erroneous conclusion has been drawn, which is the basis of former methods of training, that all that the actor "can do is select and rehearse in advance a few of the more effective manifestations . . . and trust to the promptings of inner impulses during the actual performance for the addition of enough other manifestations to complete a convincing picture of grief-stricken condition."[15] With this conclusion, the modern way of training breaks decisively. It is not content with the crumbs of expression. It tries to re-create Nature's process, by setting up fundamental impulses, dynamic motor powers, which will create all the manifestations, "the three or four dozen," of experience, without the actor having to be concerned with these inner and outer manifestations. When the proper stimulus is created the desired result ensues.

The aim of the modern method is to turn the actor away from a concern with what he, the actor, is doing, thus ridding him of his fundamental self-consciousness; and to create for him those proper elements of what the *character* is doing which become the impulses for behavior. The actor thus becomes concerned with acting the *causes,* and not the *results,* permitting the latter to occur as they do in life. The actor's concentration is on the *object* which creates fear, rather than the worry over what to do to express fear.

Each person who experiences fear expresses it. But not each person

[15] Samuel Selden, *A Player's Handbook,* p. 20.

can experience it when he so desires. This the actor learns to do. He learns to live at the command of his will and his imagination. He is not playing at something—but being; he is not "acting"—but doing; he is not imitating—but creating. Thus he holds "as 'twere, the mirror up to nature."

There is nothing new in any portion of the above procedure. Odd or unusual as it may at times appear, each step of the work can be exemplified from the activity of our greatest actors. The above tries to give an outline of the fundamental principles and an indication of the procedure. There still remains to be described the secondary phases of the training which deal with adjustments on the stage, and the more analytic phases of work on a play which is an extension of working on a scene. But I feel a certain helplessness or frustration at writing about it. It is like *describing* a picture, instead of painting it. The correspondence method is no way to study acting. The same recipes result in quite different meals. The training of actors is a vital necessity of any vital theatre. And especially today, when the competition of the movies has removed from the theatre a great part of its previous function. A heightening of the artistic resources in the theatre is an urgent necessity for its continuing existence. Actors, it may be added, can be trained not only individually but in troupes, so that at the end of a training period a whole theatre could be graduated, a complete unit, with a repertory of its own, perhaps even a distinct style of its own. It has always been one of my regrets that the Federal Theatre project, even in the short period of its existence, did not have an opportunity to create an Institute of Theatrical Art which might have proved the enormous possibilities which lie hidden on the foundation of proper theatrical training.[16]

[16] While the above does not pretend to be an authoritative statement of any method but my own, it owes more than can be said to my teachers, Mme Maria Ouspenskaya and the late Richard Boleslavski. The short time I spent with them is no indication of my debt. They are obviously not responsible for my mistakes, but have contributed no little to what good there is in it. Of the recent manuals of acting that I have examined, I am sorry to say that few of them can serve. The best one, with the exception of Boleslavski's "Acting, The First Six Lessons," which is not properly a manual, is a handbook by S. Rosenstein, L. Haydon and W. Sparrow "Modern Acting: A Manual." A more recent one by C. L. Lees "A Primer of Acting" is of value in its exercises, but is continuously faulty in its interpretation and instructions. The essay by Rapaport in the first issue of Theatre Workshop is useful. No one should fail to avail himself of the inspiration of Stanislavsky's "An Actor Prepares." These references are not intended as a bibliography on acting, which I reserve for a future occasion, but may help the student.

SUPPLEMENTARY TRAINING

THE two essential elements of an actor's physical equipment are his Body and his Voice. Both require careful training. Body is considered briefly under Rhythmic Movement and Gymnastics; Voice under the subjects of Voice Training, Pronunciation, and Phonetics.

Rhythmic Movement in the Actor's Art by Ernst T. Ferand

The actor has two means of expression at his disposal: *speech and movement.* Included in the latter is also *facial play* which became a particularly important means of conveying psychic, emotional processes when the mask of the classic theatre was abandoned and was replaced on our stage by the individual and more dynamic art of make-up. This development led, however, at times, to an over-emphasis of physiognomic expression, while the expressive power of the body as a whole (including posture, gait, etc.), as well as of parts of it, was neglected. The modern theatre, reflecting the general trend of our century towards a renascence of *body movement,* has discovered the importance and the vast possibilities of the motor element on the stage. "Body work" (or, as we should rather say: *education in movement*) is now an important part of the actor's training.

The entire material of the actor's art is derived from two media: his *voice* and his *body.* This fact places the actor midway between the singer and the dancer. Without actually entering the fields of abstract, stylized tonal or bodily movement—musical melody and the dance—the actor, nevertheless, touches at the boundaries of both these neighboring arts; he combines, to some extent, the elements of music and dance. To a certain degree, therefore, the actor is dancer and musician at the same time—even in our days when the supposed unity of the dancer-actor-singer in the classic theatre has been abandoned in favor of an ever-growing specialization.

Speech and movement both have a double function: an *expressive*

and a *representative* one. The first conveys the *emotional* elements, such as mood, state of mind, passion, etc., but also *characterological* qualities (stability, lability, aggressiveness, etc.). The second refers to specific ideas, conceptions, meanings, and designations. Hope, joy, pride, and fear, for example, are primarily expressed not by *what* is said but *how* it is said. Both functions are equally important in the actor's art, and on their mastery and mutual relationship in movement and speech depends the actor's effectiveness of characterization and interpretation. The intimate relationship existing among psychic processes, movement, and speech is, indeed, significantly asserted in idiomatic expressions such as "to be *inclined*" (to help), or "to be *moved*" (by a message), or "to *oppose*" (an action).

The element common to both speech and movement is *rhythm*. A training based on this fundamental element of all art may provide the actor with all the means necessary to control the movements of his body and of his voice, and to organize them according to his intentions in expression, characterization, and interpretation (as well as according to the intentions of the director concerning the requirements of the play). The sense of (mental and physical) rhythm can be acquired and developed—and almost exclusively so—by a specific kind of training in body motion called *Rhythmic Movement.*

Sense of rhythm means the sensitivity in discriminating and reproducing, in any material, such as movement, speech, singing, and instrumental play, all the various possibilities of contrasts, transitions, and combinations of speed, duration and dynamic intensity, our body (and at the same time our mind) is capable of. Reduced to the simplest formula, rhythm can be regarded as the result of an *organic alternation of tension and release.* This is manifested in the perfectly balanced harmony of such physiological rhythms as breath and pulse; in the "natural" rhythm of our gait; in basic rhythmical movements of our everyday life such as pulling, pushing, throwing, and beating; and in the "artificial" rhythms of the poetical metres (the trochaic, iambic, dactylic, anapestic "feet"), as well as in the large variety of musical rhythms.

In developing this rhythmic sensitivity by the medium of body movement, we have a powerful means at our disposal—namely, *music.* Besides possessing a well established and highly refined system of metrical, rhythmical, and dynamic elements, music is capable also of a direct approach to the emotions, thus establishing immediate rela-

tions to the expressive functions of movement and speech. Music, or through music Rhythmic Movement, serves, therefore, as an important factor in complementing a purely intellectual approach to interpretation and characterization. The use of music as an organic part of Rhythmic Movement (and by no means as a mere accompaniment, as is the case in many systems of gymnastics or the dance) will influence not only the sense of rhythm but also the melody of speech. It will ultimately lead to the co-ordination of speech and movement—a highly desirable result in the latent rhythm and potential musical atmosphere of an actor's part, a scene, act, or play.

Thus, Rhythmic Movement—if it is done thoroughly and over a sufficient period—will aid the actor in gaining mastery not only over the "content" of his part (by concentration on the "mental rhythm") but also over its "form" in its largest sense. This consists of the sum of changes, contrasts, combinations, and nuances of speed, and intensity, of preparations and interruptions, pauses and hesitations, of climax and anticlimax. The result of all this is an adequate interpretation. By achieving this technique, the actor can share the advantages of a singer, having at his disposal, as to rhythmic and melodic requirements, a definitely established, unequivocal, and unalterable part. And, on the other hand, the director, with actors thoroughly trained in rhythmics, will be assured of a strict realization and materialization of his director's book. He should regard it as an orchestra score in which every part and the whole ensemble can and must be executed in a practically unchanged manner, according to the intentions of the composer and conductor.

Rhythmic Movement is, then, not so much a training *of* the body as a training *by* and *through* the body. In this respect Rhythmic Movement differs fundamentally from Gymnastics, which provides the body with the knowledge and experience of the basic principles of correct posture, gait, and so on, according to the natural laws of anatomy and physiology. It also differs from the Dance, which is an autonomous art of movement with its own systems of technique and expression. Rhythmic Movement does not pretend to be, and should not be regarded as, art for its own sake and in itself; it is—besides being a means of general education—a training preparatory and complementary to all arts, especially to the interpretative art of the actor, dancer, singer, and conductor.

The vast field of Rhythmic Movement can best be surveyed if di-

vided in three parts, according to the three categories (or "dimensions") necessary for the manifestation of any motion. These are: *time, space,* and *force.* Rhythm, as the result of these three categories, forms an indivisible unity; it has the quality of a *"Gestalt"* (a configuration), in terms of psychology. Nevertheless, a separation of the elements of *time* (pulse, speed, meter, measure, duration, etc.), of *space* (directions, distances, lines, melody, etc.), and of *force* (dynamics, tension—release, accents, etc.) is advisable, provided that their mutual relations and influence in movement, as well as in speech and music are never neglected.

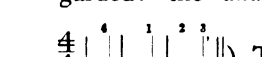
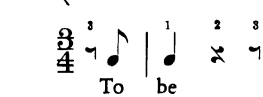
In studying the element of *time*, the questions of *tempo* have first to be considered. We start from the average, "normal" tempo, as indicated by our pulse and walking (*andante*), and proceed in both the directions of greater and lesser speed, as in running, trotting, striding, etc. (*presto* to *lento*). The sense of *speed* can be developed by studying the various possibilities of tempo in contrasts—for instance, in the sudden change of doubling the speed, or in an abrupt change to twice as slow, etc.; and in all forms of transitions (*accelerando—ritardando*). This can be done with the aid of music, following all the shadings as indicated by the improvisation of the instructor at the piano; but also from the motor impulse and the muscular sensation of the various forms of walking, running, etc., and by speaking phrases and sentences of different length in various speeds.

The next step consists of studying the *elements of duration* (in music: *note-values*). This can be done analytically and synthetically, —that is, by the division of larger time-units into *smaller parts* of various grouping; or, on the contrary, by *prolonging the duration* of steps, arm-movements, syllables, words, etc., to an increasing length. Of special importance to the actor are the "negative" values, the *pauses* or rests, and their expressive significance—such as interruption, hesitation, preparation, accumulation of energy, close, etc., as well as the *contrasting effect* of rests and sustained movements in motion or vocal utterances.

The problem of *meter* and *measure* cannot be approached without taking into consideration, besides the time-element, the element of *intensity.* Meter and measure result from a regular (or irregular) recurrence of stress. Therefore, it is necessary to study all the vast possibilities and varieties of accentuation in movement—for instance, stamping, clapping, sudden muscular tensions, beating movements of

the arms, etc.; and in speech—for instance, in intensity and pitch. The use of the conventional conducting-movements in music is a valuable means of making one conscious of the various standard forms of simple and compound meters (2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 6/8, 9/8, etc.) and their combinations.

The study of *accents* is only one part of the spacious field belonging to the realm of *intensity* or dynamics. Contrasts and transitions of force are an indispensable means of the technique of expression in the actor's and the director's art. *Dynamic contrasts* in their simplest form are loud and soft (*forte* and *piano* in music), the alternation of stressed and unstressed words and syllables, cries and whispers, tension and release in movement, etc. *Transitions* occur—often combined with *changes of pitch* in music and speech, or with changes of space in movement—such as *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, as a steadily growing or diminishing intensity of muscular or vocal tension; or, using masses, by increasing or decreasing the quantity of persons and groups in choral movement and choral speech. The simplest forms of contrasts, both in intensity and time (stressed-unstressed and long-short, etc.) are to be found in the poetical metres (trochaic, iambic, dactylic, anapestic, etc.), and should be studied both in movement and speech.

Here a rhythmic phenomenon of special importance has to be regarded:—the *anacrousis* ("up-beat," as, e.g. in "good *mor*ning": ). This is a basic phenomenon in every rhythmic activity and action because of its character as a preparation to any action or movement, easily to be observed in walking, breathing, speaking, singing, or in such typical movement as pulling, pushing, throwing, and beating. Length and character of preparation are, therefore, a decisive factor in the precision and impressiveness of any artistic utterance, be it motion or speech. On the other hand, precision has to be attained not only at the beginning but also at the end of a phrase or movement. Here the study of two types of endings ("cadences" in a larger sense) is especially important: the ending on an accentuated syllable ("masculine" cadence: "To *be* . . ."), or the ending on an unstressed syllable ("feminine" cadence: ". . . or *not* to be":

The study of up-beat and cadence leads to the problem of *phrasing* or articulation. There are various possibilities of training the sense of right articulation (as indicated by the punctuation in writing) and the correct grouping of movements, phrases, and sentences of different length—such as the use of stops, changes of direction, turns, and interruptions. Using these various means in bodily execution, a better understanding and appreciation and an enhanced sensitivity of form and style can be acquired.

The knowledge of the various elements of *duration*, of binary and ternary subdivision, of speed and intensity, gained by bodily experience, enables the theatre student to combine them. He can learn to invent variations of basic rhythms, to create and perform rhythms of his own, to develop rhythmic motifs such as skipping, galloping, and other "natural" rhythms or poetical metres into themes and larger forms. Later he can attempt more complex rhythmical patterns such as syncopations, *ostinato-*[1] and counter-rhythms, polyrhythms, combining individual with group-movements, adding speech to movement and *vice versa*. Finally, the perfect co-ordination of speech and movement is reached in various combinations.

The many problems of *space* in movement can be only touched upon. The developing of the actor's spatial sense—obviously a highly important item of his education—can be achieved by systematic exercises in the use of the principal *directions*:—up-down, forward-backward, left-right (having also symbolic and expressive significance on the classical stage).[2] This has to be practiced in the movements of a single player as well as of smaller or larger groups, of masses in various sizes, divisions and combinations. The relations of a leader to a group, and *vice versa*, of single players to each other, and so on, have to be studied in all possible aspects, and with regard to contrasts and transitions of speed and intensity. Sudden changes and transitions of directions can be observed in their relations to angular or curved lines, to inflections and breaks of the speech-melody. There exist most interesting mutual influences of distance, speed, and intensity; and relations of movement, speech, and music to the rhythm and line of design.

[1] Obstinate, continued, unceasing, designating incessant repetition of a rhythmic or melodic motif, especially in the bass.

[2] For example: right = good luck, homeland, etc.; left = bad luck, foreigner, etc.; center = king, power, etc.; up = heaven; down = hell. Symbolic and expressive significance appears also in the medieval and oriental theatre.

The study of spatial problems leads to another important division of Rhythmic Education—the education of the senses, and especially of the *tactile* sense. Exercises performed with eyes closed, in certain lines or rhythms, develop the actor's sensitivity in judging distances and keeping directions. They also increase his sense of orientation and ability to adjust his movements to the exigencies of the stage. To this group of exercises belong also movements executed on steps or stairs in given rhythms, speed, or style. Quick reaction, spontaneity, and presence of mind are learned by unexpected, sudden changes of speed, duration, direction, intensity of movement and speech, and by continuous adaptation to the changing impulses of musical improvisation.

The pedagogical and psychological *methods* used in Rhythmic Movement are to a great extent those of creative education in general. Instead of relying on imitation and standard formulas, emphasis should be placed on fostering the creative abilities of the student, stressing invention, imagination, fantasy, and improvisation. Thus the faculties of concentration and memory, spontaneity and adaptation can be developed simultaneously. Rhythmic Movement can be a potent means of helping the actor to master the conflicting psychic and physical forces, movements, and rhythms of a play.

* * * *

In addition to training through rhythmic movement, well organized and discreetly used gymnastics are helpful. The following statement by Gertrud Eckardt, a specialist in gymnastics, presents the case for this aid to the actor.

Gymnastics

WHEN someone asks me: "What does an actor need gymnastics for?" my answer is: "Why must a pianist practice the piano?" The human body is the instrument through which the actor has to perform what his role demands him to do.

Often an actor will say: "I don't need any gymnastics. I practice every kind of sport; I dance, step, box, and fence." In spite of this—and perhaps even because of it—something indispensable is missing. Before adapting oneself to the prescription of dance-steps, rhythms, fencing-positions, postures, and so on, one has to know something about one's own inherent body-rhythm, about personal difficulties, inhibitions, and tensions. A car, in order to work well, has to be

lubricated at regular intervals. Gymnastics is nothing but a careful lubrication, greasing, and overhauling. Its object is to make the body limber or springy, to increase its force by exercising, to strengthen its ability either to resist or relax, and to make the most of a short moment of rest and breath-drawing.

Apart from these more general concerns, everybody wants to overcome his individual difficulties. One of the most important is *stage-fright.* Although a very small dose of stage-fright may be indispensable to the real actor as an incentive to exerting himself, it should not so possess him as to take his breath away. The actor must learn how to control his breath, to make it work regularly and independently, so that he may be sure it will not play any tricks on him at the wrong moment. Breathing exercises are therefore essential in all carefully balanced gymnastic training. Individual exercises for the correction of special faults can also be worked out for the actor.

Frequently one hears complaints about *aching feet* and resulting *fatigue.* Upon examining the feet, it is easy to recognize the cause of those pains and to soothe them or even to make the pain disappear. A wrong position, a tendency to flat feet, a dragging or inward-turning of the ankle—these and other habits make it difficult and tiring to stand or walk for a long period. I sometimes use little rubber-balls for the feet to play with; throwing, rolling, keeping, and grasping effectuates the natural curvature of the instep and strengthens the vault of the arch, thus increasing the foot's elasticity and capacity of bearing.

Another important purpose of gymnastics is, of course, *reducing* as well as *gaining weight* (by strengthening the entire muscular system). Within reasonable limits decreasing, as well as increasing weight, is possible by individually determined and well balanced exercises, although, of course, gymnastics is not the only solution. In addition, the body can gain more harmonious proportions through special exercises—for large hips, a prominent stomach, round and curved shoulders (caused by a neglected bad posture), too short a neck, a bent back, and so on. Ordinary broom-sticks are sometimes used for this purpose.

It is essential for the actor to be familiar with the efficiency and reliability of his own body and to know how to treat it, so that it will function like a precise and dependable clock. One learns how to concentrate the mind, to be disciplined, and to make the body obey exercises. The satisfaction of being able to manage a difficult movement, jump, or posture is an aid in acquiring self-confidence; it

assures the actor that he can perform greater and more important tasks. Just as important as a great individual performance, is an actor's ability to co-operate, to subordinate himself for the sake of the harmony of the whole play. Here also gymnastics can prove educative. Adaptation of a given rhythm, exercises together with a partner, or in a group, and quick reactions to unexpected commands prepare the way for disciplined reactions on the stage.

Last, though not least valuable, is the pleasant and fresh feeling one usually gets after an hour of reasonably considered and balanced exercise. Once in a while a young actor will say: "I have just come from a very strenuous rehearsal, and I am giving a performance tonight. I am dead tired. Shouldn't I better skip the class today?" Well, if the weather is not so tempting that I can say to him "Go ahead, have a nice walk and take a long good deep breath of fresh air," I usually advise him: "Try anyway. Take it easy, but see, whether you can't forget tonight's performance. Concentrate on the things we do, take pleasure in your body's reactions, its willingness to work for you, its being alive, and I promise that you will feel better afterwards."

There are, of course, many systems of gymnastics. But it is unnecessary to make a religion out of any of them. Perhaps one can even go so far as to say that every kind of exercise will do, provided it is based on a thorough knowledge of the human body and is applied with consideration of the circumstances and the condition of the individual or the group one is working with. And whether one practices daily or weekly, for ten minutes or two hours, one should always try to work the body completely through. This is important even when one wants to pay greater attention to a special part like the feet, stomach, or arms. By no means, however, is it necessary to limit oneself to the same exercises. The more variations one can think of, the more interesting it will be, the less one will come to that bored and useless routine which inhibits the effectiveness of the work. Not only should there be a change of exercises; there should also be a variety of tensions, a different approach in doing things either forcefully or leisurely or in a relaxed manner. A right balance must be struck between strenuous and soft, relaxing exercises. As in the case of piano playing, the exercises should contain a complete scale of different movements in order to assure perfect mastery of the instrument.

(Gertrud Eckardt)

Training the Actor's Speaking Voice by Marian Rich

There are four elements essential to normal speech: a *content* to be expressed, *language* or words to communicate it, *articulation* to make the words comprehensible, and *sound* to project them to the hearer. Choosing a vocabulary is not a part of the actor's responsibility, since that is provided for him by the playwright. But in spite of this, his problem as a speaker is far from simple. In order that the playwright's words ring sincere and true, they must sound as if they were spontaneous as the actor speaks them. A large part of an actor's training must therefore aim to bridge the gap back to an understanding and interpretation of the ideas which suggested the words to the playwright or his character.

If vocabulary is not fundamentally an actor's problem, articulation is not primarily a voice problem. It lies rather in the range of diction or phonetics to establish the correct formation of vowels and consonants, and the corresponding pronunciation of these sounds in individual words. But obviously there is an overlapping in the field of voice and diction, since both deal with vowels and consonants, words, phrases, and sentences. There is, on the one hand, a notable improvement in voice placement when the vowels are phonetically correct, when the R is made with the tip instead of the back of the tongue, when the lips are accurately and energetically used. And there is, on the other hand, progress in pronunciation when the throat and jaw are freed, when breath is used for support, and when the voice is correctly placed. However, even when one is liberated from vocabulary, and can leave diction to the experts, there are still many facets to training the speaking voice.

The human voice is a wind instrument which demands breath control, so that breathing not only keeps the actor alive, but is the life of each word he speaks on the stage. It is breath which makes it possible for an actor to be heard, to make his voice louder and softer, to vary its pitch. Every time he breathes, the breath will be used in his speech as well as his lungs. *Breathing* must be timed to lines for an actor as it is to phrases for a singer. As the famous director Louis Jouvet once said to me, "En respirant vous avez déjà tourné la phrase." In other words, speech is breath molded into form and transformed into sound by thought and emotion.

Most bad or unpleasant voices are the result of *tensions* at the jaw,

throat, soft palate, tongue or neck and shoulders, which prevent the breath from flowing freely into the proper cavities of the head, mask, or thorax. Singing exercises are of great value in checking these faults, and bear the same relation to speech as dancing to gesture. Once these tensions are removed, not only will the quality of the voice be improved, but the range will be greater, and the instrument will be capable of many shades of tone without strain on the throat.

The quality of the human voice is determined, as it is in musical instruments, by the size and shape of the resonance surfaces against which the breath vibrates. This is of great importance to an actor since the quality of the voice is one of the distinguishing features of a role. As he uses head, chest, mask, nasal, or throaty resonance, or no resonance, he creates for his audience one aspect of a lyric, vital, common, physical, or emotional characterization.

There are two common difficulties that often arise in the excitement of performance, which an actor can avoid only by preparing for them in advance, preferably in the classroom. He is apt to forget to breathe freely and to become physically tense under strain, unless he has been in the habit of doing emotional scenes with conscious relaxation of the upper part of the body, throat, and diaphragm. Again an inevitable nervousness is sure to send his voice soaring and cracking into the heights, unless he has learned to lower his general level of pitch by practicing as much as possible in low pitches, moving the voice down rather than up at the beginning of phrases, and for variety.

At the same time that the actor's voice is being built and trained as an instrument, the mind's ear must be trained *to hear*, to imagine, and to criticize sounds, pitches, qualities, dynamics. The ear must learn to recognize variations of vocal tone *per se*, and as in music, the emotional values of these elements of sound. The mind must know high, low, loud, soft, nasal, round, staccato, legato, thin, throaty, full, etc., and be able to connect any character and emotional state with its corresponding sound.

When the instrument is completely free, the work on the *expressive quality* of voice begins. It may start with imitation of noises and sounds, musical, animal, natural—always, of course, produced with physiological correctness and freedom. Concrete, vivid images called forth by words, ideas, and feelings may be used to color the voice. Variants in emotion and situation may be suggested to evoke differences of sound. The voice can be trained to produce and to distinguish

qualities of richness, hardness, sparkle, delicacy, and precision until gradually the actor becomes aware of how he produces these sounds, and how he feels when he produces them. Thus he begins to relate specific sounds to specific emotional situations and eventually to specific parts.

Stark Young has said, "The tone an actor uses can move us more than any other thing about him; the word he speaks gives us the concept; the gesture he makes exhibits a single phenomenon; but the voice may be anger itself or longing and goes straight as music does to the same emotion in us." But in order for the voice to be the subconscious instrument of the actor's ideas and emotions, it must first have been a conscious tool; and although sound is sense, it is sound as a reflex and response, rather than as an end, that is the ideal of the actor and voice teacher.

In other words, the actor must perfect the study of *the psychological background of the character's speech*, more than if he himself were choosing words to express his own personal needs. He must be aware of those forces which are contained in what we called at the beginning of this "Content to be expressed" as the basis of variety in vocal sound. They are the images, relationships, objectives, emotional states, and resulting characterization which called forth the playwright's dialogue. Since in ordinary life vocabulary is the result of a normal process of thought, and in acting it is imposed, it is the *thought process* which must be recreated on the stage, or the best trained voice will sound empty. And at this point the voice teacher turns her work over to the teacher of acting or to the director. (M. R.)

Pronunciation

An actor needs additional equipment after he has mastered the physical problems of voice. He may have acquired such an essential habit as the *forward placing* of the voice (speaking forward in the mouth with free use of the lips and tongue); thus he can manage to make himself heard without strain, and without excessive loudness when the role in a given situation requires softness. He may have learned to vary, by means of *changes of resonance*, the quality of his voice; he is then equipped to avoid monotony, to create greater illusion for audiences that have heard him often, and to adapt his speech to changes of tension in the role. He may have discovered moderation in *pitch* by the use of the lower registers of the voice. His *breathing* may become nat-

ural, open, and relaxed, enabling him to sustain his lines so that the last words of his sentences will not be swallowed. (Lack of proper breath control is often responsible for dropping last words.) All this is, of course, part of his training and must be watched constantly.[8]

However, there is one aspect of speech that voice training by itself cannot solve—*pronunciation*. There are obvious mistakes in standard pronunciation that can be corrected by reference to a good dictionary, preferably Webster's *International Dictionary*. The best time to cope with this problem is when the actor is preparing a role; if he checks up on unfamiliar words, or is corrected by the director at this time, he is likely to remember the correct usage. Where a choice of pronunciation is given, the actor and director should, of course, consider popular usage, the locale of the play, and the character. For instance, the actor who impersonates an American farmer should not select the pronunciation that prevails in southern England.

It is also important for him to make a careful distinction between words of similar appearance; failure to make the distinction may result in confusing phrases and sentences. Precision in the pronunciation of words like the following is absolutely essential:

accept, except	access, excess
advice, advise	affect, effect
alley, ally	all ready, already
allude, elude	allusion, illusion
assistance, assistants	breath, breathe
Calvary, cavalry	celery, salary
censor, censure	choler, color
clothes, cloths	conscious, conscience

[8] It is necessary only to remember that these acquisitions are subject to individual variations, some of which—provided they do not seriously affect euphony and clarity! —may become part of an actor's assets. The Irish actor Barry Fitzgerald, for instance, makes wonderful use of his extremely tight jaw for comic effect. As he mutters to himself he is well-nigh irresistible, although naturally this imposes a limitation on his effectiveness when it is important for the audience to hear every word. (Fortunately, he is such a good actor—that is, he makes such good use of movement, posture, and gesture, and his roles are so well chosen, that even his occasional unintelligibility is expressive.) The accomplished clown Jimmy Savo has no voice to speak of, but this defect, when it is compensated by his inimitable pantomime, becomes part of his effectiveness; he gives a most convincing representation of timid little men. One young student was eager to preserve his high-pitched, cracking voice which was suitable for juvenile roles in comedy. He was mistaken, however, in limiting himself to such a special quality, and in resisting any attempt to train his voice for greater flexibility and ease. He should have also realized that a consistently high pitch is unpleasant.

deceased, diseased	device, devise
decent, descent	desert (*noun*), dessert
elicit, illicit	emigration, immigration
finally, finely	formally, formerly
holly, holy	human, humane
ingenious, ingenuous	later, latter
lead, led	leased, lest
liar, lyre	lightning, lighting
loose, lose	passed, past
patience, patients	personal, personnel
precedence, precedents	quiet, quite
statue, stature	suit, suite
track, tract	weather, whether
which, witch	your, you're

Equally important is the correct placing of the accent, for English is an accented language. Here, too, recourse to the dictionary is essential. A strong tendency in American pronunciation is to accent first syllables (fi'nance, dic'tator, con'tractor); this should be avoided except when the role demands a deliberate preference for colloquial American speech.

The most troublesome problem is that of so-called standard English. In some plays—in Noel Coward comedies, for instance—it is easy enough to select upper-class British speech. Here the American actor has only to guard against falling into inconsistencies such as suddenly lapsing into a broad *a* in a word like *past* or *half* or overworking the Italian *a* (ah), as in pronouncing a word like *hand* (that is, he should not say *hond*). In plays which do not need a British effect and yet require cultured speech—in the comedies of S. N. Behrman and Philip Barry, for instance—"standard English" is essential. But what is standard English in America? It cannot be determined arbitrarily without violating actual speech, as there are too many variations of cultured pronunciation in different parts of the country.

A practical approach to standard English in the United States will be basically *negative*, in the sense that it will avoid strictly local peculiarities while retaining pronunciations that are fairly uniform among educated groups in different regions. It will also strive for some compromise between a pronunciation that is too British and one that is too American; for instance, the *a* in words like *half, past, dance,* and *laugh* will best be sounded as an intermediate vowel,—between the

Italian *a* and the flat and frequently nasalized Middle-Western *ă*. Sounds that seem too foreign or too pretentious distract an audience. Cultured speech in the theatre is not an elocutionist's paradise, but spoken language. It must have some verisimilitude, even if it can be heightened to some degree; it must not be distracting; and above all, it must be both readily intelligible and pleasing to the audience.

Slovenliness should ot course be avoided. For instance, the actor should guard against mispronouncing *u* as *oo* (*stoodent, dooty, prodooce*), *u* as *i* (*jist* for *just*), *o* as *u* (*fur* instead of *for*). Diphthongs should not be contracted into a single syllable (*sour* should not be rendered as *sahr*, *our* as *ahr*, etc.); and single vowels should not be lengthened into diphthongs, as in the case of *ma-an* for *man*. But neither should one over-syllabify or lapse into too precise an observance of sounds that appear in spelling but have been dropped in speech, like the *t* in *often*.[4]

Dialect plays naturally present difficulties that have to be considered individually. The actor who does not speak a certain dialect naturally must learn it by hearing it spoken; recordings may prove especially helpful. It is necessary to acquire some knowledge of idiosyncrasies (like the substitution of *ee* for *i* in French or of *v* for *w* in Germanic dialect), and some feeling for the music or tune of each language, since special speech rhythms characterize different dialects and languages. The actor must, above all, bear in mind that the dialect must not sound labored. Nor should he sacrifice intelligibility, for which reason it is advisable to speak dialectic distortions of words carefully and slowly in the opening scene in order to accustom the audience gradually to the unfamiliar sounds. It is also far more important to suggest dialect than to reproduce it with absolute accuracy; such accuracy might actually interfere with intelligibility except in the region where the dialect is spoken. It is well to remember that even playwrights who are famous for their reproduction of a certain dialect (Synge in his Irish plays and Hauptmann in *The Weavers*) modified dialect for purposes of intelligibility, expressiveness, and harmony.

In connection with dialect, as well as standard English, the study of phonetics is of special value. The following comments by Alice Hermes, a specialist in this field, state the case for training the actor phonetically,

[4] Recordings by John Gielgud, Maurice Evans, and Orson Welles are helpful to the actor who wishes to acquire pleasant standard English.

wherever time and instruction are possible, and suggest the main lines of treatment.

Phonetics

Although phonetics is a young science, its value is already established in many branches of linguistic study. But there is a special advantage to the actor, director, and even playwright in studying phonetics. The actor learns how to recognize and speak standard English, how to analyze and reproduce local and class dialects, and how to make himself easily heard and understood. The director may be able to use phonetics as a short-cut for indicating the specific speech-pattern, melody, and rhythm of a play. And it should even be possible for the playwright to indicate the kind of speech he wants used. For example, an accurate phonetic transcription would make possible a good reproduction of an Alabama dialect by people who never heard it.

Phonetics is the study of the spoken language. It begins with the investigation of the single sound and the combination of these sounds in words. To record these sounds, we use the International Phonetic Alphabet, in which each sound is represented by a single symbol. It should be clear that phonetics is not a new language. It is the visual representation of any spoken language. Professor William Tilly of Columbia University, one of the greatest teachers of phonetics, invariably emphasized the distinction between the "real words" which we hear and say, and the "book words" which we read and write. We use phonetic transcription to record the "real words."

Approved or standard English is the composite English free from class or local dialect used by well-educated people in all parts of the English-speaking world. It has been recorded, ***not*** determined, by trained phoneticians, after sorting masses of evidence. Deviations from this standard do exist in the speech-patterns of people who speak well, but these deviations are slight in comparison to those found in dialectic English. The ability to recognize these deviations and to hear the difference between standard and non-standard sounds calls for intensive ear-training. The student must learn the function of each of the organs of speech for the production of every sound. For example, he will learn that the consonant "n" is formed by the articulation of the tip of the tongue and the teeth-ridge. The soft palate is lowered, forcing the air to pass out through the nose. The vocal cords are made to vibrate so that voice is produced. In considering the vowel "e" as in "get," we see that

the tongue is intermediate in height. The lips are spread or neutral. The opening between the jaws is medium. The tip of the tongue touches the lower teeth lightly. As is the case with all vowels, the soft palate is in its raised position, preventing air from going through the nose. The vocal cords are made to vibrate. In addition, one should realize that English has symmetrical pairs of sounds, whose only difference lies in the fact that one of the pair is produced with vibration of the vocal cords, the other without. We call the first voiced, the second voiceless: "v" and "f," "z" and "s" are such cognates. The differentiation of voiced and voiceless sounds is of tremendous importance in correct speech. In addition to forming the sounds correctly, it is also necessary to give each sound its proper length, and this, too, involves detailed study.

After examining each sound in this way, the student can practice the best methods of combining sounds for clarity and beauty, as well as acquire better carrying power by vigorous voicing.

When the student is ready to deal with groups of words, he must further consider stress, phrasing, and intonation, learning to bring out the meaning of a passage by considering where to give stress and where to omit it. In grouping the unstressed syllables with the proper stressed syllables, speakers show the relative importance of ideas.

Closely allied to this problem is the study of strong and weak forms. In the weak form, the vowel is modified or omitted, or the consonant dropped. The word "that" for example, is sometimes pronounced with the vowel used in "hat," sometimes with the neutral vowel used in the last syllable in "sofa." This difference in sound indicates a difference in meaning.

Because the speaker must breathe often enough to produce full and vigorous sounds, and the listener needs time to follow complicated thought, it is necessary to study the proper use of pauses. Finally, it is important to master by study, the fundamental intonation patterns or tunes of English speech. (Alice Hermes)

CO-ORDINATION IN PRODUCTION

THEATRE is execution, and therefore involves the most careful collaboration. The best production ideas, stage effects, sets, costumes, lighting equipment, and lighting schemes will not prevail if there is no organization to ensure that everything tallies. Organization is, in fact, a major concern for all writers on college, little theatre, and so-called amateur production. "More amateur performances," writes Professor John Dolman, "are ruined by bad management than by bad acting."[1]

In the professional theatre we generally have a *producer* who selects the director, does the preliminary casting (often even signing up some leading actor or actress before engaging the director), controls the budget, chooses the theatre, criticizes the staging, and otherwise keeps his hand on the throttle of the production. In the college theatre the equivalent of the producer may be the head of the Dramatic Department. Sometimes, of course, the producer and the director, or even the producer, director and leading actor, are one-and-the-same person; this was generally the case in the days of the actor-manager not so long ago.

The actual staging of the play for any kind of theatre organization is supervised by the *stage director* or the *régisseur*, as he is known in continental Europe. He must be a creative artist, if he is to be worth employing and deserves to be heeded—an interpreter of the play as a whole who commands sufficient knowledge to direct the actors and to conceive the décor and lighting that will be realized by other artists. These are his functions in both the professional and non-professional theatre; and although the other artists create in their own right, his is the last word on performance, make-up, settings, furniture, properties, costumes, and lighting. He works as a comprehensive super-

[1] *The Art of Play Production*, by John Dolman, p. 326.

artist, and simultaneously as the chief organizer and executive. His activity is so complex that several chapters will be devoted to him. (See pp. 202-309.) For plays with music, a *musical director*, and for choreographic productions, a *dance director* will play an important part. Immediately under him, his right-hand man, is the *stage manager*, who attends all rehearsals, and sometimes even rehearses some actors like extras and understudies himself. He notes the director's wishes in all instances, supervises the performance on the stage in accordance with them, and attends to all technical details. He may have one or more assistants, depending on the complexity of the production. He is so important to the efficiency of the performance that a description of his work is here provided by Mr. John Haggott, stage manager for many Theatre Guild productions, and at present production assistant of that organization.

Another important collaborator is the *prompter*, who may be the *assistant stage manager*. Chosen for his low but distinct voice (women are recommended by Professor Garrett Leverton and others), he stands downstage right off the acting area and prompts the faltering performer. He must be thoroughly familiar with the play, making notations in the lines of the script that have presented the greatest difficulties during rehearsals. He must take care not to mistake an expressive pause for a lapse of memory; it may be expedient for him to have some understanding with actors, who will signal for aid. A callboy will be helpful to the prompter or stage manager in routing actors out of their dressing rooms, giving them warnings before they have to be on the set, and performing other necessary errands.

When an organization produces its own décor instead of ordering it from carpenters' shops and stores, it also needs a *technical director*, who supervises the building of the scenery and even builds it himself. He must be a versatile individual and a good craftsman. In such an organization, a stage carpenter, a technician for lighting equipment, a costume-maker, and a variety of assistants, not excluding volunteer sewing committees, will do the practical work.

In the non-professional theatre, and in the case of particularly exotic professional products, *a make-up artist* may also be required to instruct the actors and help them with their make-up. In universities, this personage may be the instructor of make-up. As a rule, however, the actor should be familiar with the art of make-up and perform the

task himself. Proper facilities for make-up are essential to an organization.

For the costumes a *wardrobe mistress* is needed. She should not only collect, store, and label them, but be capable of pressing them, making adjustments, and repairing them. She may be assisted by a seamstress; by the head seamstress where several are employed to sew for the organization. Proper facilities will include sewing rooms for cutting, basting, sewing, and pressing; storage rooms lined with racks, shelves, bins, and boxes; and a dyeing room supplied with vats, clothes lines, and other necessary items.

Finally, each organization or each production, when there is no permanent organization, must have several crews, each headed by one person who is responsible to the stage manager or technical director.

1. *The Stage Crew* is responsible for setting up, dismantling, and changing the scenery. It is generally the largest of the crews, as all changes must be made quickly (normally this should not exceed eight minutes between acts, and should take much less time between scenes), as well as noiselessly. It is most efficiently divided into two groups—the stagehands who manage curtains and raise and lower all parts of the set that are flown on lines (these are the "flymen"), and those who handle the flats that are moved off the stage (these are the "grips"). Both groups are supervised by the *stage-carpenter.*

2. *The Property Crew* attends to all properties, familiarly known as the "props." These fall into two classes: (a) "hand props" like combs, mirrors, instruments, weapons, etc., which are used by the actor during his performance; he may find them on the set ready for him to handle, or he may bring them on the stage himself after they have been handed to him by a "prop" man; (b) "set props" like furniture, paintings on the wall, telephones, fireplaces, and natural objects like stage trees and mounds which normally remain stationary during a scene. The head of this crew is the *property man,* who may even make props. His assistants place or nail the required properties on the set as specified and remove them whenever they are no longer needed in the next scene.

3. *The Light Crew* places all lighting and other electrical equipment, prepares the gelatins, and controls different lamps when these have to be managed separately. It is headed by an electrician who works the switchboard. He has as many assistants as are required for lighting the play.

All the crew heads must have an accurate outline of their duties,—a *scene plot*, a *property plot*, and a *light plot*. Plots for make-up and costuming are also helpful. Where sound effects are numerous, a *sound plot* is needed. When music is used, this may involve considerable detail.

In the professional field, these crews are thoroughly unionized, and both the director and the stage manager must acquaint themselves with all union regulations to avoid violations and unnecessary expenses. Non-professional theatres can operate more flexibly, as well as far less expensively, although occasions may arise when they will come into conflict with local unions.

There is a temptation to omit mention of the *house manager*, box-office attendants, and the ushers, as their duties do not directly concern the production. Nevertheless, efficiency in their departments is essential to the reception of the play, to the audience response that often affects the actors' performance. Disgruntled patrons who have had to wait too long on the box-office line, local critics and dignitaries who were forced to stand in line when the reserved tickets should have been handed out without delay (two box-office windows are particularly helpful in this connection), people who don't get their programs or are made late by crowding or are improperly seated and have to be noisily reseated,—these are tangible threats to the success of a production. In a sense, even the publicity department is a factor, since its work includes preparing the audience and the press for response to the play.

In the university theatres, the quality and efficiency of production can be greatly promoted by an ample and intelligently planned academic curriculum. The scope of studies related to the theatre at the School of Dramatic Art of Ohio University, under the direction of Professor Robert Gates Dawes, illustrates the relation between curriculum and production.

Academic Curriculum

Voice and Diction
Introduction to the Theatre
Elements of Stage Scenery
Elements of Stage Lighting
Costuming the Play
Make-Up
Scene Design and Painting

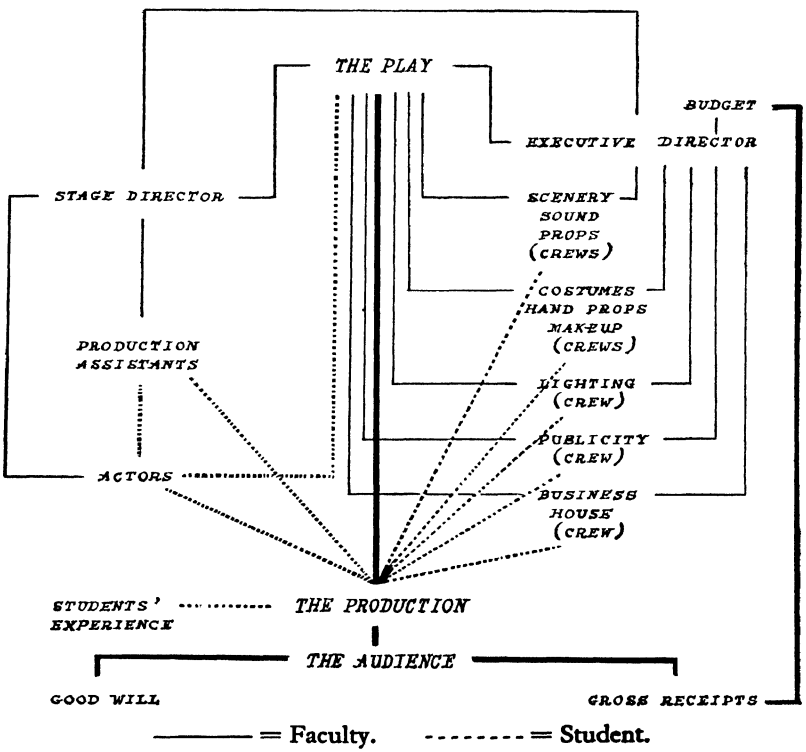
Radio Play Production
Puppetry
Plays for Puppets
Theatre Workshop
Oral Interpretation of Literature
Principles of Acting
Advanced Acting Technique
Teaching of High School Dramatics
Theatre Management
History of the Visual Theatre
Advanced Scenery and Lighting
Dramatic Composition
Play Direction
Advanced Play Direction
Masters of the Theatre
Research in Theatre Practice
Dramatics for Children
Seminar in Production Problems

These courses serve as an excellent foundation for the university theatres' production units, which consist of:

Ohio University Theatre (5 productions a year)
University Playshop (10 bills of one-act plays each year—one-third of plays original)
University Air-Theatre (plays recorded for broadcast by near-by stations)
Children's Theatre—planned for next season

Professor Dawes's chart of university theatre production, which each organization can amplify or condense in practice according to its capacities and needs, provides a particularly vivid picture of the relations of the parts to the whole:

UNIVERSITY THEATRE
RESPONSIBILITY-LABOR
DISTRIBUTION CHART



THE STAGE MANAGER AS CO-ORDINATOR

John Haggott

IT IS difficult to write a very lucid description of "what a Stage Manager should know" when one has always in the back of his mind the essential differences which that position may assume in various types of theatrical production. For, as the play goes, so goes the job of running it. My own collegian experience is not so far removed that it is difficult to recall the duties entailed; and as I remember them, in a university *not* particularly organized for dramatics, I am slightly appalled at the gulf which separates the functions of the stage manager in the average production and a professional one. The in-between step is the summer theatre and because it is native to that term, I have chosen to outline the three sets of responsibilities and to show, if possible, a correlation which might be feasible between them.

The stage manager of a college production is often a Junior who was the best carpenter (or electrician) that the Sophomore Class produced. He is a hunted man who supervises the two technical departments which have recognized standing in the amateur theatre —the carpentry and electrical departments—and who has as his crown of thorns a weak little sister known to all as "The Prompter." His was, and I venture to say, is, the job of constructing the sets and light ing them. Now, I have no wish to belittle such a hard working and important functionary; nor do I have any desire to strip from him the inevitable kudos of being referred to as the "unsung hero" of the show. My purpose here is to suggest that a small study of the duties of the professional stage manager might serve to improve the standard of production and level out the differences which are native

to the division of responsibility that is current in the college or "Little theatre."

The average college stage manager has a consultation with the director about the sets required for the show. He then starts to build them, or supervise their construction, as the case may be. When the time for dress rehearsal approaches, he supervises hanging the show and may take a hand with the lights, if that has been his previous specialty. His participation in rehearsals is slight, his knowledge of the production is casual, and questions about the properties required, where they are to be obtained, and how they are to be placed, shifted and used, are often matters for the "Property Committee" and the director, not for him. Cues in the running of the play are likewise the business of the "prompter" and of the person who happens to handle the objects which the cues concern. In effect, the electrician often takes his own cues, the curtain man his, and so on down the line. And so the usual college production wends its way with much departmentalism. The stage manager remains the head of one department, with little control over the others, and therefore leaves the stage where it began before the production was begun—that is, without a single head. A theatrical production is a *tour-de-force* of compromise, no matter under what conditions it may take place; and that compromise is best governed by a single head. If it were possible for the director of the play to be back stage during the production, it would not be necessary or advisable to have a stage manager, since their functions would duplicate. However, since the director usually has other things to do during the performance, it might be well to review the duties of the stage manager, first in a so-called Broadway production, and secondly in a summer stock theatre. There are many things for which a stage manager in the professional field is responsible which would never affect his non-professional colleague, but these are largely economic and can be easily omitted; the balance of his work is important to the success of a production and might well be included in the amateur definition of the job.

In the professional theatre, the job of stage manager is one that in other business might be called a combination of Personnel and Communication. He is essentially a co-ordinator among all of the separate facets of the production and the source of information which each department must have in order to do the work which the production entails. This responsibility is not restricted to the physical pro-

duction alone, but also embraces the accounting, legal, and publicity departments.

Prior to the beginning of rehearsals, he aids the director, producer, and author in casting. He must prepare lists of alternates for each part, arrange for interviews, read with the prospective actors for the director and other people of importance; and when notified of the final choice of cast, he must arrange for each member of the cast to see the business manager for contract signature, and finally issue the rehearsal calls to them.[1]

During Rehearsals

By the time this is done, the rehearsals begin with the stage manager holding the script. He is responsible for keeping a complete script with all line changes and with the stage business which occurs during the rehearsal period, so that by the opening night his prompt script will present a complete and accurate record of the entire production. During the rehearsal he makes out the plots for the property, electrical, and carpentry departments (see p. 192 ff.). These plots he gives to the heads of these departments and has daily conferences with them regarding changes or additions in the requirements for their separate departments. After the preliminary period of reading, the designer having finally come through with a ground plan, the stage manager lays out a plan of the sets in actual size on the stage floor, so that the director and actors may work in the same space-dimension which will confront them in the finished set. He must know the blue prints perfectly so that when the director and the leading man devise an entrance of the protagonist sliding down the banister railing, the stage manager may remind them that it has a large newel post at the bottom and might not be as much fun as they anticipate.

If the play is in period, or requires costumes which have to be made for it, he must arrange not only the appointments for fittings, but also keep the maker and the designer posted on any changes in the original designs or additions which were not thought of when the costumes were first designed. By means of this he grows to know

[1] At the first rehearsal he must, besides, list the actors appearing at the rehearsal, record their Social Security numbers, secure affidavits of their addresses for taxation, and prepare a preliminary payroll for the rehearsal payments; as well as notify the production office of the date of the end of their probationary period.

that no costume designer recognizes the pocket as a standard article of dress, or the button or snap-hook as a thing to be reached. Beware the costume play where clothes are changed quickly or things are to be taken out of pockets, for it is two-to-one that either or both will be impossible unless the maker of the costumes is hounded within an inch of his already harried life.

Dealing with Music

If the play has any music connected with it, the stage manager's function is complicated further. If standard recorded works are used, he has to select the records and arrange for copyright-clearance with the business manager. He must also arrange with his electrician for means of reproduction and decide the output wattage required, the number of speakers, the placing of them, and the number and type of turntables required.

If, however, the music is to be played instrumentally during the production, there is, first, the inevitable meeting of the composer, the director, and the stage manager (that is, if a special score is to be composed). In this talk the mood of the music is discussed, and the exact word-cues in the script are set and serially numbered so that a standard number may be used by everybody concerned with a cue. See plot "A-B." Also the approximate length of time that the cue is to consume is noted. Then the stage manager must discuss instrumentation for the score, and see the Business Manager to be sure that the theatre contract calls for the correct number of musicians. He arranges to collect the score as it is composed, and has the separate instrument parts made and copied. The musicians having been selected and hired and the score composed and copied, he calls the leader and arranges for a reading rehearsal of the orchestra. After this preliminary rehearsal is over, he arranges for the key instruments to come to the regular play rehearsal. And so the actor meets the music and the stage manager's troubles have begun.

Whether the stage manager or the conductor gives the actual cues during a performance is a matter governed by the details of the particular production. But in any case, the stage manager is responsible that the music come as planned by the composer and director in the course of the play, and that the expression in playing continue on the basis set up at the dress rehearsal by these two.

Properties and Lights

Insofar as actual running of a show is concerned, there are two departments which fall under the eye of the stage manager to a far greater extent than do any others: properties and electrics. The detail involved in these fields is usually greater than that in any other, and so requires constant checking.

During the rehearsal period, the stage manager has made note of all properties required by the production and has advised first the property man and then the scenic designer of their existence, approximate size, and function. (See plot "C.") When the dress rehearsal arrives, he directs the placing of the furniture and the minor agenda that accompanies it, as well as preparing the prop-tables on each side, off stage, on which the varied things which an actor may have to bring on are placed. And from that point on, the stage manager becomes a modern Argus in seeing that both object and its placing are correct at the right time. If the play calls for food to be eaten during the performance, he must make the proper provision—and the number of foodstuffs that an actor cannot eat in performance is as varied as the mind of the playwright who conceived that he should be eating them.

Often the stage manager directs the lighting of the production, more often he does not. It is usually compounded by the director, the designer, and the electrician. The stage manager's duty in this latter set-up is not so "outside" as it might seem, for his is the job of duplicating the lighting whenever and wherever the show may move. To do this well, he must know a bit about the subject and have a system of notation by which he can record first, the angles and colors of all the lights used, second, the electrical hook-up of the switchboards, and third, the actual lights used in each scene and their intensities. (See plots D-E-F.) He must also know this well enough to recognize when a mistake has been made and what constitutes an error. Originality, when it comes from the stage manager, is not thought well of in the theatre, and so if there is any deviation in the lighting from one performance to the next, he may find himself the object of considerable badgering. The moral is that the system of electrical notation had best be accurate, foolproof, and readable. He should also know the quality which the lighting of each scene was designed to achieve. Many times on tour, physical limitations of the theatre played in may prevent using all of the original equipment or

placing it as it was first placed when the production was set up. In such circumstances it is up to the stage manager to duplicate as he will, and as best he can, the effect that was originally achieved.

Usually the carpentry department is the least of his worries, largely because it has a more permanent basis, and also because it is supervised by both the head of the department and the designer in the initial period. Little of note can happen to it after that except in case of accident in which, as in any other contingency, the stage manager may as well be ready with a solution. The remaining functions that a stage manager customarily fills are restricted to metropolitan production. However, he may find it necessary to cope with the understudy problem, with the job of understudy rehearsals, and the keeping of a perfect script record for their direction. Lastly, if the production goes on tour, he will have to attend to the trunk list, reservations, transfer, and theatre calls.

If I have herein made it clear that the position of stage manager is placed fairly in the middle of many opposing forces, and that he must be familiar with every phase of production, my point is made.

At Summer Theatres

The Summer Theatre, since it is now well out of the class of novelty and has become one of permanence, is a varied topic. In such an organization a stage manager's function is controlled by the management of the theatre. He may do all that his metropolitan counterpart does and in the same fashion, or he may be a college dramatic society official once removed. The more usual requirements are that he light the production, get the props for it, and act as a stage manager of the play. However, he is generally relieved of the job of permanent records of the production, for usually the play runs but a week and is not reproduced. Also the physical aspects of the production are generally lighter, and detail in all departments is not so closely adhered to. Life is not, however, too roseate, because the Summer Theatre is usually a short-handed operation, and to him falls the lot of doing much physical work on the production which in New York would be done by other and more unionized hands. In many cases he will build and paint the sets as well as attempt to run the show in performance.

There are many functions of the professional stage manager that

would be useless if applied to a non-professional production. Also the needs and type of organization of amateur productions have no standard of requirements which would be all-inclusive. However, it is well to remember some of the tasks of the professional and to apply as many of them as are practical. This would result in making the office of stage manager more central, more efficient, and complete. It may appear that he is the holder of all the *hubris* and none of the *kudos* of a play. But this is not so. The coalescence and efficiency of a production, to which he can contribute so greatly, is a major virtue in the theatre.

A. THUNDER CUE SHEET

(For *Battle of Angels*)

#1. . . . ain't he in Jackson Springs?
LOW ON TYMP. [TYPANI]
#2. . . . . reach of your fingers.
MED. ON TYMP.
#3. . . . . I won't fall.
LOUD ON TYMP. SHEET PICKS UP.
#4. . . . . Oh . . oh . . . Thanks.
Receding ON TYMP.
#5. . . . . Of Two River County.
Med. Loud, On TYMP.
#6. . . . . Locked and chained.
LOUD ON TYMP., SHEET PICKS UP, and 2nd TYMP.
#7. . . . . Play the Victrola.
Med. Loud. Long roll, ON TYMP.
#8. . . . Climbed out of.
VERY LOUD, TYMP. and SHEET, 2nd TYMP. Picks Up.
#9. . . all over your face.
LOW on Tymp.
#10. . . . . It's finished.
Low on Tymp.

B. SOUND PLOT

(For Act I. *Battle of Angels*)

Cue #1. Overture, blends into Decca Record #789.
Cue #2. Train Whistle (as curtain is up).
Cue #3. . . .and no payoff.
Train whistle.

Decca Record #789 out on end of 1st chorus.
Cue #4. .....olives had seeds in them.
Train arrival.
Cue #5. .....three times straight.
Large car arrival.
Cue #6. .....Crack up once in the air.
Train depart.
Cue #7. .....but drive like hell.
Small car arrive.
Cue #8. .... . might thicken up.
Harmonica fade in.
Cue #9. . ...kind of rude.
Harmonica fade out.
Cue #10. ..... Broken my laig.
Small car arrive.
Cue #11. . . women got in a ruckus . .
Mule skinners song fade in.
Cue #12. (Sheriff's exit)
Small car depart.
Cue #13. (Negro's exit)
Dog bark (single).
Cue #14. have space around me.
Mule skinner's Song fade out.
Cue #15. ..... Life
Dog bark.
Cue #16. . one of my biggest troubles.
Dog bark.
Cue #17. Interlude music.
Cue #18. ..... yeah, that one.
Decca #1615, "Hula Blues" fade in.
Cue #19. ..... Sheriff's Wife.
Cue #18 fade out.
Cue #20 .. ..Silver and white.
Waltz, orchestra.
Cue #21. . ... in at the middle.
Gin effect fade in.
Cue #22. .. .. I was afraid you would.
Percussion.

C. PROP PLOT

(For Act I. *Battle of Angels*)

SCENE 1

Stove.
2 wooden chairs (light) (L of stove; L of counter DR [Down Right])
Cash register stand:
  cash register, practical:
    several 5-dollar bills
    change
  drawer, practical:
    record book
    pencil
    invoices (loose)
  1st shelf:
    cash book
    snap board with several invoices
  top of stand:
    charge notebook
    pencil
    ball of string
    Scotch tape
Counter DR:
  top:
    rack with boxes of valentines
    2 boxes pencils
    writing paper and envelopes
    boxes and stationery
Dress rack:
  12 women's winter dresses
Hat counter:
  cap stand:
    top: 2 pasteboard dress boxes
    shelves: caps, 2 men's hats
  3 hat-stands
    yellow hat on stand
Trestle table, D of post L:
  cloth
  2 2-branch candelabra.
  vase of narcissus center out of
  ashtray:

1 cigarette
1 box matches
Wooden 2-seater shoe-bench
Shoe-stool
Shoe mirror
7 practical shoe boxes:
(3 for Eva; 1 for Vee; 1 Queen Quality; 1 blucher oxfords; 1 white pumps)
Shoe boxes to dress shelves
Step ladder
Shoe horn

SCENE 2

Strike[2]:
trestle table
3 hat boxes
hat from cash register
magazine from cash register
top box L of stairs
Set:
sock counter:
several boxes socks and stockings
underwear
1 dress box (L end of dress rack):
red dress (on top)
blue and white dress
string and scrap paper (under OS [other side of] sock counter)
snap board 7 invoices (top of cash reg. stand)
2 hats (brown and blue)
spring dresses
chair (from DL to DR)
dogwood blossoms
2 hanging panels (L wall and over juke box)
Off R
1 oil painting (red church steeple)
accordion (prop)
Off C
box of men's slacks
In confectionary:
heart-shaped candy box
case of cokes (Coca Cola bottles)

[2] Remove.

PROP COSTUMES

ACT I, SCENE 1

3 ladies' hats—(2 of average head-size; 1 to fit DOLLY)
(Spring hats—in fancy boxes)
1 snakeskin jacket—(To VAL'S measurements; beige lizard skin, dyed with markings of snake)
1 pair white suede blucher oxfords (women's; any size; in shoe box)
1 dozen ladies' dresses—(mixed sizes; to dress dress-rack)
(Spring and winter styles)
Assorted ladies' hats—(Winter styles; to dress hat-counter)
Assorted men's caps—(Winter styles; to dress cap-stand)

D. SWITCHBOARD CIRCUITS

(For *Battle of Angels*)

Board #1.

1. } "A" Preset Board[8]
2. }

3. } "B" " "
4. }

5. } "C" " "
6. }

Boards #2-3.

Switch #1. Garlands
2. Drop Lights
3. Amber Back Border
4. Blue-Pink Back Border
5. 71 Well Border
6. Blue and Pink Well Border
7. 1000 Watt Tormentor #7; L. & R.
8. " " " #8; L. & R., etc.

[8] A "Preset" switchboard is a sub-circuit board which has from 6 to 12 small non-interlocking dimmers, each on a separate circuit. Each of these switchboards is controlled by one "Master Dimmer" on the main board. These boards allow a scene to be set up electrically in advance and are thus called "Preset." In this case the "Presets" had two master circuits and so required two master board circuits for each preset unit.

E. ELECTRIC PLOT

(For Act I, Scene 1. *Battle of Angels*)

Sc. 1. Open:

Preset Masters, A, f; B, ½; C, ½

Preset Dimmers:

1-¼	7-F	13-F	19-½
2-½	8-F	14-½	20-½
3-F [Full]	9-F	15-½	21-F
4-F	10-½	16-¼	22-½
5-out	11-½	17-F	23-F
6-½	12-F	18-½	24-½

Switches:

3-½; 5-8; 20-F; 21-F; 22-F; 23-F; 24-F; 10-¾

Fronts:

1-5-9 to 2[4]
2-6-10 to 5
3-7-11 to 2

Cue #1:

Switches:

5-2; 3-2; 20-3; 21-6; 22-5; 23-5; 24-8

Fronts:

3-7-11 to 5.

Cue #2:

Preset dimmers:

1-out	7-out	13-½	19-out
2-½	8-½	14-out	20-out
3-out	9-out	15-F	21-½
4-½	10-½	16-½	22-out
5-F	11-out	17-out	23-out
6-out	12-½	18-F	24-out

[4] The term "Fronts" refers to lamps of the "spot" type which are usually placed on the balcony railing. Wherever they may be placed, they are accorded this term. These units are numbered in rotation (usually from left to right) for designation purposes. Electrically they are "ganged" together as the various scenes or color circuits require. So, the "gangs" are referred to by their serial numbers; a "gang" may be called "1-5-10" or any other combination.

F. ELECTRIC PLOT: COLOR AND ANGLE PLOT

(For *The Time of Your Life*)

1st Pipe—6 in. 500 W.:[5]

#1. 71-112; Chair R. of L.C. Table
#2. 71-112; Below and R. of Phone
#3. 71-112; Chair R. of C. Table (matt to inset)
#4. 71-112; to Phone
#5. 71 ; Onstage on Bar
#6. 71-112; Stage
#7. 71-112; below door Up C.
#8. 71-112; to Phonograph
#9. 71 ; Back C. of Bar
#10. 71-112; Chair L. of L.C. Table
#11. 71 ; Steps
#12. 71 ; Up of Bar
#13. 71-112; Piano
#14. 71-112; Pin Ball Game
#15. 71-112; Up C. of Bar
#16. 71-112; Down C. of Bar
#17. 71-112; Chair L. of C. Table
#18. 10-112; Up of C. Table to Piano
#19. 71-112; Onstage of C. of Bar
#20. 71 ; Up of C. of Bar

R. Tormentor—6 in. 500W.:

#1. 71-112; R. of Pin Ball Game
#2. 10-112; Below Bar
#3. 71 ; Chair L. of C. table
#4. 71-112; Chair L. of L.C. Table
#5. 71-112; Chair L. of L.C. Table (21 mark)
#6. 71-112; Phonograph

L. Tormentor:

#1. 71 ; Chair R. of L. Table
#2. 71-112; Below Table L.C.
#3. 71-112; Chair R. of L.C. Table (21 mark)
#4. 71 ; Chair L. of C. Table

[5] In giving a plot of this type it is expedient to compress the following information: (a) type of lamp, here expressed by 500 Watt, with 6" lens and (b) the color medium used in it. There are several manufacturers of gelatin and as their products differ as to shade, the catalog numbers are used. "71" means a single sheet of #71 Rosco gelatin, and "71-112" means a single sheet of #71 and a single sheet of #112 in the same frame.

#5. 71 ; Onstage of Bar
#6. 71 ; Chair R. of C. Table

Stand Spots R.:

#1. 71 ; to Up of Swinging Doors
#2. 71 ; to Down of Swinging Doors

Stand Spot, Back C.:

#1. 10-112; to Doorway

G. CARPENTER PLOT

(For *Battle of Angels*)

ACT ONE

Sc. 1. CURTAIN UP, Medium [Speed]
" DOWN, Medium.

Sc. 2. Garlands to low trim.
Picture Panel to low trim.[6]
Curtain Up, Medium.
" Down, Fast.

ACT TWO

Same as Act One Sc. 2.
Curtain Up, Medium.
" Down, Medium Slow.[7]

[6] The word "trim" is the theatre's most used word. It means a height to which any piece of scenery or equipment is taken by the flyman for use in a scene. Thus every drop, border light pipe, etc., has a proper "trim" which is masked in the flies. If a piece has two or more "trims," in other words, if it is used in separate scenes at a different place, these are designated as "high," "low," or may be given the scene numbers as a method of designation. In this case a picture of large size was hung from the flies and was lowered in the intermission.

[7] Usually it is difficult to get curtain speeds expressed in the English Language. Many times speeds of this sort are counted out on a musical beat. The usual system is to rough it out with "Fast," "Medium Fast," "Medium," "Medium Slow," "Slow," and "Very Slow." It's a sort of boxing the compass arrangement.

This section concludes our survey of preparation for producing the play. To summarize, we may say that the preparation consists of:

1. An understanding of the nature of the drama, of its special problems, and its esthetic and historical styles, as well as a knowledge of our past and present dramatic literature.
2. An understanding of the nature of the theatre and of its styles of production.
3. An understanding of the theatre building, and the creation of an adequate plant, stage, and auditorium.
4. An understanding of the elements of theatrical production—scenic design, lighting, and costuming.
5. An understanding of the nature of acting, and the proper training of actors and the acting group.
6. A knowledge of the art of directing by one or more members of the staff of the producing organization.
7. Efficient organization of the departments of a producing unit, and the creation or maintenance of the best possible facilities for the work of the various departments.

We may now turn to the actual production of a play under the guidance of the director and with the collaboration of those associates who create the décor

Producing the Play

I. THE DIRECTOR AT WORK

Production Procedures
Directing the Play
The Principles of Interpretation
Form in Production

II. THE THEATRE ARTS IN PRODUCTION

Designing the Play
Lighting the Play
Make-up for the Play
Costuming the Play

PRODUCTION PROCEDURES

THE production of a play is the director's responsibility. After choosing the script or accepting the assignment to direct it when the producer makes the selection, he sets up a producing unit, or he avails himself of an already existing one, merely selecting his assistants from its available personnel.

Selecting the Play

In the fields of the university, school, "little theatre," and so-called amateur (dramatic club) production, the problem of play selection by the director or by a play committee involves special problems. *One must know one's potential audience*—its tastes, previous exposure to the theatre-age level, degree of sophistication, and local traditions and interests, including its history, politics, racial and religious complexion, social outlook, economic activity, and so on. For example, a moderately sophisticated comedy may seem daring to an unsophisticated community, a liberal play radical or even revolutionary to a conservative playgoing body, a moderately realistic drama sensational (for better or worse) to audiences that have not seen many modern plays. And conversely, in a metropolitan area like New York, plays that would seem sophisticated, sensational, or original in other regions may seem altogether too mild, too naïve, and too old-fashioned. Playwrights who have little knowledge of metropolitan centers often believe they will be taking Broadway's breath away with stories that would not ruffle a maiden-aunt in the city.

At the same time, it is important to avoid hard-and-fast generalizations and deductions, or to regard past experience as an absolute criterion. Local differences are being diminished by improved means of communication, and both films and radio are producing an increasingly homogenous national taste—again, for both better and worse. Moreover, a community is not a static, unchanging thing; its

attitude alters under the pressure of circumstances, world events, and cultural developments. There can be too much caution in play selection and too little reliance on the flexibility of a locality. All that can be said with certainty is that, like playwrights, producers, directors, or play committees should be sensitive to their time and place. Such sensitivity will tell them not only what to avoid and what to select, but also what adjustments to make in the play and the production in order to *overcome* audience resistance. For example, an important social issue may be presented moderately or obliquely for one kind of public, which still has to be persuaded, and forcefully to an audience that is already familiar with the plain facts and accepts them implicitly.[1]

In choosing the play one must also know one's theatre's physical resources, and to what extent these can be augmented by expenditures or assistance from the community (which may lend properties, costumes, and perhaps even lighting equipment). And the availability of actors, dancers, and musicians, and their ability to perform what the play requires must, of course, be particularly considered. Here, too, however, it is inadvisable to arrive at hasty conclusions that may prevent the producing organization from undertaking an ambitious production. The resources of the American people have been barely tapped for theatre, as for everything else. Especially in finding casts there is no need to be excessively pessimistic about local talent. The lack of either required types or expert performers can prove less serious than may be imagined. In this connection, the following note contributed by Miss Cheryl Crawford, independent New York and summer theatre producer, and the Theatre Guild's casting director for many years, may be found illuminating.

A Note on Casting by Cheryl Crawford

A professional tea-taster does not find it easy to explain why one tea tastes better to him than another. A casting director, too, has difficulty in explaining how he knows just the right actors to select for certain parts. Some casting directors say they do it by "intuition";

[1] When the Scottsboro case drama *They Shall Not Die* was written, two types of presentation suggested themselves. The Theatre Guild's production concentrated on the human equation as much as the script allowed, used realistic sets, and restrained the violence of the action. Other producing groups, which aimed at a partisan public, considered the production genteel and stuffy; for their audiences they wanted an aggressive production supplied with painted drops representing mass action on behalf of the Negroes and scenes of squalor.

one of the best of them claims that she knows by a peculiar sensation she gets "right in the middle," presumably the middle of her stomach, but even she cannot describe exactly what the sensation is. It seems to me this means that a great deal of the process of casting a play stems from the subconscious.

Of course, experience is an all-important factor—experience and a good memory. Casting directors, as a rule, remember the performances of virtually every actor they ever see at work. Some of them keep a complicated system of cross-index files with programs, notes, and cards; others simply file their reactions away in the back of their minds and turn there when necessary.

There are many problems in casting, depending upon the type of play, the interpretation that is intended, and the available material (for often casting a role is a matter of compromise). The moot point, however, is so-called *type casting*. On this subject I have found a middle-ground to be the most tenable one in practice. I don't always believe in casting to type—but then, on the other hand, I don't always believe in casting against type either!

Sometimes one cannot get any expression in a part by casting an actor who is the exact counterpart of the character as the author has him in mind, because then the actor finds it impossible to add anything except that quality which both the character and the performer already possess. This quality is so perfectly "right" that it is impossible for the actor to "grow" beyond it. This is particularly true in the case of a rather flat or dull part. When in casting a play I run across a dull business-man part, for instance, I immediately put out of mind all of the actors who quickly leaped to the fore as perfect examples. I rack my brains for someone with some personal eccentricity, in color, voice, appearance, or general style of acting, who will give an extra touch to the part and keep it from being dull.

I don't always believe in casting to type in the case of colorful characters either. The case of Alfred Lunt in *Idiot's Delight* comes to mind. He had certainly never been a "hoofer," and I don't believe he had ever sung a song on stage. I feel sure that if an actual song-and-dance man had been cast in that fine part, he could have added nothing to it that would have brought to the play the great characterization which Alfred Lunt gave. The casting of Gene Kelly in *Pal Joey,* to cite another example, was particularly good. The character, as written, is definitely unpleasant. If the obvious Broadway

musical comedy leading man had been put in that part, I think it would have been quite unbearable. If someone with more expertness and more self-assurance had been chosen, the play would have been too obvious from the beginning. Gene Kelly, however, brought a freshness and a naiveté and a really likeable quality to the character. This made a difficult theme palatable—and the theme is that one can never quite regenerate a "heel." . . .

Nevertheless, casting to type in minor roles and where atmosphere is needed often works out very well. In the case of *Green Grow the Lilacs*, which I cast for the Theatre Guild, we began interviewing all of the young Equity members who could sing a little, for the extra cowboy parts. We selected and re-selected, but it never seemed to any of us that the actors provided any feeling of authenticity. Then one night I went over to the Rodeo at Madison Square Garden and said to one of the managers, "Do you think any of these real cowboys would like to stay on after your rodeo and be in a New York show?" Since he thought that quite a few of them would be delighted at the proposal, I asked him to send over to the Guild Theatre those we might depend upon. The next day we were struggling along with forty or fifty Equity members on the stage when all of a sudden in tramped twenty-five real cowboys in full regalia. The director took one look at them and promptly said "This is what we want." We have always thought that the authentic note these twenty-five real Westerners brought to *Green Grow the Lilacs* was largely responsible for the success of that play.

In *Roar China* the Theatre Guild started out selecting Equity actors for the bit parts and extras, and felt completely unsatisfied. Then I began going down through Chinatown; I spent ten or twelve nights wandering through the Chinese district picking out types. One man I found there was addressing a political meeting; he turned out to be the best actor in the cast of this political, anti-imperialistic play. Some of the best bits in *Porgy*, too, were played by people who had never been on the stage before, and they added a great deal of authenticity to this folk drama. Some of them couldn't read, and we had to train them to remember their lines by speaking them over and over. These people had a rare way of saying lines in their own words, and sometimes we would put their words down because they were better than those in the script. Two whole scenes were played in actual conversations that these people had among themselves. One woman whom we

found scrubbing a floor—she was seventy-two years old at that time—never did get to say her lines consistently; but whatever she said was always so apt that no one ever minded.

There are many subtleties of effect that should not be overlooked, and they are likely to be overlooked when the casting is literal. Thus, the casting of Josephine Hull and Jean Adair as the two old poisoners in the murder comedy *Arsenic and Old Lace* is brilliant, since at first sight the audience is certain that these two gentle women, who remind one of one's mother, couldn't possibly have committed a crime. Such casting assures the right mixture of surprise for the melodrama and humor for the comedy in this play. In Elmer Rice's *Flight to the West*, the director had to cast the part of a Nazi consul who is both a conspirator and an apologist for his cause. Now, instead of being a typical "villain" type, the actor chosen for this ungracious role was Paul Henried; and because he is an attractive and charming person, it was possible for him to make the audience listen to the unpopular point of view, the refutation of which is the *raison d'être* of the play. In casting a barbed comedy like *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, it was absolutely essential to select the most charming and amusingly suave person one could think of to play the caustic and unpleasant part of the hero. When he delivers himself of his terrible quips, it is important for the audience to like him instead of shuddering with distaste; otherwise the comic effect is bound to be ruined.

With respect to the problem of casting in non-professional groups, it is often well to select a play to fit the players. If the organization is, let us say, in an agricultural part of the country it would not be very wise to try to put on Noel Coward's *Private Lives*—unless there happened to be some very unusual farmers in the neighborhood. Certainly, something like *You Can't Take It With You*, while far from being a rural drama, could be much more creditably given. After all, the object of these groups is to provide entertainment for their audience, and not to develop Mrs. Smith and Mr. Jones into real players; they probably don't want to be professional actors anyway, and wouldn't think of giving up their pleasant and secure lives for the trials and tribulations of the commercial theatre. At the same time, they really love the theatre and like their work in it. They enjoy it more when they are able to give a good performance, and they are generally better able to do so when they are cast in roles in which they can feel at home. It may not always be possible to suit the plays

to the locale of the theatre, but in many cases it has been done and it is almost always outstandingly successful. For instance, I feel certain that a group in Pittsburgh could make a success of *The Weavers*, and in Oklahoma—well, *Green Grow the Lilacs*, by all means.

I have seen plays which were indigenous to a locality presented by local groups which I thought were superior in performance to the original professional companies because they created such an effect of reality. On the other hand, it is probably desirable to vary the native, easily cast, plays with others which create greater problems for the actor; and by an imaginative application of non-type casting, unusual and interesting interpretations of the play and part may be revealed

(C. C.)

Program Making

The possibilities of finding special talent in the community or university should be included in one's inventory. Various academic departments—the music, physics, fine arts, physical education, and other faculties—and their best students can often be utilized. Special training in advance of production and during rehearsals will also help to overcome some difficulties posed by a play. Program-making for a permanent organization will give the director time to tap all possible resources and start some kind of training in advance of the production. He can, for instance, prepare a chorus for a Greek tragedy by asking the dancing or music instructor to stress certain modes of dancing and singing.

A balanced seasonal program may, in addition, gratify different tastes, making it possible to produce some less readily acceptable types of drama between popular plays, and may provide opportunities for different kinds of acting talent. The experience of a number of university and little theatre directors (as reported on p. 520, 527 ff.) will exemplify the manner in which the problem of play selection can be approached.

The Actors' Parts

Once the budget is determined and the actors, scenic artists, technicians, and stage crews are selected, the production gets under way. Artists start the designing of the décor, consulting with the director on all fundamentals. The actor who has already had a copy of the play or has heard the entire play read aloud, gets his "parts"—typed pages,

half sheets for convenience in handling while he still doesn't know the lines. On the part "sides," he will find not only his own lines but also his cues—that is, the lines spoken by other actors to whom he must respond; the cues are indented and distinguished from the actor's own lines by dashes. Here he will also find ample directions for stage business, the kind of response he must make, and how he is to deliver certain speeches. The lines and directions in his part may be modified during the rehearsal period, in which case he should jot down changes clearly in the appropriate places.

Too much stress cannot, in fact, be laid on the importance of accurate and clear parts. This will avoid much confusion and fuzziness. The following pages from Joe's part in the Theatre Guild's production of *The Time of Your Life*, as directed by Eddie Dowling, may serve as examples. Two are used in order to indicate the value of the director's detailed setting of the action and mood for the actor.

THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE

ACT I

Joe.

(At rise. At a table, you; always calm, always quiet, always thinking, always eager, always bored, always superior. Your expensive clothes are casually and youthfully worn and give you an almost boyish appearance. At the moment you are in a sort of Debussy reverie.)

(You suddenly come out of your reverie. Whistle the way people do who are calling a cab that's about a block away, only you do it quietly. Willie turns around, but you gesture for him to return to his work.)

——Paper, Mr.? [a newsboy speaking]

(Shake your head, no)

How many you got?

——Five.

(Give him bill, take papers, throw over head)

——Oh yeah?

(Calling)

Tom.

(To yourself)

Where the hell is he, every time I need him?

(Look around calmly; the nickel-in-the-slot phonograph in the corner; the open public telephone; the stage; the marble-game; the bar, and so on. You whistle again, this time a little louder)

Hey, Tom.

(*Wait a moment, then whistle again, very loudly.*)

——What do you want? [Tom speaking]

I want the boy to get me a watermelon, that's what I want. What do YOU want? Money, or love, or power or what? You won't get them studying the Racing Form.

——abreast of the times.

(*Lean back and study him with casual disapproval*)

(*Objectively severely, but warmly*)

Who saved your life?

——You did, Joe. Thanks.

How'd I do it?

Act II

SCENE I

Joe.

(*At rise. You, at your table, quietly shuffling and turning a deck of cards, and at the same time watching the face of the woman, and looking at the initials on her handbag as though they were the symbols of the lost glory of the world. And you yourself are tight, but as always completely under control; simply sharper.*)

Is it Madge . . . Laubowitz?

——Is what what?

Is the name Mabel Lupescu?

——What name?

The name the initials M. L. stand for. The initials on your bag.

——No.

(*After a long pause, thinking deeply what the name might be, turning a card, looking into the beautiful face of the woman.*)

Margie Longworthy?

——No.

(*Your voice higher-pitched, as though you were growing a little alarmed.*)

Midge Laurie? My initials are T. F.

——John?

No.

(*Pause*)

Martha Lancaster?

——Joseph?

Well, not exactly. That's my first name, but everybody calls me Joe.

The last name is a tough one. I'll help you a little. I'm Irish. Is it just plain Mary?

With these parts we are already in production, since they stem from the director's interpretation of the play and its roles, and from his first decisions on stage business. The director has perhaps also prepared a Prompt Book, consisting of a copy of the play with numerous marginal notations on expression, stage business, actors' movements, floor plans, and anything else that may occur to him. This is, of course, not final, until the last change has been made up to the opening night.

It remains to be seen how the director approaches the play, chooses his actors, how he decides on its décor, how he coaches his actors and sets their stage business, and how he conducts the rehearsals from the first reading to the dress rehearsal and pre-view or tryout. Mr. Worthington Miner, the director of many productions, reviews this procedure.

Since the interpretative function of direction is quintessential, and too much cannot be said about that subject, the survey of directing procedure is supplemented with a chapter on the director's concern with *interpretation* for himself and the actors. This, in turn, is followed by a brief consideration of the director's awareness of *form* in production.

After this we turn to the procedure of the director's collaborators, the specific approach and work of the scene designer, costume designer, make-up artist, and specialist in light.

DIRECTING THE PLAY:
THE COMPLETE PROCEDURE

Worthington Miner

THERE is great misapprehension regarding the status and the function of the director in the theatre. He is all too often praised or blamed in proportion to his creative contribution, without any apparent realization of the fact that the one thing a director should not be is "creative." His function is purely interpretative, and his work is excellent only in so far as it is unobtrusive. In an ideal theatre he would not exist. If playwrights turned out nothing but completely stageworthy plays, if all actors had the intelligence, the integrity, and the skill to work together and interpret these plays perfectly, the director would have no function to perform. But our theatre is not ideal. It is necessary for someone to help the average actor appear better than he is, to help the average author appear like a playwright. Hence the director. And if there is today a common acceptance of the importance of his contribution, that is tacit admission that either playwrights, or actors, or both are failing to do their jobs.

It is good that the director should realize that both his fame and his fortune are parasitic; such recognition may breed humility. It may also heighten his sense of obligation. If he care at all about the theatre, he will be sensitive to the tremendous odds against which it is battling. He will not be too greatly exaggerating his own responsibility, in feeling that under present conditions his contribution may be vital to the survival of the theatre.

Assuming that a man has communed with his soul and has determined to dedicate himself to the hardships of the stage, he immediately faces the murky, ill-defined road of theatrical apprenticeship. What is the minimum, basic knowledge he should acquire, before he has the right to assume his responsibilities? The stage has no prescribed novitiate, like medicine, or law, or the Church. There are no

bar examinations, no certificates, no degrees. If he seek personal advice, he may be told anything. One person will say, "The theatre's a racket. You don't have to know anything. Just be lucky." Another will say, "Don't try it. No one knows enough, and you're no exception." Such answers breed confusion.

Under existing conditions, there is only one way I know to clarify the qualifications needed, and that is to examine actual personalities in the living history of the theatre, not in a carping mood, but in an analytical one.

"Suggestive" Direction—Old Style

The story of one of the great names of a decade ago may present most vividly the exacting requirements for the director today. For years this man's taste, skill, and success were unexcelled. The finest playwrights, actors, and scene designers came to him with their wares. He was a pioneer and an adventurer. He was trusted and respected—and five years later he was almost forgotten. Had something happened to him? No. But something very important had happened to the theatre.

In order fully to comprehend the significance of this story as it affects anyone entering the theatre today, it is necessary to examine the theatre from which this man sprang. It was a theatre suffering the birth-pangs of iconoclasm. In response to the general upheaval of 1914, men began to scrutinize accepted traditions. There was unrest among writers, producers, and audiences. They were weary of bedroom farces, squidgey sentiment, and sentimental melodramas. They began to resent the leaden traditionalism into which acting had fallen. In 1917 the theatre was ready for revolt, and this man was part of that revolt. His success was ponderable and sustained. His productions were vital, fluent, sharp with excitement. This was direction at its best. What did he do? How did he do it? And why did it prove insufficient?

What he did was very simple. He released the latent energies of men and women of outstanding talent and experience. He encouraged them, he admired them, and he made them think. But the premise, on which all his success depended, was that those who worked for him should have both talent and experience.

His method was uniquely simple. He assembled the best he could find in every line, and put them to work. Since he had taste, he chose shrewdly. Then he withdrew to the sidelines and commented, never

positively, but negatively; never didactically, but provocatively. The actor would be playing a scene in which he was supposed to fly into a rage. He'd clench his fists, simply because everyone had been clenching his fists for years. "I wonder," the man would say, "if a man really has to clench his fists every time he becomes angry. Why don't you think it over and see if there isn't some other way of doing it?" Two minutes, or two days, later that actor would find some fresh and telling way of projecting the mood. "I wonder if a woman would really cry in that situation!"—"How would it be, if you played that scene with your back to the audience?"—"Does a harlot really have to wear a red dress?"—"I wonder—." Nothing more. And actors, too, began to wonder, and playwrights, and scene designers; and from that wonder there sprang imagination. Not all of his plays were successful, but all were distinguished, fresh, and exciting. This lasted for ten years.

But in 1928 motion pictures adopted sound, and in 1929 there was a crash in Wall Street. Hollywood began to raid New York systematically, choosing always the best talent, because it needed them desperately and could afford to pay. Year after year, actors and writers of experience were lured away, and each year this man found it harder to get the people he needed. Talent remained, but experience had sought the gold coast. Playwrights no longer turned in playable manuscripts. Actors could no longer absorb suggestion; they often understood what was said to them, but they had no equipment with which to translate that understanding into action. Some of them didn't even know how to be heard. And this man could not and, much more important, would not tell them. He loathed the didactic method. He could not bear the sight of a group of actors parrotting their lines in blind and stale obedience to the dictates of a martinet. He met incompetence on every side, yet he persisted in treating it with the dignity of skill. He had not accepted, and I dare say never wanted to accept, the dreary fact that, although talent remained in reasonable abundance, experience was a commodity that could no longer be bought. Younger men came along who accepted these difficulties as normal, and battled them. A greater man and a greater director slowly went under.

He went under, because he was not a director in the present sense of the word. His equipment was inadequate. He saw no reason why he should be an author; he felt that that was the business of playwrights. He saw no reason why he should be an actor, a scene de-

signer, an electrician, or anything else. He was a director, and he accepted that function with dignity. Without attempting to judge the correctness of his attitude, his own history proves dramatically that what he had to offer was not enough for survival in the theatre today. A director must understand the art of *play craftsmanship*, for there isn't one manuscript in a hundred that evidences an adequate mastery of that art. He must understand *acting*, because professional actors, like writers, have no chance and no place to learn their craft adequately. He must understand *every branch of the theatre*, because the theatre today is no longer anyone's home but merely a stopping off place between radio and Hollywood. He must not only know his own business, but he must know everyone else's business too. But he must never let anyone know that he knows it.

These are the basic requirements for a director. Once he possesses this knowledge—and it is not easily nor quickly acquired—a man is ready to start examining his goal. He must orient himself in terms of his relationship with the theatre. Has he ideals? Does he dream of a new form of theatre, or does he nurse a nostalgic desire to return to the good old days of Ibsen? Does he want to dedicate his life to the eternal verities, or to the eternal slapstick? These are not questions that can be answered by anyone else. A man must examine himself ruthlessly and reach his own conclusions. But a glance at the living scene may again reveal certain unexpected realities, which he would have no reason to suspect.

One thing a director must recognize is the obligation to succeed. A Van Gogh may die unappreciated, without in any way having failed. That is because he has created a tangible object, a permanent challenge and rebuke to his contemporaries. But the theatre is a transient and evanescent art. If a piece of direction does not receive acclaim immediately, it has no chance of getting it hereafter. Consequently, the well-known names in the professional theatre today are successful to a greater or lesser degree, though neither their worth nor their personal satisfaction is measurable by the same yardstick.

Some Other Kinds of Direction

The most dependable way to succeed quickly is to develop a formula. A formula is an assemblage of the best and most imaginative contributions of others, crystallized by repetition into an effective, though spiritless, routine. This method of direction is mathematical, precise,

and predictable. It is comforting to both audiences and critics. They know what to expect before going into the theatre, and they come out having got it. This type of production hurts no one seriously except the director, for after the first flush of triumph, he will find himself the victim of two ironic torments—the obligation to repeat that success, and boredom. The names of the plays, even the names of the authors, may change, but year after year it will remain the same show; the same entrances and exits, the same feeds and gags, the same characters and plot. That is one objective. It can be extremely lucrative.

Another way for a director to succeed in the professional theatre is to hitch his wagon to a star, and there are certain advantages in this type of direction. Star personalities—the very few who deserve the title—are reliable sources of income. Managers increase budgets for productions, they have the choice of reasonably good plays, and good actors can more easily be seduced into playing supporting parts. It is, or can be, exciting theatre. There are only two disadvantages. Stars, too, are aiming for success. They have a tendency to play safe. This is not invariably true, but it is a danger. Far more important to the director is the realization that his contribution is of almost no importance. Those stars have earned the right to do their plays as they choose. A director may approve or disapprove; the difference will be fractional. As a type of assignment, it, too, may be lucratvie; but in the end it will contribute very little in personal satisfaction.

Then there is the clever director who tries to exhibit himself—that is, his directorial virtuosity, rather than a play. This frequently leads to stupendous success—for a few seasons. Such a director is both the darling of the gods, and the goat. He is often far more sinned against, than sinning. A fresh idea is a healthy thing in the theatre; it is not a revolution. More often than not, it is a sign of youth and exuberance, something to be encouraged—not eulogized for a time and then blasted. But because the tempo of our age is swift, novelty is too often mistaken for inspiration, excitement for profundity. Year after year clever actors, clever playwrights, and clever directors appear on the scene. They often deserve success; they seldom deserve the excessive adulation which is showered upon them. And because critical judgment in our theatre is not astute, they are led to believe that superficial cleverness is the foundation of sound art. They are unaware of the transitory nature of a critic's enthusiasm. They have had no time to learn how shallow these

outbursts of praise can be. The awakening is rude,—often destroying. For just as their first efforts received unwarranted adulation, their second receive unmerited castigation. They find themselves torn limb from limb for no other reason than that they have fed the critics precisely what they had seemed to ask for.

Beyond these personal tragedies lies a deeper implication. The clever director is only half a director. He must necessarily sacrifice integrity to impact; he must create excitement, no matter how spurious, in order to attract attention. He will have a brief day of glory, and leave his soul in hock. He will be the four-star wonder of the year, but the price is heavy. Tribute paid to egotism, reaps a leaden harvest. The end is failure.

This is not a philosophic comment. It is statistically accurate. The annals of twenty years are studded with nearly forgotten names. They were the clever discoveries of their years. And what is saddest is that, had the praise been less lavish, the downfall might never have occurred. Excessive acclaim has destroyed more potential talent in the theatre than was ever hurt by blunt disfavor. The young director should never forget that, if a production of his is extolled above the play and above the actors, he has almost certainly done a mediocre job. He should feel no pride, only a deep concern over his own shortcomings.

Directing and Theory

A very popular pastime today is to develop a theory. The theatre is flooded with theories of acting, theories of production, theories of everything under the sun. Dozens of incipient Stanislavskies and Meyerholds gather in rooms, in halls, and in summer theatres to start movements that should revolutionize the theatre. The Group Theatre is the only one of all these movements that achieved any prestige or permanence. For that reason it may be well to examine this organization briefly. It was unquestionably endowed with some of the finest acting talent in the theatre. Its actors had passion and sincerity. But was this the result of direction along theoretical lines, or was it owing to the burning intensity of the actors themselves, actors who had shared common hardships over a number of years? The Group exhibited some fine individual and ensemble acting; and it was blessed with two potentially fine playwrights. It was a vital and exciting organization.

It would be a mistake, however, to jump to the conclusion that its

fine work was solely the result of a good theory. Organizations with no theory whatever have also prospered. Good as the work of the Group was, it is still possible to question whether anything it did was better or more consistent than the work of the Theatre Guild Acting Company of 1926-28. That, too, was fine acting, and within an amazingly wide range. There is no single road to heaven.

Theories, like ideologies, can sometimes be dangerous. Even when they are sound, they have a tendency to be rigid. They also have a tendency to be ruthless. There is one director who has kept a group of actors around him for some years. He has rented a summer theatre, and has had two or three New York productions—all failures. He has a theory that is based upon one of the kindergarten rules of acting and direction. His success or failure would be of no importance whatever, had it not involved the destruction of two or three fine acting talents, young people who were crowding success when they went with him, and are now completely in the discard. Every play a director takes hold of is a fragment of matter waiting for life. He must know and feel by opening his eyes to see the people around him, by knowing the things that touch their hearts and fire their spirits. He will not find these things by turning his eyes inward to his own mind.

A director is only a substitute for an author's executive weakness. This is the fundamental realization that should govern his thoughts and his feelings. A director is never better than his play, and the more fully he absorbs the implications of this statement, the more deeply will he recognize the importance of his task. If a director with a formula chooses a good play and attempts to apply the formula to it, he cheats the play and its author. The star director works for his star; the clever director and the director with a theory work for themselves or—sometimes, as was the case with some Soviet directors—for something extraneous to the play. A conscientious director—in normal circumstances—works, and can only work, for the play.

This is his standard. The following pages are dedicated to an analysis of those practical attitudes and actions, which may be most helpful in clearing the way for him. These seem to fall quite naturally into three main categories: (a) Script, (b) Preliminary Preparation, (c) Rehearsals. They will be treated in that order.

THE SCRIPT

The first thing a director must do with any play is to read it. This is perhaps his most difficult assignment, for the manuscript of a play

is not like a short story, nor like a novel. No director can wait till some respected critical judgment assures him he will not be wasting his time. It is neither an amusing experience nor a restful one, but it is the crucial test of his knowledge of his craft. It is, also, a highly specialized art without rules and without precedent.

Certain hazards to a just reaction are recurrent. Most of them are based on some form of preconception. Practically every manuscript a director receives has a title on the cover. That is a misfortune. On the first page there is usually the name of the author. That is a worse misfortune. If humanly possible, neither should be read. They should not be read, because they impose on the reader an expectancy that may gravely distort his judgment and the honesty of his reactions. Neither the name of the play nor the name of the author has anything to do with the value of the play; the play, as created, is all that matters. But all too often a director sees the letters that spelled a last year's hit, and starts dreaming of a boisterous first night, of glittering reviews, and a "fat take," glossing over the stale and glutinous elements of a play with the tinsel dressing of his own desire for success.

A play is a fragment of living matter cut to the vaguest pattern of a precedent. Only in its capacity to come alive is it valuable. It is the director's business to make himself receptive to those animate elements, to detect with immediate intuition its dishonesties and its editorial meanderings. To do this he must see through and beyond the written word. He must not read with his eyes alone but with all his senses and emotions. It is not enough for him to understand the action; he must see it, and hear it, and feel its impact. He must simultaneously discipline himself to see that his enthusiasm has not made some contribution beyond the valid content of the scene. It is a constant temptation for a director to feel a special kinship with a play which his imagination alone has brought to life. He will read into it more than it can ever convey to an audience. The interpretation of the living action is his sole concern. All the sensitive imagery with which he decks out a hollow script will turn out in the end as transparent as a gayly painted scrim, when the lights come on behind it. The audience will be conscious only of a vague, disturbing unreality; the contents of the play will remain untouched.

The play must give promise of coming to life *through its own vitality*, not through the director's. And because this viable reality is primate over every script, he should be lenient toward its form. Form

is no more than the trade mark of repetition; in its original state it is invariably a revolution against itself. It is born of the necessity to explore some new island of experience; it is only solidified into a set of rules by the degenerating force of repetition.

Most manuscripts give away their ineptitude within the first few lines. The director's concern is not with this type of play. His problem is to select from among the few potential manuscripts the one that will take on valid stature in its transmutation into animate action. This cannot be achieved by considerations of success, or of critical endorsement; it cannot be achieved by weighing the name of the author or the name of the manager against the sterility of the play itself. The director's sole concern is with answering one question; "Do I like it?" In the end that personal certainty will be his one recourse. It is unwise to temper it with pragmatic qualifications at the start.

But assuming that he reacts with genuine enthusiasm to a play, are there any other considerations that should temper that enthusiasm? Expense, for instance? And *showmanship*? And the director's own capacity to do a certain type of play?

Expense. That is a word of frightening implications. It is the leaden weight around the manager's neck. It is a curb and a hindrance. It is also a goad to invention. Certain plays should not cost more than a certain amount; others warrant a larger investment; but, in general, all plays in the current professional theatre cost far more than they should. It is the director's business with every play to consider how far he can economize without injuring it. If, however, the manager should insist on an economy that the director feels would destroy the play, he must then make his choice, whether to do that play or not. This does not occur frequently enough to constitute a serious drawback. In most cases the director should consider economy a normal and stimulating obligation.

Showmanship is not an art; it is first cousin to a second guess. There is no such thing as showmanship, until the people and the money pour in. *Green Pastures* was a magnificent piece of showmanship, yet half the showmen in the business gave it a cursory dismissal, before it reached the hands of the one man who believed in it. Some years ago, the Theatre Guild earmarked an important sum of money to throw away on a play. They knew it had no chance of success. But because they liked it, they felt some of their earnings should be turned over

toward its production. The show was *Strange Interlude.* That is showmanship.

Types of Plays: A director may like a play but be afraid of it, as a type—farce or tragedy, as the case may be. His most recurrent concern is inspired by his sense of overabundant earnestness or overabundant humor. He may feel he is utterly unequipped to do farce, because he is unable to get away as a drawing-room Marceline; or he may look in the glass and detect an irrepressible glint of humor in the corner of the eye, and decide that tragedy is something for him to shun. This reaction, though apparently logical, is almost invariably wrong. A sense of humor is actually far less a crying need in comedy than in tragedy. Humor is blood-brother to taste. It cleanses emotion of its sticky coating of bathos. It maintains proportion and heightens credibility. It is not overawed by lyric truth, but is quick to detect absurdity and falsehood. A sense of humor is vital to the direction of an emotional scene.

Comedy and farce put a far greater emphasis on mathematical precision than do plays of emotion. A director can develop a methodical aptitude for this type of play, without possessing either genuine humor or gayety. One such director, hardworking and earnest, has been fabulously successful in the field of farce; and yet, over the course of years, this man has consistently failed in every attempt to do a play of either emotion or beauty.

If a director cares deeply about a play, he should never let the lack of some social amenity deter him. The sensitivity, the astuteness, and the passionate integrity of his own reaction are the best warrant of his capacity to bring a play to life. Let him be far more wary of the play's shortcomings than of his own. He has an excellent chance of gaining stature in high company.

Analysis of the Script

Assuming, however, that the director has found a script to his liking, one that has come to life in his mind and has excited his enthusiasm, is that enough? In almost all cases where a new play is involved, the answer is "No. It is not enough." This is a statement of practical fact; it is not the exposition of an ideal. The director should steel himself to the realization that almost no manuscript will come into his hands that is more than three-quarters written. It takes a grievous while to learn to write a play; by the time the modern play-

wright has got far enough to write one that can, by a combination of managerial, directorial, and acting co-operation, be made acceptable, he is ripe to stop writing for the theatre and start drawing Hollywood pay checks. The time has passed when a director or producer can wait for the perfect play. It is the recognized responsibility of each to be sensitive to those amorphous elements of vital emotion or vital gayety which may be sifted and spun into the coherent fabric of a play. Only a handful of completely realized manuscripts have come along in five years, and the young director would have little or no chance of being assigned to any of them.

But the director remains as good as his plays,—no better. His first responsibility is to that play, for without it he is predestined to failure. Furthermore, he must recognize the delicacy of texture of most plays. Rewriting and rearranging have quite often distorted a play rather than benefited it. A director must beware of that insidious delight which comes with seeing his own ideas take shape as a vital part of the story. He must constantly subject his imagination to ruthless analysis. Only insofar as his suggestions remain selfless, only insofar as they melt indistinguishably into the mood and the intention of the author, are they valid or just. This is an ideal he dare not relinquish.

To what test, then, must he submit both the play and his creative imaginings to insure their integrity? Where must he look to find the matrix that has given, or can give, life to that embryo?

This is where most directors flounder. This is the point where endless time is lost or misspent; for, until some common understanding of the fundamental intention of the play is shared by both author and director, all discussion is useless,—far worse, harmful. There is a first question, however, and in its answering all other questions can eventually be answered: *"What is it about?"* The play may be about sex, religion, or the torment of souls; it may be a story, a dream, or a cerebral discourse. It is never about nothing; and if there be any exceptions, they are rare enough to warrant ignoring.

Climax: Faced with this question, the director can save himself a great deal of time by examining how the play has been written. The first thing he must realize is that *a play should be written, not forward, but backward. A play is a preamble to a climax, and that climax must be the consummate statement of the play's intention.* Quite disregarding the body of the play for the moment, the director should

ask these things. *Is there a climax? Where is it? And is it good enough?*

First of all, is there a climax? Surprisingly enough, there often is not. There are little hillocks here and there, little moments of tenseness or of high comedic fireworks, but the *climax of a play is the culmination of every conflict and implication* in that play. It is the *completion of a statement regarding some selected human beings in a cycle of selected circumstances.* Forget the play, forget the stimulation or the excitement of any other part, *look at the last act.* Study it, analyze, dig into it, till you know precisely what it says, and precisely what it does not say. Only then can you clearly and authoritatively discuss its shortcomings.

Do not be fooled by substitutes. Excitement or laughter are all too often used as climactic *ersatz.* The things that count are those elements in the story which, taken in sequence, create the progressive theme. *To that progression there must be a top.* If there is, and if at that moment something worth saying has been said satisfyingly and well, then there is hope for the play.

Where does that climax occur? One page, five pages, from the end? Twenty pages? That is important, because every word, every gesture, following that climax is waste, unless it be specifically conceived as anticlimax, of which more in a moment. *The climax of the progression is the end of that progression;* it is also the end of the play. Examine, for a moment, the structure of *The Front Page.* This play is concerned with any number of elements; murder, suicide, and the race of a man to escape with the woman he loves. And yet, behind all of this, coloring and directing every step in the progression of that play, is a deeper conflict, the fight of the girl and the editor over the possession of Hildy Johnson. The last scene of *The Front Page* was possible only because it dealt with that theme. And the line, "The son-of-a-bitch stole my watch," has become a national byword, not alone because of the laughter it evoked, but because of its deep implication regarding the inevitable allegiance of Hildy Johnson to his editor Walter Burns. That scene and that line were the culmination of everything in that play. And the climax to that situation was not reached till the final curtain had started to fall.

A good climax, however, need not occur so near the final curtain. There are certain situations vital enough to justify the use of *anticlimax.* It is important first to understand precisely what function an

anti-climax performs. Anti-climax is allowable only when the implications of the actual climax are too far-reaching to be fully absorbed at that moment. The tension of a high scene, its various concomitant elements, may becloud the fundamental train of events which it presages. Such, for instance, is the end of *Uncle Vanya*. The departure of Elena and her farewell scene with Doctor Astrov are so poignant as to obscure for the moment the central tragi-comic theme of Vanya himself. It is not until his loneliness is dramatized in anti-climax that the full statement of the play can be absorbed. *The Front Page* is expert writing; *Uncle Vanya* is great writing. But each displays a true and proper knowledge of climax. A play should never be stopped till it is over; it should never drag on after its end has been reached.

Nevertheless, the mere presence of a climax toward the end of the play is no assurance that it is the climax. This brings up the question of the dynamic accumulation of the play. The final climax warrants careful study so that proper evaluation may be made of all the lesser moments of climax, those that are but semicolons to that final period.

These are usually *the ends of scenes and acts*. They, too, are important. Action and character, conflict and humor, must have certain periodic rises and falls or their rhythm becomes stale and monotonous. If these occur as *interior scenes*,—that is, within the structure of an act —they should be studied for their honest characterization (in terms of the ultimate statement) and for the proportionate importance of each (in terms of its relationship to the ultimate climax). When such a moment occurs at the end of an act, however, certain practical problems arise.

Suspense: In every *intermission*, the play runs the danger of losing its hold on the audience. The final moment in that act must contain not alone a lift, but a *provocative situation*. It is unwise to be contemptuous of anything that may illustrate a method of combatting this danger. *The Perils of Pauline*, the daytime serial *Dick Tracy*, are sound examples. They have to hold an audience for a day or a week at a time; under such conditions their authors cannot afford to be subtle. They slab on *suspense* with a trowel; but, in doing so, they expose both the need and the method. No matter how great or how commercial the play may be, if the audience has not been given some provocative tidbit to whet its anticipation, there is more than an even chance that its interest has been lost forever. In the climax of every

act, there must also be the hint of increased tension and heightened conflict to come.

Most authors are conscious of this necessity and compensate for it. The danger lies in over-compensation, in magnifying the need of early climaxes so much that the final climax is mustered into service to bring down a second-act curtain, or in some cases a first-act. The land mine goes off in a burst of thunder thirty pages before the end of the play; from then on the audience is asked to respond to cap-pistols. This failure is recurrent, because authors do not discipline themselves rigidly enough. They do not write their plays backward. And this failure is most insidious, because the director is tempted to feel that, if a play is so good for so long, surely it will not be hard to make its end measure up. He will then attempt to bolster up gossamer, for the end has already been reached. He has nothing left to play with but the dust of a departed footstep.

Justification of Climactic Behavior. Study the last act most of all for the full knowledge of the characters. Every being must possess those qualities which justify his conduct at the moment of his supreme conflict, mental, physical, or emotional. The last act must supply the key to the basic problems of selection, emphasis, and economy. A character noble for two acts may not suddenly in the last react in a tawdry, snivelling way unless some hint of that incipient demoralization be planted earlier. The reverse is equally true. This is an extreme example of a recurrent weakness in plays.

A far more exacting task is to study the last act to determine precisely how much is needed to justify each character's ultimate action. Here is where a director's perception, taste, and judgment are most severely tested. All well-conceived characters have dimension; in other words, they have certain idiosyncratic, sometimes illogical, characteristics. They and their minds go off on tangents, and with them, scenes. Some of these excursions and deflections are integral. Some are mere excess verbiage. How much is justified? There is no sound answer that is not justified by the ultimate statement of the last act,—the last act of that character, at least, no matter where it appears.

The Little Foxes provides both good and bad examples of this. Many of the scenes, particularly those concerned with the plotting of the robbery, are so far over-written, over-accented, and repetitious that the characters emerge as cardboard villains in a ten-twenty-thirty melodrama. These scenes are not merely bad; they distort the inten-

tion of the play. Characters designed to symbolize frighteningly recognizable examples of an historical trend emerge as case histories. The author sacrifices integrity to theatrical effect. But in the same play appears the character of the wife of the older brother. This character is conceived with razor-edged sharpness. Study every scene in which she appears, and it will be found that not one word too little nor one too much is said to justify, motivate, and clarify her last act. That is fine writing.

Study the last act, then, for many things. Study it to see if every element in the characters and preceding scenes is directed toward that ultimate statement. Study it, too, to see if some deeper, richer quality which the play possesses has not been cheated of its just culmination, by false accent, by diffusion, or by poverty-stricken imagination. Every decision relative to the play, every suggested cut or change, must conform to a cumulative purpose. The director cannot go far wrong if he sets this as his standard of judgment and criticism.

Director and Author

The director now has in his hands a play, seventy percent of which is good. There are faults, and he has studied the play till he believes he knows not alone what they are but how they may be cured. His next step is to convince the author of the need, and then to fire him with the enthusiasm to do the work with a fresh hand. This is so intimate a problem relative to the personality of both author and director that it is impossible to lay down any set rules of conduct. However, a few hints of possible approach may help to smooth this thorny path.

1. Let the director start off by saying all the nice things possible. The play probably means far more to the author than it does to the director. It is for the author a form of creation, born of much pain. He has, more often than not, a secret recognition of the play's weaknesses, and a maternal ferocity in defending them.

2. Don't *tell* an author anything, if it is humanly possibly to avoid it. The truer it is, the more he will resent it. Let him think he has hatched every idea himself. He will do better with it under these conditions.

3. Make the author talk as soon, and as much, as possible. Make him tell what the play is about. He may resent this a little, but

less than he will resent anything else. Furthermore, he usually warms to the subject, and somewhere along the line he is apt to give away the secret of why his play does not fulfil its promise. Do not seize on this, at once, however. He may freeze up before some other vastly important facts have come to light.

4. Attempt to account for every shortcoming in terms of the author's expressed intention. Do not try to impose an intention, but merely expand and clarify the author's own statements.

5. Suggest—without insisting. It is also wise to make all early suggestions as general as possible. Leave specific methods to the author. Let him admire his own imagination, not the director's.

6. Be particularly aware of any emotional reaction of his toward the quality of certain scenes and characters. Many authors seem eager to improve characters whom, for some obscure psychological reason, they dislike. Accept this intention with suspicion. False hopes can too easily be aroused, time wasted, and, in the end, nothing accomplished.

7. Let the author draw up his own scheme for revisions. Never criticize that scheme on the spot, even though its faults are palpable. A courteous degree of consideration should be given each idea.

8. Sidetrack, at least temporarily, any work entered into halfheartedly by the author. It will only exhaust his patience without materially improving the script.

9. View with suspicion the author who accepts all suggestions with equal willingness. It probably means he has no mind of his own; his work will be meticulously correct and lifeless.

10. Try always to make the least possible change in a script. Authors have often been the victims of bad advice, and have a justifiable suspicion toward every director. Hours spent in useless work may build up a stubborn resentment at a more vital moment.

11. Do not fire an author's imagination beyond his capacity. He may strike a few sparks far above his normal reach, but the effort as a whole will flounder. He will resent being made conscious of his own shortcomings, and will hold the director responsible. The play will remain unaffected.

12. With living authors, do not anticipate perfection. Even its shadow is rare. *Concentrate on exuberance and spirit;* be liberal

toward the imperfect form. Awkward edges may even add a rugged vitality to the whole.

13. Study every piece of rewriting as carefully as the original script. Study it for what has been added, for what has been lost, and for what still remains untouched. Build the ultimate structure slowly, but painstakingly. Leave as few loose ends as possible. Enough will prove wrong after the rehearsals start.

14. Do not expect gratitude. A director needs all his energy; he cannot afford to waste it on resentment or hurt feelings.

PRELIMINARY PREPARATION

Once the script is complete, or far enough advanced so that its ultimate form is reasonably assured, the work of the director, as such, begins. This work falls into five categories. They will be discussed in chronological order, rather than in the order of their importance: (1) Type of Treatment, (2) Budget, (3) Casting, (4) Scenery, (5) Business.

(1) Type of Treatment

The finished play is ready, even though the last word is not on paper. Its type of treatment—the way it is to be done—must now be decided. It would seem that this decision should have been reached during the conferences with the author, and in most cases that is true; but the possibilities of treatment are not necessarily dictated by the form and quality of the play.

To illustrate, it is better to take an example where no alteration of manuscript is contemplated. Since *Macbeth* has come down to us in a form much more closely approximating an acting text than any other Shakespearian play, it presents almost no problems of cutting or rearrangement. There it is, a tragedy. What is left but to cast it and put it on? A number of things.

Shall it be done as originally conceived, with a forestage, or shall it be framed by a proscenium arch? Shall it be performed in the classic tradition, or shall it be done in modern dress? Shall it be a vehicle for a star, or shall it be played by the best rounded cast available? Shall it be done with masks, or shall it be played blackface?[1] None of these is far fetched. I have seen *Macbeth* performed in every

[1] That is by a Negro cast, as in the Haitian *Macbeth* produced by the Federal Theatre in 1938.

one of these alternate ways. And yet not one of these styles of production, altering as it must the attack on every line and action in the play, necessitates the changing of a word in the script.

Every play is subject to varying treatments. Nor is it possible, in advance, to pronounce any one method better than another. In many cases two or more methods may be equally honest and equally effective. The only didactic statement that can be made is that *two or more methods should not be used in the same production.* Macbeth played by Alfred Lunt, and Lady Macbeth by Ethel Waters would be, at best, confusing. Muddling of a less palpable sort is not uncommon; for example, miscegenation between the modern idiom and antique stylization, between group action and a star performance, between fantasy and realism.[2] These things do occur, and for them the director must be held responsible. He is obligated to select his styles—or, at least, to accept the selection—and he is responsible for seeing that every element in the eventual production cleaves to that style.

An example or two may clarify the point. Some years ago Jed Harris produced a play called *Gilhooley* with Helen Hayes and Arthur Sinclair. It was a better than average play, and it might have been expected that, with two such performers, it would be a success. Actually it was a failure. Why? Mr. Sinclair was giving an indirect, lyric performance in intimate scenes with Miss Hayes, who played the same scenes with a complete, American directness. The two were on the stage all evening—they were in the same room, in each other's arms; but to all intents and purposes a huge asbestos curtain of style kept them irrevocably separated. A mixture of method in both acting and direction destroyed a potentially good play.

A few years later, the Group Theatre took a mediocre melodrama called *Men in White* and turned it into a Pulitzer Prize. From beginning to end, the sets, the lights, the cast, and the direction were keyed in one mood. Lack of distinction in writing was compensated for by dignity in performance. Everything was geared to imply a deep and highly-sensitized reality below the verbal surface. Reality was created by integrity of performance. Stature was achieved in the long, hushed silences.

[2] Unless, of course, there is a special purpose in selecting such a mixture of styles —in satire or burlesque, for instance!

The type of treatment must be determined. Then every step on the road to production must conform to that decision.

(2) *Budget*

Each type of treatment implies a different financial expenditure. *Macbeth* in modern dress and without scenery, is far less expensive, than *Macbeth* invested with Renaissance splendor. The budget may also determine the style. A director who has read a script and has seen it come to life against lavish backgrounds should not at once desert the play because insufficient funds are available. Let him first examine what might be done within the confines of that limited budget. Let him weigh carefully the losses; let him weigh even more carefully the gains. A play need not be killed by economy; it may conceivably be given more glowing life.

The chances are that, with Katharine Cornell playing *Saint Joan*, an expensive production was warranted. It was not essential, however. And this is not guesswork; it is fact. *Saint Joan* was done before at a fraction of the cost, and with, in the opinion of many, an even greater impact,—this impact being importantly related to the stark quality of the earlier production.

Bury the Dead required the services of approximately thirty-eight actors, plus an elaborate, multi-scened setting. When faced with the proposition of putting this play on for $650, I was tempted to throw it over. But it was eventually put on in New York for $650, pared down to the last conceivable economy. It is hard now for me even to remember the first production schemes that flooded my mind. The ultimate form took on an individual personality so right for the play that I could not imagine doing it again in any other way, no matter how generous a sum were handed me to spend.

The budget may determine the type of treatment; it seldom need kill the play.

(3) *Casting*

With the play in hand and a style of production determined, the next step is to select the persons to bring that play to life. Casting is seldom done in this neat chronological sequence. A director will often hear and see a certain personality in a part after reading no more than two speeches. In other cases, the picture of the person wanted by him may remain hazy even after the plans for the scenery

are in the carpenter's hands. Generally speaking, however, it is unwise to consummate any piece of casting until the form of the final script and the style of its treatment are fully determined.

(A) Equipment. Assuming the director is clearly aware of his needs so far as the script is concerned, what should he know in order to do a good job of casting?

First he should know actors. He should cover as many plays as possible—failures, as well as successes. It is a director's business not only to see as many actors as possible but to see them as often as possible.

Knowing actors does not merely mean knowing their names and faces. It implies much more than that. An actor may be lost in a bad part, through lack of experience or inept direction or sheer bad writing. It is the director's business to see beneath the superficial. He should observe the person, quite apart from any play or part. He should never allow his judgment to be affected by an actor's notices, good or bad. The effect of an actor on an audience is an important factor, because it is a direct response; but critical reaction is unreliable, because it is neither spontaneous nor is it backed by sufficient knowledge. A director will find his own intuition more dependable.

He should maintain a file of actors' names, listing their performances and any special qualities which may have struck him at the time. This list should not alone include actors appearing in the theatre, but movie actors, radio actors, vaudevillians, night club entertainers, and foreign actors playing parts that give some hint of their quality and range. He should constantly bear in mind, moreover, that the theatre of today is a transient profession. Actors leave it almost as fast as they learn their business—sometimes faster. New talent must be found to take their places. This means that a director must search the theatrical breeding pots. He must follow the summer theatres, the schools, the "*Borscht* circuit" (summer hotels). He must track-down favorable rumors, and arrange to meet anyone whom others recommend. All this should be behind him before he begins to cast the play. This knowledge is basic. Its proper use is the measure of his craftsmanship. In directing for the college, of course, the range of casting has its special conditions.

(B) Immediate Pictorial Casting. This type of casting usually occurs, as has been indicated, during the first reading of a script. It is spontaneous and generally reliable, because it is based on the

vitalizing potential of good dramatic writing. This association of a part with a person need not necessarily be with an actor. Sometimes the part says Alfred Lunt or Morris Carnovsky; sometimes it says the clerk from the corner delicatessen; sometimes it says Wendell Willkie. It may also say no actual person but some combination of dominant qualities that take tangible shape in the imagination, waiting only for the living reality to come along and invest it.

The more characters there are in a script that take on this corporate individuality, the better the script. The director should discard these aggressive associations with caution. They are built of firmer stuff than most reasoned decisions, and only when they definitely clash with each other (or represent *in toto* an exorbitant cost sheet) should they be abandoned. The closest approximation to their quality should then be sought.

This instinct can even take precedence over experience and reputation. A few years ago I read a script and found myself seeing and hearing two persons in the two leading parts. Everything thereafter intensified my conviction that these two people were good casting. Who were they? A couple of walk-ons from a play just closed. Eventually they played the parts, and played them supremely well. No stellar personalities could have done more.

(C) Balance. An estimate of the relative importance of certain parts in the schematic structure of the play as a whole is one of the few considerations which may justly qualify such spontaneous casting. In every play certain parts demand more *emphasis* than others. Just as a painting highlights certain details and subdues others, so a *well-cast play will highlight certain relationships and subdue others.* This scheme must be protected, if integrity is to be maintained. This does not mean that second-rate acting should be tolerated (if one can help oneself); it does mean that the use of some lustrous personality in a grayly written part is improper interpretation of the author's intention. Such casting does not always entail failure, but it invariably produces distortion.

Example. In the golden years of the Guild Acting Company, the Theatre Guild produced a play by S. N. Behrman called *The Second Man.* In this four character comedy they put Mr. Lunt, Miss Fontanne, Miss Margalo Gillmore, and Mr. Earle Larimore. This would have been rational casting but for one thing: Miss Fontanne played an extremely small secondary part, Miss Gillmore the feminine lead.

Miss Fontanne attacked the part legitimately, but with all the brilliance of imagination she could muster. She found ways of implying a profound, comedic significance beneath the most casual word. She wore a startling wig, with an arresting streak of white spinning through it. She was colorful, unforgettable—and disruptive. By the magic of her unique vitality, she blunted an audience's interest in Miss Gillmore, thus destroying every basic implication in the play. Quite aside from any success the play may have had, this was bad balance in casting,—and whether the fault lay in casting Miss Fontanne or Miss Gillmore is unimportant to the particular point at hand.

Some years later *The Second Man* was done in stock. There was no Mr. Lunt to play Storey, and no Miss Fontanne to play Mrs. Frayne; but it was a competent and well-balanced cast. When the final curtain fell, I was conscious of having seen the play Mr. Behrman had written for the first time.

The play's the thing. Choose the cast with integrity toward its implicit emphasis and its intention.

(D) Deferred Casting. Certain parts remain unfilled. Before attempting to see people, the director must dig into the script, must live with each part, until it takes coherent shape in his mind. He must discover the essential quality needed. This process is no more than a deferred application of that dynamic certainty which, in the previous case, sprang spontaneously from the printed word. With this complete knowledge of what is wanted, some actors will come to mind, others will have to be sought. The director's file is now important. Each name should arouse some pictorial memory; its fitness or unfitness should be recognized at once.[3]

(E) Interviews. The cast is filling up, but there still remain some parts to cast. Word has got round that the director is looking for people, and his office is under assault. He decides to give some interviews. How can he tell anything about an actor's capacity from an interview?

[3] Once the right person has been found, a director in the professional theatre should let no preconception of an actor's salary stand in his way. Broadway is peopled with yesterday's successes now out of work. No actor will resent being asked to play a part, if a fraction of sensitivity color the approach. "Look, I have a part, and I want you for it, and I can't pay anywhere near your salary. What shall we do?" The director may get some refusals, he will get many acceptances; I do not believe he will find any actor ungrateful.

The answer is not easy, but there are certain clues intimately associated with the art of acting, which may be detected by astute observation. There is, of course, the actor's physical appearance. This should be carefully distinguished from type-casting, which puts reliance not on creative acting but only on a sterile, tracing-paper similarity to the original. Physical appearance is not always crucial, though it is less than likely that a boy of sixteen would make a good Hedda Gabler. There are, of course, certain limits within which the actor's physical qualifications must fall.

Assuming for the moment that there are two equally likely candidates, what can the director do to test the acting capacity of one as against the other? First, he should recognize certain basic requirements of acting, one being the simple capacity to listen. Pick up any piece of manuscript, good or bad, and ask the actor to read a few lines. If he does it well, be on guard. A good actor can scarcely ever read at sight. That capacity implies a superficiality he will disdain. If he does a bad enough job, let him take the script over night and see him the following day. Read with him, and watch him closely, not to see how well he reads, but to see how well he listens. *Capacity to listen is essential to acting.* A good actor will answer any question, as it is asked, shading the tone of his reply to the manner of the asking; a bad actor will perform in a vacuum.

Watch also his eyes and his hands. No actor can discuss a part without his eyes or hands betraying his emotional integrity, or his lack of it. This does not signify how good he may be; it almost never fails to tell how bad he can be.

(F) Readings. The major fault with readings is directly attributable to the director's manner. Many directors, if they do not actually look down on actors, give the impression of so doing. Very few make the effort to put the actor at ease. They fail to recognize that, for an actor, an interview is a peculiarly personal, and immodest thing. The actor comes, not to offer a necktie or a pair of shoes or an insurance policy. He comes to offer himself. He is like a model appearing for the first time before a life class. And when the director refuses that actor, he does not spurn a mere commodity; he turns his back on all that that person has, his looks, his voice, his clothes, his spirit. Let him do it with some gentleness.

If the actor deserves a certain delicacy of feeling in a mere inter-

view, he deserves far more at a reading. In order for him to be fully in the part, he should be completely unaware of himself. The director may feel self-important in making an actor squirm, but all he is really doing is wasting his own time. The only way to get results from an actor is to believe completely in that actor and, in some way, to convey that belief to him. He must be made to feel he can do more than he has ever done before; under such conditions he has some chance of doing justice to himself. The director will not compromise his own high standard by helping an actor to reach toward it.

Almost no part can be cast that does not have some intimate association with one or more of the other characters in the play. The two actors may be selected independently, but no decision regarding their fitness should be reached *until they have been brought together.* If good casting were no more than finding the right actor for the right part, all-star productions would presumably be triumphs of acting. They notably are not! Particularly where long *love scenes* must be played between two people, a certain electric quality must be added to the rightness of both actors for their parts. Two actors of less individual capacity may strike sparks in a scene where finer performers will fail. The director will need no seventh sense to be aware of this; it will flare up and hit him in the face. He should only be aware of the need for it to happen.

Group readings are also tremendously valuable. The cast of a play is not a group of individuals; it is an entity. It must give visual and tonal cohesion to every scene. It must be keyed to a proper contrast range in coloring, in the pitch of its voice, in its quality, and in its method. The wheel of a Mack truck is a good wheel, but it does not belong on the front end of a Chevrolet. Even a single group reading is of inestimable value to the director. He should make it his practice to use it, whenever humanly possible.[4]

The cast is set, the play is ready to start rehearsals. Now is the time to give out the players' contracts or to set them definitely—not before. Unless the risk of losing some vital actor be too great, bind-

[4] Equity disallows group readings. With large groups this is serious, and should not be treated lightly. The director may, in this case, cause his manager to pay out weeks of full salaries to the entire cast. Because of the gravity of the penalty, the director may be forced to forego this vastly important step in casting. He should, however, understand the urgent need for it, and perhaps be instrumental in bringing it back to normal practice.

ing obligations should not be entered into until the entire cast is assembled. It is a precaution well worth taking.

(4) Scenery

The child is aborning. The play has taken shape, the people have been found to bring it to life. Both need a home. Shall it be a walk-up flat or a cloud above Olympus? The type of treatment must primarily determine the style of set, qualified by certain basic considerations of movement and action implicit in the script. But before discussing these specifics, it is wise to examine the problem of scenery in general, and the director's relationship to it.

The primary fact to recognize is that scenery is basically a luxury, not a necessity. In my experience, scenery has made an important contribution to only a handful of plays; it has done great disservice to dozens. (The eight-foot-thick curtain in *Criminal Code* was directly responsible for a large portion of the play's impact. It amplified the play's statement visually and dramatically. The same was true of the settings for *Winterset.*) The fact that the average designer today is a better and more imaginative worker than any other craftsman in the theatre should not blind a director to the comparative unimportance of his contribution. No play can be greatly harmed by doing without scenery; but the play can be seriously hurt by bad scenery, for which reason the director must pay close attention to the sets. The public has been conditioned to scenery. Sets are only an acquiescence on the part of producers to an audience's demand. It may be wise to bow to it at this moment. It is not obligatory nor essential to do so.

Many plays create a richer impression of integrity and excitement during the bare stage days than they ever achieve in competition with painted settings and luxurious drapes. If scenery is used, it should be functionally conceived, and whatever mood it represents should be subservient to the action it houses. The ideal set should be seen, understood, and instantly forgotten. A director is responsible for seeing that it performs this service.

Assuming that a set is integral to the style of production, what should the director's next step be? Should he call in a designer and say, "I want a set for this play"? He can, but he had better not. A designer should never be called in until the director has clarified certain things in his own mind.

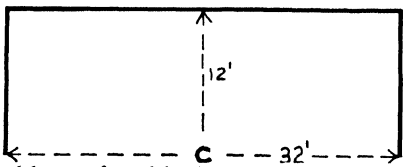
a. *What kind of set:* Should it be realistic, or impressionistic, or dynamic (whatever that term may mean to the director)? Each of these modes must be dictated by a sensitivity toward the over-all mood of the play's treatment.

b. *Particularization:* It is not enough to say room, or porch, or barn. It must be a particular room, with certain idiosyncrasies of its own. A tawdry hall bedroom, with open steampipes, or a Victorian Gothic room with stained glass windows? Should it be airy, or should it be cramped? As soon as the designer appears, his imagination will elaborate the initial scheme, but he has a far better chance of directing his energies toward a desired objective if the director is decisive regarding the fundamental mood.

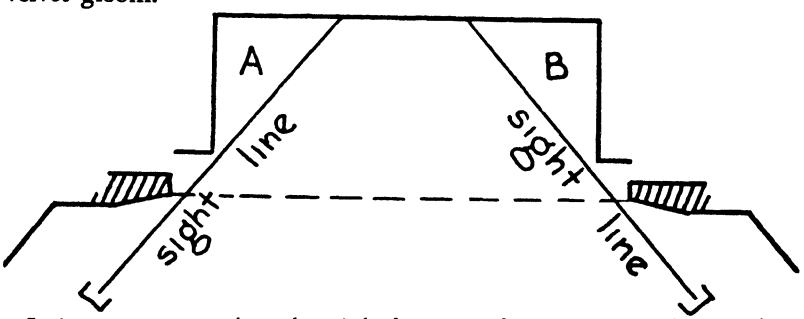
c. *Functional Quality:* Does it assist or impede the action of the play? This is the most important consideration of all. The position of entrances and exits; the opportunity for free movement; the reality or artificiality of that movement; the use of levels (if any); color; the effect of height and breadth and depth. All these are tangibles, directly affecting the ultimate integration of the production.

Let us take a few examples and see how they were arrived at, and how far they served the director's and the play's intentions. The ensuing paragraphs belong more properly to the treatment of scenic design farther in this book. But they illustrate the understanding and precision with which the director should know the principles of setting the action of the play in its proper habitation on the stage.

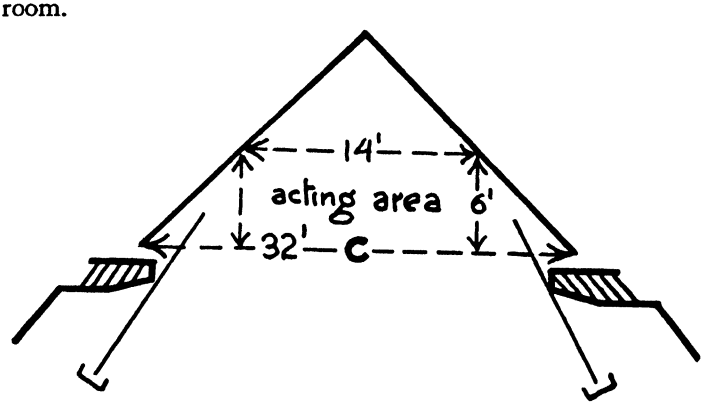
First, a single set which housed the comedy *Up Pops the Devil.* The scene was laid in a Greenwich Village apartment, four flights up. In other words, it would not have been originally planned as an apartment; it might have some quality peculiar to the persons who inhabited it, but it would be neither expensive nor spacious. The average proscenium opening in New York City is thirty-two feet; in other cities it is usually more. Thirty-two feet is a good length for an expensive Park Avenue flat; it does not fit a fourth floor walk-up in Greenwich Village. A room thirty-two feet long implies a depth of at least twelve feet, in order to avoid looking like a passageway. This dimension would create a box form like this:—



Such a set would comfortably house a Christmas reunion for the Kennedy Family. Something must be done to reduce this area. Here are a few simple alternatives. A false proscenium may be used to cut the opening to twenty-six feet, but this still leaves a large acting area, it is bad for sight-lines in most theatres, and the bare face of the false proscenium has a tendency to frame the set in black velvet gloom.

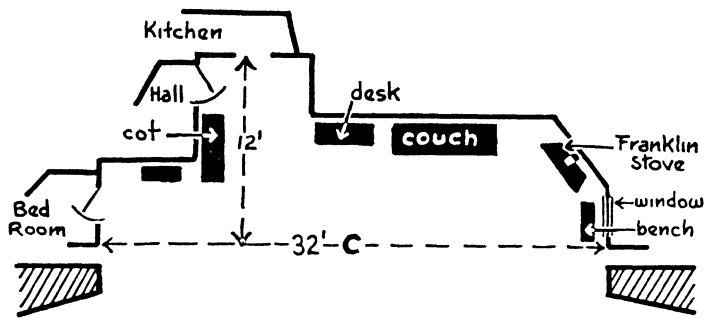


It is easy to see that the sight-lines render area A and B useless. Thus, although the actual area is only fractionally reduced, the acting area is reduced by nearly half. This is uneconomical and awkward. Another method is to follow the angle of the sight-lines themselves (minus false proscenium), thus revealing only a corner of the room.



This form has some advantages (sight-lines, for instance) and for certain scenes it is eminently satisfactory. It should be noted, however, that though the set remains twelve feet deep at its deepest point, for over half the acting area it is only six feet deep, or less. For this reason, unless a great depth is used, this form is most useful for intimate scenes between three or four people. In addition, this form constantly implies a very large room, of which the set constitutes a small segment.

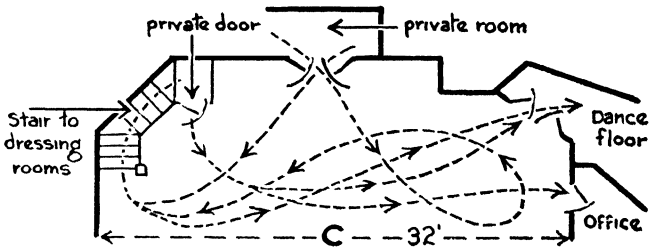
None of these solves satisfactorily the problem presented in *Up Pops the Devil.* This is the floor plan actually used.



Notice certain features. The room seems intimate in spite of its thirty-two feet width, because the six feet jog beside the bedroom and the diagonal wall above the fireplace appear to reduce the actual width. The acting area is mostly eight feet deep, but since the couch was so near the footlights, it could be left against the wall, and every foot of acting area utilized. The haphazard shape of the room made an audience immediately aware of the sort of place it was, a made-over apartment in an old-fashioned house.

This example is chosen for another reason. It is an excellent instance of a badly conceived set for movement. Notice that all the doors are situated stage-right. An actor cannot cross this room with any sweep; he will inevitably bump into a wall stage left, thus creating the sensation of being hemmed in. This room was purposely designed to create precisely that effect. It made all movement awkward. Actors could not turn around without stepping over a pair of feet or bumping into each other or weaving between people. This is typical of the sort of feeling the play demanded, and was good in exact proportion to its awkwardness. If fluency of movement had been desired, however, this set would have been a director's nightmare.

Let us examine a set designed for fluent movement.



This was the set for *Broadway* (drawn from memory). It had to accommodate chorus entrances, chorus exits, the constant movement implicit in the backstage life of a nightclub. The dotted lines indicate a few of the basic lines of movement the set permitted. Actually many more were used effectively at one moment or another. The functional emphasis in this set is the exact antithesis of that in *Up Pops the Devil.* It may help to study these floor plans carefully, thinking always of their inherent values in terms of movement, space, atmosphere, and architectural form.

Just as *Up Pops the Devil* illustrates the necessity to make a large area *appear smaller* than it is, so it is often imperative to make a small area look *larger* than it is. The basic factors governing this process are scale and light; of these two, *light is the more important.* A well-lit, blue cyclorama with nothing else on the stage can create a reasonable illusion of infinite space. Bluish or mauve tones are the normal colors of atmosphere; hence, they are invaluable to the designer in creating a feeling of distance. A vast exterior at night is always easier to achieve than an exterior by daylight. However, there are certain other factors which, when properly employed, can go a long way toward serving to expand the confined limits of an ordinary stage. In *The Affairs of Anatol* one scene is laid in the square of the Rathaus. This is the effect Mr. Mielziner attained (see fac. p. 247).

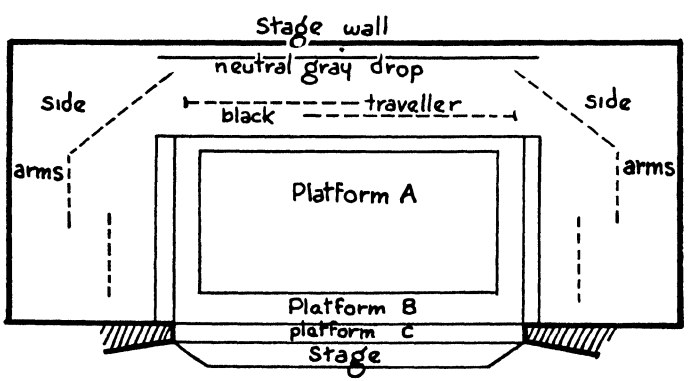
The total depth of this set was only eleven feet. Notice the use of optical perspective in the scale of the statue at the right. With snow dropping through the hazy blue light on the face of the *Rathaus,* a sense of tremendous depth was given.

The use of perspective is perhaps even better illustrated in Mr. Mielziner's first act setting for *Winterset.* Notice the illusion of depth in a single plane that the painted bridge achieves. When lit in the

theatre, with the twinkling bridge lights receding toward a blue sky, a sense of immense space was created. This set is on a larger scale, but in both cases the implication was of vastly greater proportion than the actual area the set occupied. (See illustration facing p. 247.)

These are examples of only a few of the simplest and most elementary rules of functional design. The director should be fully aware of them before he moves into his first scenic conference. A deeper study is strongly recommended. He should know the *relation between the height of a set and the height of an actor.* (Any set over fourteen feet high runs the danger of dwarfing actors.) He should understand the disturbance of painted patterns (wallpaper or fresco), and the various methods of subduing each; he should know how important dark colors are to the creation of a third-dimensional sense; he should know mechanics, the turntable, the jack-knife, the split-platform, the treadmill; he should know, above all, where to put entrances and exits to secure the maximum or minimum movement, and he should know the architectural principles that give such arrangements a valid sense of structural reality. He should know the rules of *design,* and he should also know when and how to break those rules.

Before leaving this subject, it might be well to examine the floor plan of the perfect director's set. (If not perfect, it is so close an approximation that it cannot hurt to study it.) If a director fully absorbs the details of this set, he should be able to analyze how its best elements may be adapted to any type of set he may need; interior or exterior; realistic or expressionistic. Here is the set; it happens to be very close to the floor plan of Welles's *Julius Caesar.*



This set has the following advantages:—

1. A central elevated stage of good acting proportions.
2. A fore-stage for intensely intimate contact between actor and audience. Because of Platform B, the actor is free either to sit, or, by standing, to dominate another actor.
3. Complete freedom for entrances and exits, creating maximum fluidity of movement.
4. A neutral colored drop, allowing for maximum depth, and a black traveler[5] to secure maximum intimacy.
5. No walls, so that, by judicious use of light, any height of scene may be implied.
6. Minimum disturbance in detail.
7. Maximum stimulation of an audience's imagination.
8. Maximum color range.
9. Equally effective in full or in selective light.

When all these factors, and their implications, are fully absorbed, the director will have *a working foundation in design.* He will be ready to develop a scheme for the particular play. This process is integrally interwoven with the problem of stage business, but certain basic concepts may be listed at this time. The director should always be conscious of them, even though it will be up to the scene designer to give realization to them in the sets he prepares for the actual stage. (In the non-professional theatre the director may even find it necessary to guide and instruct the young or amateur scene designer—or to do his work.)

1. The director must absorb the basic emphasis on locale and background, implicit or explicit, in the script. For instance, is it tragedy or comedy? Is it modern, or historical? Is it stark, or glittering? Are the people ugly or beautiful; or should they be set against a contrasting background?
2. He should select the most important details—a door, a window, a fireplace, a sunset. Find that central object, or location, the effect of which is most important to the full comprehension of the scene. Select after this, and in proportion, those other elements which also are of importance. Give to each its proper optical position and proportion, remembering that *the optical*

[5] A draw curtain made in two equal halves.

center in every set is slightly to the right of center from the audience's point of view. Keep in mind also that perfect balance creates a stagnant, motionless mood. It should be avoided unless that is the mood desired (as in the second act of *The Green Bay Tree*).

3. Add details only when their inclusion is absolutely obligatory. The simpler a set is, both in form and in detail, the better. This is true even when a sense of cluttered disorder is desired. Try to achieve this by scale and implication rather than by fussy detail.

4. Let the width, height, and depth conform to *the proportionate importance of the actor* to the scene. If the script calls for a stairway in an intimate scene, the ceiling height must be cut down by some device. Play comedy in the most intimate surroundings possible.

5. A director should never underestimate an audience's capacity to accept a new or arbitrary scenic formality. Just because Lorenzo says, "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank," there is no obligation to have either moonlight or a bank. Just because he says it, a director can let the actor sit on a stiff rehearsal chair, and an audience will supply the missing scenic effects. Paint and canvas and a 1000 W. spot can never produce so rich a setting as the mind can imagine. A director need be unafraid to do the best for the play, no matter how many traditions he break. The chances are the traditions have been broken dozens of times anyway.

6. He should never consider a set without considering how it is to be lit. Many moods may be created in one setting under different lights. Light is the camera lens of the stage; it is the great selector. It should emphasize for the audience just those details, animate or inanimate, which are most important to a scene's statement. Light, however, warrants a fuller discussion. This is a highly technical subject, best entrusted to the specialist (see pp. 354 ff.). But the director must have at least a basic esthetic understanding of its rudiments.

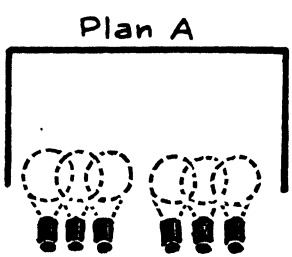
Lighting. Lighting serves three primary purposes in the theatre: (a) It makes the actors visible to the audience; (b) it selects and em-

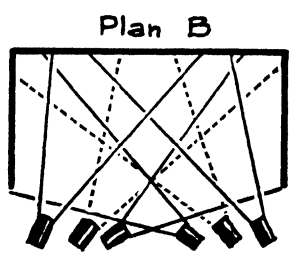
phasizes dominant elements in the scene; and (c) it assists in the creation of mood.

Of these, the first must be recognized as the basic function of light. It needs to be emphasized, because it is too often made subservient to (b) or (c). There are some designers who are particularly prone to light the sets, the costumes, the cyclorama, the drapes —everything, in fact, but the actor. Nothing which does not assist the actor to clarify the play, has any solid reason to exist. An actor may be able to play tragedy in a blaze of sunlight; he cannot play comedy in darkness. A situational line or two may get over during a blackout; this is an exception that in no way affects the validity of the rule. An actor, the director must remember, has three things at his disposal for establishing contact with an audience: *his voice, his face,* and *his body.* Acting consists in the full integration of the three; darkness reduces its potential effectiveness by two-thirds. The first obligation of light is to assist the actor.

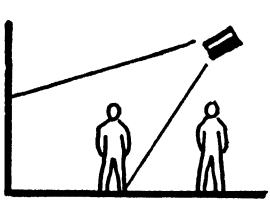
There must be enough light to display the actor with maximum effectiveness. There should not be too much light, however, nor should it be *thrown from a source or in a color which may destroy or obscure his characterization.* Blue light on an ordinary make-up turns the face magenta, or an even uglier purple. A strong light from directly overhead lights the forehead brilliantly, but leaves shadowy pits where the eyes should be. Excessive light washes out all expression.

The ordinary interior setting is approximately fourteen feet high. This means that the average front pipe for light will hang about twelve feet above the stage. At this height light may be thrown satisfactorily on any face, provided it is approximately half the width of the stage away. Examine a simple arrangement of six spots, three on one side, three on the other. The following shows a correct and an incorrect lighting plan.

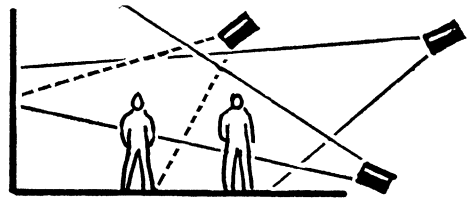




Plan A is functionally inept. The lights, being turned straight downward, can light only the tops of actors' heads in the minimum area. Plan B lights the actors' features over a maximum area. There are two weaknesses in B, however, and they lie in under-lighting and front-lighting. Examine Plan B from the side, and then Plan C, which is merely Plan B, augmented by low light and front light.



Plan B



Plan C

In Plan B the actor is still lit from over head (and the higher the set, the more this fault will be accentuated); his eyes will tend to be in shadow. As he moves downstage he walks out of light entirely. In Plan C he is picked up by front light (7) in the forward area, and lit in every area by the low spot (8).

The danger with both 7 and 8 lies in variable intensities and in the creation of shadows. It is a comparatively easy thing to light an actor's face from the first pipe without causing disturbing shadows on the set. Front lights, however, are usually hung from the balcony, and their height above the stage and distance from the stage are variables. The lower the balcony, the greater the danger of casting shadows on the back wall of the set; the farther away the balcony, the greater the likelihood of a bad balance between the main stage light and the fore stage light. Whenever possible front lights should be hung as high as possible, and the distance compensated for by increased wattage of the individual lamps. (There is almost no legitimate theatre in New York so high that second balcony or booth lights will cause bad shadows on an actor's face.)

Low light is even more tricky to control than front light. Footlights are a boon to actors, because they blot out the audience, while helping to bring out expression. On the other hand, the more carefully the first pipe spots are set (hitting the walls of the scene as little as possible), the greater the danger of footlights casting shadows. More

important still, "foots" light the upper part of the set, accentuating its height, thus reducing the scale and stature of the actor. If foots are to be used, they should be held far down on the dimmer. To augment the low light, towers of spots in the two downstage portals are far more effective. A light, head high, is quite as effective in reducing face shadows, as a spot on the floor. It is infinitely easier to use effectively without destroying the light balance of the set.

Before leaving the question of quantitative light, one hint may prove helpful in creating more sparkling quality in the lighted area. Direct ray light has a tendency to be hard and unmoving. This may be partly cured by the use of mixed or frosted gelatines, but in many cases this distorts intensity balance, or it spills light onto the set. A more effective way is to use dimmers. For instance, if a 500 watt lamp is adequate to light a given area, use a 1000 watt lamp and pull it half way down on the dimmer. The factor involved is the increased resistance set up by the lower point contacts on the dimmer. This creates a granular characteristic in the light ray, a scarcely perceptible oscillation, that is both restful to the observer and complimentary to the actor. The whole scene will have a tendency to come alive.

(b) The actor must be lit, yes. But this does not imply that he must be lit with the same intensity at all times or in all parts of the stage. Broad sunlight on a beach is not selective; the same sunlight, striking through a prison window, is. This is a blatant example of what should be done more subtly in every scene. A proper *balance of light and shadow* at specified places and times is essential to good lighting. By the differential between the direct and reflected intensities of light a certain area, person, or thing is given focal emphasis in the scene. In moving pictures the lens of the camera focuses full attention on a certain object or person, excluding any elements irrelevant to that scene. To a lesser degree light can and should serve the same purpose in the theatre. It is obvious that light so unselective as to show every crack and hinge in the canvas is bad. These details should be subdued. Persons and objects warrant a similar treatment.

Here are two scenes: one from *Excursion*, the other from *Bury the Dead* (see illustrations facing p. 246).

The first shows the deck of a boat, as a group of passengers start in holiday mood for Coney Island. This is light in a high key, each detail receiving an equal emphasis. It is sunlight without shadow.

The second is a moment near the climax of *Bury the Dead.* Here there is no geography of location, but many subtle emphases. Action is pivotal, reaction is radial. The soldiers watching the priest, the dead in silhouette—these are vital to the scene in varying degrees. The light is consonant with that variation.

Even in daylight, this sort of effect may legitimately be obtained by judicious placing of windows to let in light, or of obstructions to hold it out. In this way, even at high noon, the importance of scenes may be emphasized by the position on the stage of the actors playing them. No set should be considered without considering its possible light sources. It is part of the texture of the play, just as the inflection or the emphasis of an actor's lines is part of that texture.

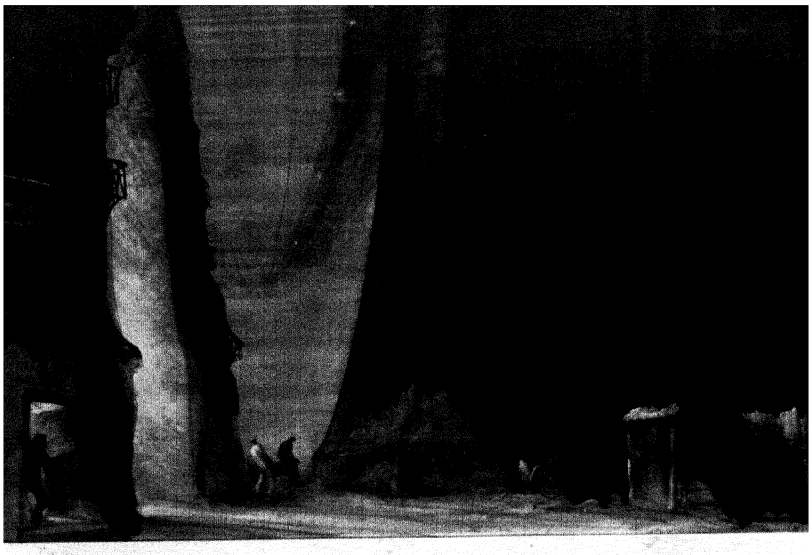
(c) Light is also important to mood. Generally speaking, the brighter the light, the gayer the mood it will evoke. Colors play an important part, of course. These colors are part of design; they can be accentuated by light. Grey, for instance, is a cold color; red is warm. Black is gloomy, yellow is bright. Far more subtle are the relationships between sets and actors, or between actors and other actors. The face of the monster may be hit by a green spot. This fortunately does not happen often. Much subtler is the contrast between a coolly lit wall and a warmly lit person. Here a clash of moods is created, as well as a heightened third-dimensional sense. A girl in a white ballet dress under a pink and bastard-amber spot, will stand out in sharp relief from a mulberry wall tinted with surprise pink. Reverse the set-up and an entirely different mood will obtain; and not alone an altered mood, but a loss of perspective. The woman in mulberry will tend to sink into the wall, where the girl in white stood out from it.

Lamplight, moonlight, daylight—each has a mood of its own; even twilight and morning. These should be understood in terms of light. The actor must be lit, but the way he is lit and the way the room around him is lit may seriously affect for better or for worse the impact of the scene. It is the director's business to heighten that effectiveness by his knowledge and taste in every department. A knowledge of lighting is an important part of his equipment.

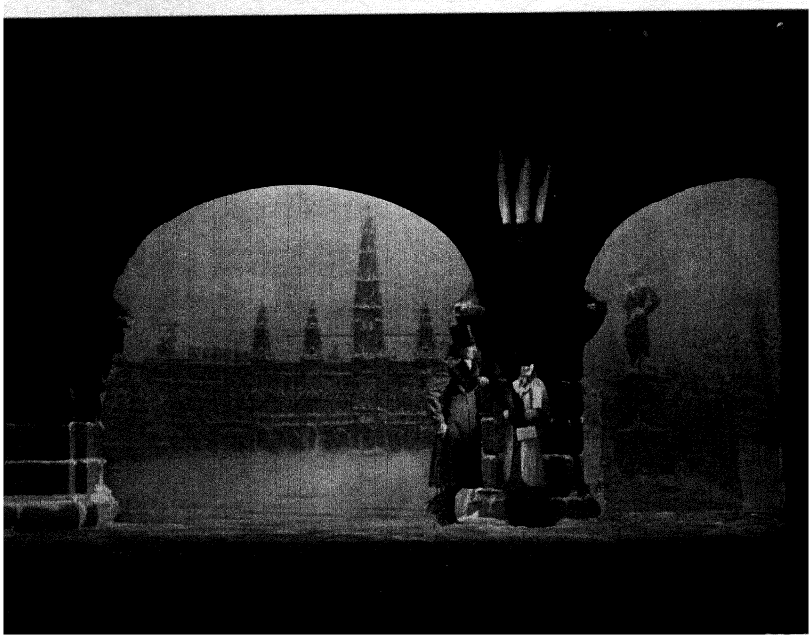
(5) Stage Business

The mapping out of business should presumably follow the blueprint of the set, but, like casting, it can seldom be done in this tight,

Above: Set by Gladys Calthrop for Wolfson's *Excursion*, Act I. (*Photo: Vandamm Studio*)
Below: Set by Worthington Miner for Shaw's *Bury the Dead*, final scene. (*Photo: Vandamm Studio*)



Above: Set by Joe Mielziner for Anderson's *Winterset*, bridge scene. (*Photo: Peter A. Juley & Son*)
Below: Set by Joe Mielziner for Schnitzler's *The Affairs of Anatol*. (*Photo: Vandamm Studio*)



logical sequence. Many times a scene will play itself out while it is being read. It will take shape so indelibly in the director's mind that he has no choice but to put it on its feet in that way. Some business is explicit in the script, and must be considered before the set can be discussed. Certain other touches, particularly character touches, may be added late in the days of rehearsal. In general, however, the *moving pattern* of the play should be worked out after the set is designed and before the rehearsals start.

What is business? It is the art of *movement*, designed to convey both the maximum *clarity of motivation* and the maximum *effectiveness of emotion*, either independent of or in collaboration with the spoken word. More simply, it covers everything an actor (or group of actors) does during the play, including those moments when he does nothing at all but think. It is the sum of all physical expressions, either of emotion or of logic; it is, also, a visual symphonic score for the complete play. In its conception, the director possesses greater creative license than at any other time. For that reason, the danger lies far less in his being under-imaginative than in his being over-imaginative.

Before discussing how to approach the problem, it may clarify the issue to examine a few isolated examples of business in the light of their honesty and effectiveness. In *Broadway* Robert Gleckler played a slick gunman. In the last act he entered, having just had a bullet put through his hat by an unseen and unheard assailant. He was "scared," and it was important for him to cover that fear. What should he do? Bite his nails? Mop his brow? Loosen his collar? Pant? None of these. He entered very simply and quietly. But after he had been on the stage less than a minute, it became apparent he was able to breathe only with his mouth open. Everything he did was quiet and deliberate, except for the fact that he never closed his lips, till the final moment when he was shot. The cumulative effect of internal terror aroused by this simple piece of business was electric and unforgettable. It was good business.

In the original try-out of *The Shanghai Gesture*, Mrs. Carter, as Mother Goddam, was discovered in the third act, lying full length on a couch, gazing at a glass ball. The mere fact that this had once been an effective bit of business for Sarah Bernhardt did not justify its inclusion here. The following things made it bad: (a) There was no reason for Madam Goddam to look into a glass. (b) Nothing

resulted from it. (c) The audience was anxious for the play to progress. (d) It was neither funny nor effective. (e) Madam Goddam was not the character to do it. It was meretricious and ineffectual.

Sometimes a piece of business can be meretricious yet vastly effective. Such was the wake scene from *Porgy*. A group of Negroes were singing to the soul of a drowned fisherman. On an arbitrary cue, a spotlight came on in the footlight trough, throwing massive shadows of waving arms against the wall behind them. Had someone even bothered to place a candle on the floor, this might have been sufficiently motivated; as it was done, it was illegitimate. On the other hand, so vivid an effect may be partly justified, since a large part of the audience was unaware of the trickery. A consciousness of effective opportunities is a director's obligation; motivating those effects will not subtract from their impact—it may, on the contrary, strengthen the impact.

An analysis of these examples should help to clarify the director's standard of stage business. We may now proceed to the problem of creating this business.

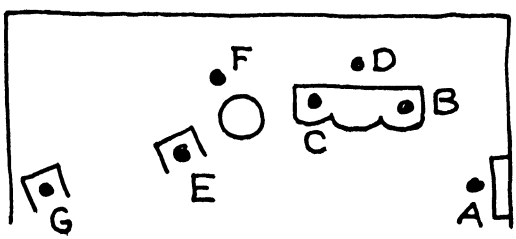
(A) Laying Out the Business. The first step in this process is to read the play, to reread it, until certain visual certainties become crystallized. "I see him sitting down here"; or, "I don't see him sitting." Some of these pivotal moments may be inspired by explicit directions; others will spring from a growing familiarity with characters and scenes. Both must be considered.

The one thing that is certainly wrong to do—just as it is wrong in playwriting—is to start from the beginning and go methodically for ward. It is wrong, because it is the least intelligent and most wasteful approach. Let us presume for the moment that the last act calls for a departure scene—the heroine is to leave, as in *Grand Hotel*. Let us also assume that in Act I she has to arrive. The first thing for the director to know is where and how the final scene can be most effectively staged; only with this in mind, can he determine whether the story warrants duplication of this action in Act I, or variation from it. The director's initial responsibility is to give his highest moments the most imaginative treatment; when that is done, and not until then, should he start to tie those moments together.

This secondary step may, in fact, be delayed for some time. It is better, on the whole, not to become rigid regarding any single piece

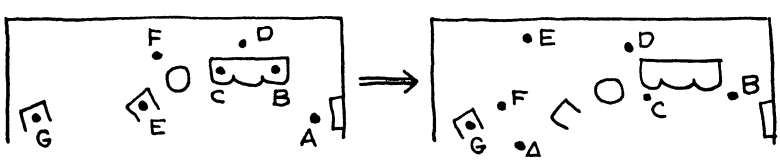
of business. If right, it will be apparent at once, or can easily be tested in competition with alternate schemes. There is no urgency to set the play in a mold too early. Intimate contact with the actors may radically affect a preconceived scheme, or may endow it with new life through a slight alteration in superficial form. The actors and the play are the only legitimate parents of the action; any violence done to that union may seriously distort the effectiveness of both.

On the practical side, the director will find it a great help to have a ground plan of the set beside him, when figuring out movement of actors. The reason for this is particularly apparent, when a group of people has to be handled through a long scene. It is hard for anyone to visualize silent characters in a scene centering around someone else, and yet it is often these listeners who give that scene its quality and its meaning. This kind of ground plan need not be elaborate.



A simple plan, such as this, is interesting because it conveys to a skilled director certain values and relationships. Presume, for example, that this is a scene where a listener speaks seldom but very much to the point. His comments may be comic or wise or both In any case, this plan indicates an excellent position for such a character during the scene. That spot is the chair where G is sitting. The position of G in relation to the scene is a visual emphasis of G's slightly aloof, yet observant part in the scene.

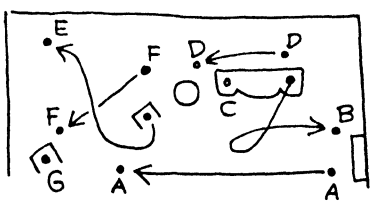
These dots and letters are meaningless unless they indicate living personalities in a particular room. The moment they do mean that, they become graphic charts of pivotal instants in a moving pattern.



The above plan is useless unless there is some movement both before and after it. Let us study this plan in association with another.

From these two plans it is possible to make a reasonable guess about what has happened. G has said something which has directly affected A and F. C and D are only casually concerned, this being apparent from the fact that C does not rise, and D only moves a step or two. B is more concerned, or less self-controlled, for he rises and backs away from the scene. The most interesting person, however, is E whose reaction is strong enough to carry him completely out of the scene. These are the stories inherent in business plots; they need only a knowledge of the script to make them coherent and specific.

To clarify the form of movement involved, a chart of movement can be made. Thus:—

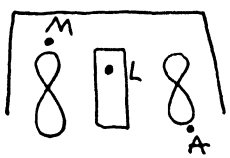


With this moving plan, still more information is given. E is more immediately concerned than F, because E has moved first. F may, in fact, be more affected by E's action than by G's words. More, too, is known about B. He has made an initial move as though to join A, F, or G, but has ended by walking away with his back to the scene.

This type of plan can be very useful, but it is not without dangerous features. The first temptation for a director, once he has learned to use any plan with visual assurance, is to use it too elaborately. This is a great mistake. Plans are only notes to jog a director's memory. The moment he becomes self-conscious about them, he is in danger of seeing the plan in front of the actors, rather than the actors in front of the plan. He will tend to look with suspicion on any disturbance to this mathematical scheme. He will see too vividly the attendant disturbances to other plans that either precede or follow it. Above all, he will begin to think in terms of large-scale movement, when much of the time the more vital question is whether

the scene is played honestly and with fire. The position of actors in relation to one another, though important, is secondary to the performance of each as an individual. For that reason, it is far wiser for the director, before rehearsals start, to mark down in his memory, or in the margin of his script, only those high moments when the positions of people are vitally significant, and to arrange the moving pattern only when the actors are on their feet on the stage.

After some time he will limit himself to creating a shorthand for these notes, indicative of the essential elements in a more elaborate plan. There was a moment in *Reunion in Vienna* when a comedy scene of good quality failed for a long time to fufil its promise. Looking over my script, I find this margin note, jotted down sometime during the week in Pittsburgh.



This little note meant that for this scene M (Minor Watson and A (Alfred Lunt) were to pace up and down on opposite sides of the couch where L (Miss Fontanne) was lying. It also meant that they should pace in different directions. This business was rehearsed the next day, and immediately the scene took on a new vitality and meaning. It was not necessary to draw a full-set diagram to convey the intention; this indication was adequate.

An even simpler note:—

This was found in the margin of *Up Pops the Devil.* Biney (Albert Hackett) and George (Brian Donlevy) were to sit on one chair. This was a scene where two men, slightly drunk, undertook to pack a woman's trunk. It was an excessively funny scene to begin with, but the thing that made it really "sing" was the idea of having Hackett with an immense cocktail shaker in his hands, and Donlevy with three evening dresses over his arm, sit on one small hard-

wood chair. The first line of the scene may clarify the balminess of the mood.

George (to Biney) "Suppose we were married."

Let the director never forget, however, that what gave this scene its quality was the integrity, the taste, and the skill of the two actors. If either had been arch, the scene would have been repulsive. Had either been aware of being funny, the scene would have been ruined. Since both were sincerely morose over what had happened to two of their friends, the moment was one of sheer delight. The actor comes first always; stage business is a vastly important *secondary* consideration. The director must never lose sight of this relative significance.

Type of Business. There are two general classifications of stage business: (a) Character, and (b) Plot. They may, of course, and often must, be combined.

Character business is the more subtle and more difficult. It is less a matter of rules and patterns, more a question of imagination and sensitivity. The sensitivity begins with the author's creation, but must be fitted to the idiosyncrasies (characteristics) of the particular performer. In reading a love scene, a director may visualize some untraditional business not usually associated with the situation in hand. One such piece of business occurred in a love scene between Roger Pryor and Ruth Gordon, in *Kings X*, later produced by the Theatre Guild as *Man's Estate*. Without warning, without any call for it in the dialogue, Mr. Pryor took out a cigarette, lit it, and handed it to Miss Gordon. It was done so simply, so much as though it were part of an habitual pattern of relationship, that it in no way reduced the sense of intimacy and lyric feeling; on the contrary, it crystallized precisely that mood. The problem involved here is character, not action. The quality of the girl, of the boy, and of their particular relationship must be carefully considered; also, the era, the place, the background of the people. This business would be wrong for Juliet, wrong in *Shadow and Substance*; in fact, it would almost never be right. A full appreciation and knowledge of the play and its people is necessary to decide even such a simple problem as whether a cigarette shall be lit or not, who shall light it, how it shall be lit, when it shall be lit.

There is no short-cut to this type of business. It is imagination tempered with wisdom and taste. The director must decide whether

a pause shall occur in a line, and for how long; or whether a step shall be taken, and how fast. The minutiae of each individual gesture must stem from character; its selection is the test of a director's knowledge of his play and of his craft.

Plot business is simpler. It is frequently explicit in the script. The door opens and a character enters. The phone rings and someone answers. The baby cries and mama runs upstairs. The director has only to determine how and at what pace these things shall be done. There are times, however, when plot business can be used to give visual accent to the spoken word. This sort of thing is almost never in the script, and the responsibility for it falls on the director.

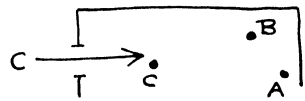
Blind Alley is the story of the psychoanalysis of a Pretty Boy Floyd type of gunman. In the second act he begins to tell a vast number of childhood secrets. The difficulty facing me, as a director, was to weed out from the mass of material the few elements which were primate over the final action of the play. One of these elements concerned a murder (one of many, it must be remembered) in the boy's checkered career. In telling this part of the story, the dialogue ran something like this:

"she keeps swinging there, back and forth, back and forth."

In order to highlight this, his "moll," who was very worried over the whole situation, began to pace back and forth behind him, back and forth, back and forth. The visual and unconscious reinforcement of the statement impressed the words upon the audience so vividly that without any further comment they were completely aware of the vital importance of this part of the story. Here movement conveyed a visual emphasis far beyond its apparent importance. The business was warranted only because the girl's mood justified her moving in precisely that way, and because she was utterly unaware of the effect she was creating.

The third contribution of business is *motivation*. In its simplest form, it is merely a method of rationalizing rearrangements of actors' positions in order to put them in better positions for the playing of scenes, or parts of scenes. In its more complex form, it *unites* character and plot in a coherent pattern for the telling of the play's story.

The first form is arduous but, at best, it demands only facility. The arrangement of the scene may be thus:



This may have been the perfect position for A and B up to this moment. In a few lines, however, C is to enter, and there is valid reason for wanting A to have his back to him when he does. Some legitimate reason must be found for A to *cross* B. There is no law that says he must cross for a match, but he may. He may also cross in the rhythm of a mood. He may cross to open a window, or to tear up a letter, or to retrieve something previously, and perhaps purposely, left on the other side. This type of movement demands ingenuity. Only when a decision must be made regarding the relative advantage of the changed position as against the disadvantage of the move, does the director have to call on any sensitivity or taste.

When such movement motivates character, however, much more than ingenuity is demanded. Miss Margaret Webster has developed this capacity to a high point in the direction of Shakespeare. In the middle of a soliloquy a door will open, a voice will be heard, and the actor's entire mood will change. His train of thought will be shot down a new channel, creating a fresh mood, either more violent or more deliberate, whichever the action may justly provoke.

Such business may be harmonic or contrapuntal, according to the implication of that instant upon the progression of the play as a whole. It is, or should be, a constant cathode-anode *oscillation between character and plot*, each affecting the other, creating from this alternation an observable accumulation of frictional energy sufficient to the charge exacted by the climax. Sometimes the authors will build a play around this type of thing; witness the drums in *Emperor Jones*. At other times it must be supplied. The Group Theatre did this with consummate skill in *Men in White,* directed by Lee Strasberg. In order to energize the conflict between the routine hospital and the personal story of the young doctor, the director amplified the deliberate and inexorable ceremonial of the operating room at the moment of the man's most headlong rush toward action. His mood was energized with passionate intensity in precise proportion to the impassive mechanics of a diurnal formality. *Men in White* would have had a frail framework for climax without the robust stimulation supplied by its actors. No character was violated by this

action, nor was the main story line broken by false emphasis. This was legitimate use of direction to clarify the underwritten implications of a play.

Business is the pattern of all the action, no matter how small, of all the actors in the play. It must motivate and clarify both thought and emotion. It also presumes action, which is movement; and movement implies another dimension, a visual satisfaction for the audience above and beyond the merely utilitarian function of the movement.

Movement, whether of individuals or of crowds, is an extension of the mood of each into a *visual rhythm.* It is less clearly understood and more cursorily treated than any other department of our theatre. It is, none the less, integral to the effectiveness of every play, and it should be appreciated by the director in proportion to its valid contribution. Some actors are born with a rhythmic sense, which is apparent in every move they make; with most it must be acquired. Every time an actor takes a step or raises a hand, even when he sits still, he is creating some visual mood. If the words and the emotion behind those words are not in tune with the way he takes that step or sits in that chair, half the effectiveness will be dissipated.

Every move in the theatre must be in balance, even though the actor is creating the impression of being off balance. An actor should never be still without creating the impression of a capacity to move, *and to move in a certain rhythm.* (If the actor be portraying a corpse, he may consider himself exempt.) Similarly, he should never move without creating the *impression of a capacity to stop,* unless the volitional intention back of the move is inexorable and unending. (See: Charlie Chaplin going up a long road at the fade-out, or the dead walking at the final curtain of *Bury the Dead.*) This concept of balance dictates a rhythmic mood that must control the entire passage of an actor through a play. *Movement is merely the interval between moments of stillness; stillness is merely the generation of an impulse to move.*

The degree of restraint inspired by cross purposes in the actor's mind is the determinant of the pace and the vibrancy of each. An actor may so sit in a chair that an audience knows, when he rises, he will drag across the stage. He may also sit so that an audience is constantly anticipating his dashing out the door. *Every movement is a glass to reveal more clearly the mood of the actor.* If the director

lets him muddy the glass, the clarity of the whole will be blurred and obscure.

A particularly frequent failing of both actors and directors is to conceive of movement as an actionary interval between static states. A spectacular example of this was the Dantchenko production of *Lysistrata.* Here large groups of actors hit splendid pictorial postures, then moved haphazardly and listlessly to new positions and assumed new postures. The static states were, in this case, more vibrant than the movement between. This mass example is reflected in production after production in our theatre today by individual actors, male and female. Every action, in its fulfillment or in its restraint, is a visual amplification of the mood and the thought of the play. A director who belittles or ignores this factor will cripple the potential effectiveness of every scene he directs.

Movement of crowds is basically the same as movement of individuals. For crowd work, the background and relationship of the actors is of tremendous importance. It is almost impossible in the space of four weeks to get good crowd action, unless the actors have worked together before, or with the director before, or both. A crowd can only take on life in terms of the combined activity (mental, emotional, and physical) of each individual of which it is composed. The director cannot start to conceive of movement for that crowd *until the character of each person is real and clear to him,* until he knows each wordless reaction as well as he knows reactions of his principal players. That is why the Group and the Actors Repertory Theatre achieved so high a standard of crowd action. Any walk-on might be tomorrow's star, and *vice versa.* There cannot be good crowd action without dignity and a sense of integrity in each and every member of the cast. This concept must be considered basic, before the mere mechanics of its movement can be created.

Once this crowd is so conceived, infinite variety is made possible. A man is shot. What does the director do with the crowd? For some time he should do nothing but watch. One person (provided he, or she has an adequately deep sense of characterization) may run in circles, doing little useless jobs, meaning nothing,—and everything. A man may run in, drop a towel, never realize it, and then start looking for it aimlessly. This can be the most significant piece of business in the scene. The director should first help the actors to find *a characterization;* thereafter, much of what they do should be left

to them. Eventually the moment will come when the action will be too confused or repetitive. Then is when *selection* and *suggestion* must be made to give to those individual actions a coherent form.

It is also well to realize that in a crowd no one person is privileged beyond any other. Once a leading personality meets twenty people with no prescribed lines, all are equal. So long as either actors or director view any one member of the scene with awe, that scene will never achieve its maximum effect. Movement will tend to become constipated, in order to protect some privileged personality. This constriction will destroy all freedom of rhythm. If some player becomes completely hidden from the audience at a vital moment, it is easy enough to extricate him. To protect him constantly may vitiate every attempt at naturalness.

When a crowd must hit an emotional high point, the director must depend more and more on the individualities he has built up. If, however, this high point warrants restraint, he may find it helpful to ignore the restraint for some time. In order to give dynamic evidence of control, it is first necessary to create a sense of almost insuperable urgency. If a crowd needs to be frightened but at the same time hushed, it is unwise to ask for a hush at the start. Let the lid fly off, pile on the violence. When, at last, the request is made to do the same thing quietly, every whisper will vibrate with smothered intensity. This will be equally true of the action. Suddenly actors will walk, as though they desired to run, will move spasmodically, perhaps awkwardly, but always keenly alert to a desire that is being held in leash.

A director must see the crowd as individuals, but since he must rely so greatly on personal contributions, what can he do about laying out the business? For this he needs first a sense of design suited to the frame-line of his set. This problem is complex and, if he is not blessed with an intuitive grasp of its basic concepts, he will need to acquire it by sweat and long hours. Shoddy groupings can give false emphases, can create a passive mood at a vital moment (or vice versa), can, in fact, seriously affect the intelligibility of the entire play.

There are certain basic laws that the director must know. He must know that the line of action is *never horizontal nor vertical, but diagonal.* This law controls the attitudes of both individuals and the mass forms they create. He should know that the pivotal position in a triangle is the *point of dual focus,* and that that *focus can be changed at will.* He should know that the *straight line implies one*

mood, the curve another. He should know the relative weight of space around a single form as against a lesser space around massed forms. He should also know that *symmetry and flat planes are static; that balance is an implication of movement.*

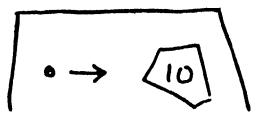
These are primer rules. Beyond this lies the entire field of *passive and active design.* Books are less stimulating than paintings; paintings less stimulating than the living scene. Among painters, Goya was the supreme master of theatrical design. Goya warrants more exhaustive study. In addition there are Michelangelo, Giotta, Rembrandt, Pieter Bruegel, Dürer, Raphael, and Tintoretto. These are not the only ones, but the best. They mastered design in theatrical terms, implying action even in its suspended state.

For the theatre this is not enough, however. The danger is to emulate the Soviet director Dantchenko and undercut these eloquent moments with confused and listless interludes. The action of the human body and of masses are around us constantly, but nowhere more easily grasped than in sports. An athlete is worth watching, for most of his emotional responses are unconscious. Anger, grace, mute rage, stoicism, joy, discouragement—these are things he displays publicly and without shame. Watch the posture of a football end just before the ball is passed. Watch a fighter in his corner between rounds Watch a wrestler's shoulders in repose, and a bowler measuring the alley. Watch an athlete move, and watch him when he is still. Study the groupings and the lines of movement in an off-tackle play, the runner passing through his own interference, breaking through on the other side. Study a hockey team on the attack, every line of movement converging directly (or indirectly) on the goal. Study the form of a baseball diamond, and the positions of a doubles team on a tennis court. Study the faces—faces under stress, and faces that are confident; study the feet and the hands and the spring of the body. Study the cautious moves, and the reckless. Study sports and there will be little need to labor nights over a book.

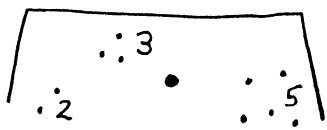
A director must know design, but never in terms of a frozen state. He must keep his pictures fluid. The museum and the football field are good schools. How the director applies the things he learns is his peculiar and personal problem. It is in this that he must create his own individuality.

Assuming now that he has a pattern of action in mind, how does he go about plotting it out to fit the scene, without an endlessly elab-

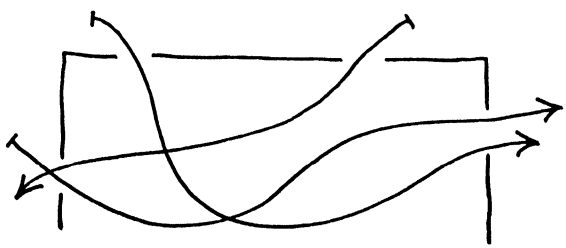
orate group of charts and plans? Generally speaking, he can do no more than set up groups which will people his stage in proper relationship to the mood and to the situation. Thus, if one man faces a mob of ten people, he may indicate it so:



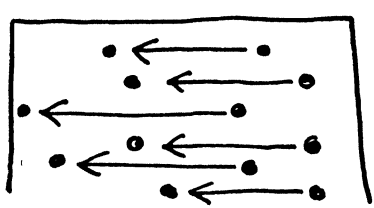
If he desire this man to be surrounded by a crowd, it may be so:



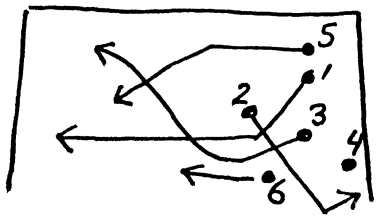
Most important, however, is to figure out general schemes of movement to be elaborated later. Thus:



Here he indicates movement and counter movement. There are a few basic factors involved in these rhythmic designs, which he should bear in mind. *A direct sweep is almost never as effective as when it is combined with some counter move.* If six men, standing left, have to cross right, for instance, the least effective way for them to do it is this:



It is far more effective to do it so:



The net result in terms of actual position will be almost the same, but the resemblance to "sheep movement" will be gone. Move people, if possible, *above other people,* not below them. Let individuals *cross at different speeds.* Let persons at the back weave through the crowd, perhaps never moving certain persons in the front. Try never to have a large group go in one direction, without at least one person *moving against* the stream. (There is almost always valid justification for this.) When a person in a crowd has something important to say on the opposite side from the focal center of attention, some legitimate movement before his speech will tend to *shift the focus to him.*

These are a few rule-of-thumb suggestions. In the end the individuals will create the rhythm. It is vital for the director to recognize, however, that for every individual, whether he be alone in a soliloquy or part of a crowd of fifty, the visual rhythm of his movements is commensurate in importance with the *tonal rhythm* of his words. They must supplement each other toward the achievement of a single objective. A full understanding of this fact is basic to a mastery of the problem of business.

REHEARSALS

The night before the first rehearsal of a play is a frightening time for every director. He will lie awake conjuring up images of calamity. The actors will assemble and they will all be Chinese; the set will be sixty feet high with only one door swinging eerily above the actors' heads, the leading lady will rebel and break her contract, and the hero will appear with a nose like Cyrano's.

One of the persistent torments that beset him is his doubt of his own capacity to command respect from his cast. This can, perhaps, be alleviated by an understanding of what breeds respect in the theatre. If a director be right, he need never rage nor storm. Dictatorial blus-

tering is symptomatic of insecurity. The parrot-like obedience which it may arouse will be hollow and spiritless; the authority of the director will go only as deep as his capacity to hire and fire. There will be no profound respect; there will be no trust. The director does not need to be called "Sir" in order to hold the confidence of his actors. He needs only to be sensitive to the best in the script, and to the best in his actors.

Actors are highly sensitized; they are swift to recognize the kernel of arrogance under a coating of friendliness. Many directors distrust the intelligence of actors. An actor does not need to be a master of calculus, Hegel, or the Bacchic dithyramb in order to understand the mood of a scene or the subtler implications of a part. Actors are, however, human, with many of the attendant frailties of man. They will frequently give lip-service to integrity, while seeking to steal bouquets for themselves alone. They will persist in misunderstanding the intention of a scene, in the hope of having it changed to their greater advantage. They will sacrifice honesty to effectiveness. These things a director must recognize at once. He may use the actor's effectiveness, his bouquet-hunting, but he should not let the actor think he has put something over on him. To secure authority over the individual and over the other members of the cast, the director should never let himself appear to be duped. He can call the turn in the best of humor, he can laugh with the actor and at the actor, but he cannot afford to let the attempt go unchallenged.

Above all, he must believe in the actor. More fine performances have bloomed in response to a director's genuine faith, than ever flowered under his bludgeoning. He must sometimes believe in the actor more than the actor believes in himself. The boy cast in the lead in *Both Your Houses* pleaded for two weeks to be replaced; he was kept in the part and did a magnificent job. Faith also compensates for gruelling work. An actor will work hard, can be picked on and driven without resentment, if only he can feel the director's belief is not waning. Distrust breeds insecurity; it also reduces a director's authority.

Superficially there is no absolute formula for a director's attitude before his cast. Some directors shout; others whisper. Some laugh; others are grim. Some are volatile; others precise. Only one thing is certain—the director's manner must spring from an inner integrity or it will be ineffectual. If he is true to the play, he can be all kinds of a

person, and it will not matter. If he be untrue, no external mannerism will conceal the fact from his cast. What he knows and the sensitivity of that knowledge—this is the ultimate yardstick of his authority. He must be wise, and he must be flexible.

Rehearsals in our theatre usually last four weeks. (This applies to new plays for professional production alone.) Whether or not this is an adequate allotment of time is beside the point. It is all the director can get at the moment, and so it seems best to discuss rehearsals on those terms. Perhaps the clearest picture of the play's growth will come from treating each week as a separate unit. This is a rough, and not an altogether true picture, but may help to clarify the chronological importance of certain steps along the way. For a longer rehearsal period, the steps may take a proportionately longer time; the adjustment can easily be made.

First Week

Reading by the cast. The cast having assembled, the first thing is to read the script. This is a deceptive and dangerous moment. Good plays, like good actors, often read badly. What is far worse, mediocre plays, like second-rate actors, often read well. But no matter how well or how bad the play sounds, no matter how well, or how badly any actor may read, this is a moment for the director to listen and say nothing. He may correct typographical errors in the parts or in the script. Beyond that, any advice he gives will smack of amateurish enthusiasm. No actor can be expected to know what lies behind a character at the first reading; to be told will only create a justifiable irritation.

Once the play has been read, it is quite proper for the director to discuss it in general terms, even to discuss performances. He should realize, however, that *an actor can absorb only a few constructive hints at one time.* He should be careful to select the most significant characteristics, ignoring details which can easily be picked up later. It is quite proper to tell an actor on the first day that he is playing a hypocrite; it is quite improper to tell him that he can get a laugh on the tenth speech of Act III by taking a bite of an apple on the penultimate word.

The length of time a cast should be kept reading around a table is variable. Some directors do not allow actors to get on their feet for two weeks; others start the second day. Whatever is done should be

qualified by the type of actor, the type of play, and the intricacy of the action. If leading players—say, the Lunts—have had a script all summer, it is merely wasting time to keep them sitting around a table for a week. On the other hand, a play of delicately woven moods with simple business may warrant a longer period devoted to readings.

Characterization. The fundamental thing for the director to recognize during the first week is that the actor must create forward. He must establish and become familiar with the character he is playing, *before* he attempts to hit the emotional climax of that character. Whatever he does must naturally be tempered by, and directed toward, this climax, but the climax itself should not be attempted. There is valid reason for this. Tense scenes have a way of playing themselves, of carrying the actor along toward an approximation of their intention The actor who hits his climax glibly is in grave danger of setting a tone he will find difficult to throw off—and that tone will almost invariably be his own, rather than that of the character he is playing At best, the performance will be a frail shadow of what it might have been. Habits are more easily acquired than broken; it is the director's business to see that they are not solidified too early.

In the first entrance a character makes, all that he is, was, and will be must be implied. It may be only five lines, but those lines are often worth a full week of struggle. Once they are keyed truly, once they are surrounded with the full texture of a vibrant personality, two thirds of the battle is won. If an actor is fully and completely right in his first act, it is almost impossible for him to go wrong later. If he does, the fault more often lies in the script than in the actor.

The first week is the time to clarify and to mold characters. This begins with individuals, but must also include those individuals in relation to one another and to the mood of the play as a whole. Inherent in the fabric of Act I is the potential energy to bring down the curtain of Act III. It must be there, or the road ahead will be rough and slow. Learning lines is not yet important. It is the indications of a sound thread on which the character is strung that matters. This is the business of the first week.

Second Week

Setting the Business. The second week is hardier and warrants greater pressure. Presumably in casting the mold of the characters, the first act has already been put on its feet. Parts of Act II may also

have been roughed in. The second week is the time to get the business of the entire play set, the first two acts at a minimum.[6]

Once the actors have a clear foundation in characterization, the "breaking in" begins to go faster. As soon as this mental clarity is achieved, even good actors do not hesitate to anticipate rehearsals, to study speeches and scenes in advance, and to weave them into a coherent texture. This is not particularly hazardous and tends to speed up the work of blocking in the scenes.

The director should be forewarned of a characteristic of rehearsals at this time. Actors will begin to get startling results with scenes only cursorily rehearsed, while seeming to lose all that has been carefully set in earlier scenes. This is symptomatic of the actor's state of mind, when trying to get the part out of his hand. His concentration will veer from character to the mechanics of memory, his rhythm will be destroyed, he will flounder, he will often become irritable. Not only should the director be undisturbed by this: he should be actively sympathetic. Whenever he sees an actor struggling to set an early scene, he should try to schedule enough time to help the actor get over this hurdle without interruption. He should recognize that the halting pace and broken rhythm of the performance get on the actor's nerves quite as much as on the director's, if not more so. The efficiency of the actor will be lowered, and it will be impossible to gain his full concentration on anything else. Let him run these scenes until the process of memory becomes automatic; then he will be free to think again and feel again in terms of character.

Props. Props may be as troublesome as words. Dialogue spoken over a tea-cup or a bridge game is only half conveyed by the words themselves. The spacing of those words between gestures of pouring, of dealing the cards, of dropping in the sugar, of making the bid—in short, the integration of words and business makes the scenes. Adequate time must also be given to smoothing out the rough edges. It is unimportant whether this time be allotted early in the day or late, but, whichever is done, the actor should be notified. For instance, the director may say, "Let's go after the curtain of Act II the first thing tomorrow. We'll save the afternoon for Act I." Or he may say,

[6] The symbols Act I, II, and III are indicative of the most generally accepted form in the theatre today. The play may be written in one act, in five acts, or in eleven scenes; that is unimportant. What is important is to realize that all plays have certain *establishing scenes* [Act I], certain *developing scenes* [Act II], and certain *climactic scenes* [Act III]. These classifications are what the act symbols are meant to convey.

"Act I all tomorrow morning. Act II after lunch." Either way the actor's mind is at rest. The one thing not to do is to leave him in suspense. In this case he will stew all morning over the thing he is afraid will not be done, and he will stew all afternoon over how bad he was before lunch. There is not time enough to waste days in nervous exhaustion.

Costumes. If costumes are needed—and for women they almost always are—these should be selected and the first fittings scheduled before the end of the second week. The nerve strain of rehearsals is cumulative; the more pressure is reduced during the final days, the better. The selection of costumes should never be left to the discretion of actors or scene designers; this is one time when both can be counted on to go wrong. The director should be there to give his assent to every costume used in the show, to pass on color, and style, and the relationship among costumes as they will appear on the stage at one time. If he is not there, some costumes will inevitably be wrong, which will mean a new selection, more fittings, and more hours of strain for the actor or actress at the very moment when those hours can be least spared. Wasted effort is resented deeply, and justifiably. It is the director's business to cut this waste to a minimum.

The constant pressure of the second week is toward an objective. By the time these days of concentration on the play are over, everyone concerned is in danger of losing perspective. Good or bad results within scenes blur the outlines of the broader pattern, create false estimates based on isolated detail rather than on the cumulative effectiveness of the performance as a whole, or of the play as a whole. The play needs to be submitted to an audience whose reaction will determine the conduct and emphasis of the remaining days of rehearsal. The selection of this audience is crucial. Obviously, the play is in no shape to be presented publicly. Certain scenes will be smooth, but in others actors will still be holding parts in their hands. A cold worklight will harden the outlines of faces, obscure expressions, and give the audience a headache. The persons selected must, therefore, be theatre-wise and forgiving. Above all, however, they should be tough. It is worse than useless at this time to pull in sentimentalists and "push-overs." One skilled observer, appreciative, aware, and blunt, is worth fifty gushing enthusiasts. The purpose of this run-through is not to find out what is good about the play but what is bad. Compli-

ments are pleasant but confusing. The director who cannot take criticism is on the high-road to heartbreak.

His hardest task is to weed out, from whatever criticism is offered, the valid from the invalid, and to transmute negative comments into positive lines of action. This is not to say that tough comments are always valid. When E. P. Conkle's *Two Hundred Were Chosen* was five days away from an opening, a prominent author was called in for advice. After seeing the play run through, he said, "The trouble is the author doesn't know how to write farmers." Since it was my opinion then, and is now, that this was the finest play I had ever been privileged to do, and since Mr. E. P. Conkle was, in my estimation, hauntingly aware of a lyric magnificence in the farmer, this comment failed to clarify anything except my disrespect for the man's judgment.

Good suggestions are often phrased in an almost equally devastating fashion. After a run through of *Father Malachy's Miracle* a man came out swinging. He tore into the play almost before the curtain was down. He didn't like this scene, and he didn't believe that. But he did believe the miracle, and he did like the play. We knew, because they were the only two things he had not abused. Weeding through his lengthy attack, sifting the just criticism from the unjust, we were able to rewrite and re-rehearse this play in five days to give it solidity and an impact it had never had before. Merely because criticism is tough, it need not destroy faith in a play. It may only inspire determination and stubbornness and hard work. This is often all that is needed to turn a tepid show into a vigorous, exciting production.

A reaction should be sought as early as possible, since the difficulty of changes increases in geometric proportion to the lessening time before opening. It is not easy to be told your work is bad, but it is easier to be told early by friends than too late by an audience.

Third Week

The third week is the time for changes. It is also the time for polishing and refining. The emphasis up to this time should have been on broad lines of attack—on composition of mood, character, and story-line. Assuming this pattern has been generally correct, the next thing needed is to extract the ultimate value from each individual moment. This is where the sheen is put on the cloth. A director's craftsmanship is put to its severest test during this time.

The following are important for him to recognize:

(1) Definition. The measure of the impact of an actor's performance is in terms of the *clarity of his projection.* This is a wide field, ranging all the way from his being heard to his being understood.

a. *Audibility.* The actor must be heard. This does not mean he has to shout, but what he says must be clear. He may throw a line away; he must not swallow it. Richard Bennett seemed to mumble through most of *Winterset,* yet every syllable was audible from the first row to the last. If the actor doesn't know how to make himself heard, the director must show him.

b. *Clarity.* The actor must be clear. Every line is capable of many readings, nor is there necessarily only one right reading. A line may be understated or "stepped on." What is necessary is for the thought and feeling behind the line to be clear. Sometimes an author must be asked for help here. Good literary lines often defy translation into speech. Authors frequently put words in undramatic sequence. For example, suppose the lines were "When I came into the room, I found her lying dead in the middle of the floor." The line says what it means, but it lacks impact. The chances are an actor would find it easier to say, if it read, "When I came into the room, I found her lying in the middle of the floor. She was dead." There might be valid reasons for an author's choosing the first way. If, on the other hand, he wrote it that way unintentionally, there is better than an even chance he will be amenable to the change.

c. *Rhythm.* The actor must have rhythm, not alone within his own speech but between his speeches and those that precede and follow them. Many times an actor will be so concentrated on what he is saying that he will be unaware of the effect of his words on others. He will stumble along, oblivious to a host of values inherent in those other reactions. The spacing of his words, the phrasing of the line, must accommodate the maximum clarification of the scene. He is but a part of that scene, and the rhythm of his words must conform to the potential effectiveness of the whole. So far as personal clarity is concerned, one sentence might follow directly on another, but a pause, a look, a beat taken at the right moment may add immeasurable value in terms of another's reaction, in terms, perhaps, of his reaction to that reaction. This will temporarily pull down the pace of a scene,

but once an idea is in the actor's mind, the visual symbol may often be stricken out, the pause may be collapsed to a breath, and yet the inherent value will remain—more fleeting, but often, for that very reason, more provocative. The scene will be richer, at a minimum distortion of pace.

d. *Motivation.* The actor must be adequately motivated. During the early days a director may say, "Look, go over to the mantle and pick up something—I don't know what yet—but we'll find something." By the third week that "something" must be concrete, or the movement cut. The actor must begin to be clear about what he is doing, and why he is doing it every moment of the time.

Much more important than this physical motivation, are the steps up to and down from a given height. In building climaxes, actors often start by jumping up to correct climaxes without working out the preliminary stages; more skillful actors will gradually feel for the climax but will not hit it until all the steps are clear to them. In either case, the interplay of action and reaction must now begin to take shape, so that the graph of mood may assume its proper form. This may mean the injection of minute stepping stones, a pause here to absorb an idea, a move there to indicate a tensing. Rung by rung the ladder must be built, and each step of the way must be sound enough to tread on. Cobwebs will give way when the pressure is put on. False stimuli are cobwebs.

This building process is sometimes particularly important for the actor during moments of silence. It is then that the director must check the actor on what he feels as he hears each line of the scene. These words mean this to him; this look means something more. That gesture is a reminder; that move a revelation. Little by little his mood is drawn taut, till, when the moment of climax arrives, he is ready to meet it emotionally as well as vocally.

e. *Comprehension.* An actor must be understood. This means that every word he utters and every gesture he makes must be woven together to create the maximum impact. This is the art of economy. Not only must he do everything necessary, but he must do nothing that is unnecessary. Some actors will need help imagining things to do; more often they will need help in stripping off the meaningless embroidery. Miss Garbo is most

effective as an actress because of the stark economy of her characterizations. Even though her medium is pictures, she warrants careful study. *Ninotchka* is a textbook of good acting. It is commendable in large measure because of the things she might have done but had the good taste to forego.

The actor can make himself clear to an audience only when every move and every word is both rhythmic and coherent. A passionate speech spoken by a character slopping across the stage will certainly fail in its impact. If the actor cannot move in rhythm, perhaps he can remain still in rhythm. The director must use both an actor's assets and weaknessess in order to achieve a maximum effectiveness.

(2) Climaxes. Above and beyond the definition of the actor's individual performance is the rhythmic order of the play's accumulating development. This is closely allied to the problem of climax, either comedic or emotional. Any good play is studded with greater or lesser climaxes within acts and at the end of acts. In the enthusiasm of early rehearsals, the tendency is to drain the maximum from each, as it appears. Inevitably this leads to distortion. The high moment of the play may be reached twenty minutes after the start of Act I. This, of course, is fatal, unless one of two things is done; the attack on the early situation may be softened, or the later climaxes intensified. Something of both is usually the wisest course.

Act climaxes present peculiar dangers. Authors, directors, and writers are all afraid of these moments, and, as a consequence, they are likely to pile on steam to create a spurious height not inherent in the situation. These curtain scenes warrant careful examination at this time: to see that they are high enough, and to see that they are not too high.

(3) Use of the Stage. In the early days of rehearsals many scenes will be put on their feet in what appears the best spot on the stage for that scene. When all these pieces are strung together, a certain area may be found to be overworked and the other areas neglected. With experience the director will become automatically aware of this, but he may consciously let it go until he is certain which of two or more scenes gains most from its position. By the third week the business should be set, however. Some scenes may have to be restaged to make maximum use of the full stage area. A director should never forget

that a set can justify only those architectural details that are proved to be necessary. Quite practically he may find that a consciousness of the need to use some neglected spot may radically affect and often brighten a scene, giving it freshness and variety.

(4) Props and Scenery. During this week the director must check his props and scenery. By this time he should know precisely what every chair, table, and ash tray has to do. Should the chair be comfortable or straight-backed? Should the stool be seventeen inches high or eight? Should the ash tray be marble or pewter, and of what size? He should arrange to go with his scene designer to pass on the acting characteristics of every prop and piece of furniture.

In addition, he must check his scenery. He is probably familiar with the dimensions of his set, but the color is also a critical problem. As an assistant director, I arrived at the paint shop one day to find a towering second-act set painted red with gargantuan gold frescoes of Asurbani-pal hunting lions all over the back wall. They were magnificent —and that was precisely the trouble; they were too magnificent. When the director arrived, he was so impressed that he could not bring himself to cancel them. The painting went ahead according to plan; the play was a failure. It is advisable, then, to check the color of a set. Where patterns (wallpapers or frescoes) are to be used, this becomes even more imperative.

Fourth Week

The fourth week is the week of despair. Often it starts off smilingly. The play is shaping up, the actors are getting free, the morale is good. And then the set appears. Suddenly everything caves in like a deep-dish pie. The actors, used to hard rehearsal chairs, cannot get into or out of the sofa. Costumes catch on upholstery, distances seem longer or shorter, doors won't work. The whole play is sacrificed on the altar of mechanics, and its rebirth seems misty and insecure. This is where the director needs faith,—and a clear head. This is the week of *co-ordination*, when all the carefully planned pieces must be fitted together.

During the first part of the week it is well to change the tactics of rehearsals. Details should by now be set. What is needed is uninterrupted continuity. The cast is by now eager to get the "feel" of the play as a whole. The play should be run through without stopping at least once a day. After a *run-through* the director can give notes, can bone down on certain weak scenes, can try new details of business or

emphasis here and there; then the play should be run through again. It is hard to believe, yet profoundly true, that a series of straight run-throughs cures quite as many of a play's ills as the director. It is also well to remember that the more secure a cast feels before the scenery arrives, the better the chances of their rebounding gracefully from the first shock.

Mechanics. Once the scenery is in the theatre, work must be departmentalized. When the stage crew is working, the actors should not be. When the stage hands lay off, the actors may appear. It is unwise to hold a full cast while technical difficulties are being ironed out. Make a note of them, but do not stop. When the actors are gone the crew will work more efficiently and more quickly. On both sides, nerves will be spared.

In a similar way, actors should not be asked to put on steam during a *technical run-through.* Let them master the intricacy of a latch or the spacing of a cross without pouring on the emotion. They will overcome the mechanical hurdles faster that way, and with less drain on their energies. If certain props continue to hamper the flow of a scene, they should be replaced. Every piece of furniture is awkward for a time; if it continues to impede action, the fault is probably with the prop, not with the actor. No such object is sacred; it can and should be sacrificed to the good of the play.

All during these days the more rigidly a schedule is followed, the better for everyone concerned. Nothing is more irritating to a cast than arriving at ten and being allowed on the set at two. The same, to a lesser degree, applies to the crew. Things should be done at specified times, and only the gravest emergencies should upset this routine. If these injunctions are obeyed, the dress rehearsal will gain in smoothness, will be of greater benefit to all.

Dress Rehearsal

The dress rehearsal is the culmination of the four weeks or more of preparation of the script, when the creative and mechanical elements within the production are brought together and fused. The dress rehearsal is essential to the actors in order to make it possible for them to do justice to themselves and to the play on the first performance. It is not a private performance put on for the director's benefit.

There is a grave responsibility placed upon the director at this time

to maintain an equanimity of mood while anticipating, so far as possible, those irritating and often avoidable difficulties which inevitably arise. An actor who is struggling to reach a difficult emotional climax will not be assisted by a curtain which falls two minutes before the end of an act. It is the director's business to rehearse the mechanics of the curtains before asking the actors to run through the play as a whole. He should check the props, the lights, the furniture, all the appurtenances of the stage, not so much with an eye to ultimate perfection, as to easing possible disturbance to the actors. No actor is thrown off by the substitution of a rehearsal bench for an utterly inappropriate and unworkable sofa. This should have been forseen in advance, but if, by some accident, the wrong piece of furniture has been delivered to the theatre too late for change, it is the director's business to substitute the more familiar piece of rehearsal furniture.

He should realize that, for the dress rehearsal, he is of more service to the play in the capacity of wet-nurse to the actors, than in the capacity of either critic or martinet. His concern, disappointment, or excitement is completely unimportant to them. They must feel comfortable and assured. It is quite unnecessary for the director to curry up some nervous state that will give excitement and fire to the performance. It is well for him to realize that every good actor supplies his own abundant quota of nervousness, no matter how many years of service he has put into the theatre. Provided the director has taken care of the play, tension will take care of itself.

So far as humanly possible, the director should perform no violent operation upon the script or the performances between the dress rehearsal and the first public showing of the play. The concentration should be upon smoothing out those rough edges which may impede the effectiveness of the performance. If absolute necessity drives him to make certain cuts, elisions, or changes, they should be conceived with the greatest consideration of the actors. An actor can cut a whole scene far more easily than he can cut two words out of a long speech. Whatever is done should be done cleanly and clearly. The director should not be carried away by his own desire for perfection in detail. He must remember that he is largely responsible for these weaknesses, if they occur at this time, and should not put the burden of his failure upon the cast he has chosen to work with him.

The director should remember one more thing. He and his cast

have had, as a rule, a certain number of weeks to learn the play, its implications and its subtleties. The members of the crew who arrive to set up the show for the first time have not had this intimate relationship with the script. Enough time should be allotted to make them familiar with and comfortable in the handling of effects, shifts of scene, and so on. A good "dim" on the average dimming board is a difficult process; it is often integrally associated with the mood of the scene in which it occurs. There is no reason why a director should expect an electrician to perform this job sensitively the first time he tries it, any more than he should expect an actor to give a finished performance at the first reading. If it is impossible to give the proper time to smooth out such effects, at least some allowance should be made for the accidents that may occur. If, before the dress rehearsal, there is no available time for setting the various cues, dims, etc., it is far wiser to eliminate them temporarily. An actor is seldom bothered by having to play a dark scene on a fully lit stage; he may be tremendously thrown off by having to play a comedy scene in murky darkness.

The dress rehearsal is important only insofar as it irons out the difficult union between mechanics and the creative instinct. The director's main responsibility is anticipation; his second is understanding.

Try-out

The play opens for a try-out. (Many Broadway plays have an out-of-town try-out. In the college or community theatres, this is not the case; but these observations may prove helpful if there are *pre-views*.) The production should not, but probably still does, need work. What that work shall be must be determined by the director's judgment. It is not possible to give advice in general terms. Each play creates its own peculiar circumstance. If the director has worked well during all the previous days, he should be ready to use his own judgment effectively now. A few simple, technical suggestions may be of some help:

1. Do not call the cast for a long session after the opening night. They need rest, and the director can use every moment to lay out a clear schedule with the author for the work that lies ahead.

2. From then on, try to take and give notes on each perform-

ance. It is quicker than a full rehearsal, and leaves more time and energy for the vital changes that must be made.

3. If any rewritten material is to be put into the show, never try to put it in on the same day it is given out. Actors must be allowed to sleep on new lines. Keep a cast late at night, if necessary, but do not expect them to speak even the smallest number of new lines on the same day these are given.

4. Always call the entire cast into the theatre for at least an hour the day of the final opening. Try to give each some tiny attention. This will tend to reduce nervousness and heighten the tone of the whole performance.

5. Don't hang around back-stage the night of the opening There is nothing the director can do, and he will merely be underfoot.

6. Never desert a show while it is running. If the director has made a mistake, it does not help to spread rumors and run down the show. A reasonable loyalty is owed to his author, his cast, and his manager.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR THE DIRECTOR

Before concluding this survey of the director's work, it will be well to refer to certain general aspects of direction which may warrant brief discussion. In this miscellany of pointers, which may be fitted into other sections of this chapter, the following are important:

(1) Reading Lines for the Actor

In general the director should avoid reading any line for an actor. He should certainly defer it as long as possible. Even a good directional reading will lack the spontaneity of the actor's own phrasing. With unskilled workers and morons it is sometimes necessary, but there is less of either in the theatre than is generally imagined. The object from the director's point of view is not to impress the actor, but to have the actor impress an audience. Most readings stem from the director's latent exhibitionism. He should control it as far as possible.

(2) Demonstrating Business

This does not apply to business. An actor may be shown how to time a cross, how to use a foil, how to open a door. The process of

physical transmutation seems less disturbing than the aural. The director should know how to handle his body in any circumstance. He should be able to distinguish valid difficulty from the actor's temporary awkwardness.. He should also know how to avoid pitfalls in business, to circumvent them, or to imply them.

(3) *Type of Playing*

A certain well-known actress in our theatre takes the stand that there is no such thing as a comedian and an emotional actor. "There are actors, and there are bad actors," she says. This is profoundly important for the director to realize. If the actor fully absorbs the mood and the mind of a character, he will automatically speak the lines as that character would say them. If the character is funny, the actor will create the illusion; if the character is emotionally strained, that, too, will come through. There are certain "tricks" (so-called) to comedy, but it is vital to realize that all of them are derivative from some living example. They are not fabrications but replicas. The actor who understands fully the character he is playing, will reveal both the mind and the external idiosyncrasies of the original. That is acting. It is equally at home in tragedy or comedy. The good director should evidence a similar scope.

One word regarding *farce*. Many actors and many directors approach it with foreboding. The secret of farce is simple. When an actor attacks a farce character, he has a tendency to feel he must do some tricks to produce a proper effect. He will consider a red nose or a funny hat; he will try to wrap farce around himself like a coat. This is evidence of a complete misapprehension regarding the essence of the form.

Farce is a rationalization of the absurd. It possesses an inner madness, concealed beneath a wardrobe of plausibility. The good farce actor needs no superficial tricks. What he must do is to dig out the inner absurdity of the concept of the character, and then play that absurdity with complete legitimacy and naturalness. It is the juxtaposition of what are generally considered to be mutually exclusive qualities that makes up most farce personalities. *Charlie's Aunt* is not funny, if played by a man with effeminate mannerisms. The fun lies in the desperation of a "100%" male, caught up in a trickery he wants to, but does not dare, abandon. The drunken parson, the good thief, the sentimental wrestler; these are farce concepts. The

director, as well as the actor, must appreciate the inner absurdity, but must also recognize the necessity for the character to be completely unaware of any peculiarity within himself. Blandness of approach is the secret of farce. It is not something to be applied externally. It demands quite as much integrity in playing as does Ibsen or Strindberg.

(4) Excitement

Excitement must be in all cases inherent in the script. The director's problem is to know how far it can be applied without destroying credibility. To apply excitement like a poultice is dangerous, since it is far more likely to reveal the essential shallowness of the script than to cover its weaknesses. Good actors are prone to give special emphasis to colorless or awkward speeches; good speeches will carry themselves. This is also true of scenes. Greater intensity is needed to salvage a weak scene than to do justice to a well-written one. But it is important to recognize at what point that intensity over-weights the content, reducing it to bathos. It is right that a director should give concentrated attention to the weaker parts of a play. He must, at the same time, be alert to the danger of pressing too hard and driving the scene quite out of bounds.

(5) Movement and Attention

Movement for movement's sake is never necessary. There was an old theory in the theatre that no one could sit still for more than thirty seconds without putting an audience to sleep. This has been disproved. The essence of movement is *vibration*; it must be maintained at all times. The excitement within the mind may be quite as vibrant and arresting as a slamming door or a scream in the dark. The actor must constantly hold the audience's attention; it is not necessary for him to emulate a voodoo dancer to achieve it. Let his mind dance, and his feet may rest.

(6) Pace

Pace is not speed. It is the *alternation of rhythm* that gives full and vibrant accent to the scene. Continuous speed is a plateau—it is high, but flat.

The tempo of a mood is the measure of its intensity, qualified by the resistant power of conflicting impulses. A is mad enough to kill

B; he whips out a gun and shoots. If B is his dear, old, grey-haired mother, his hand may hesitate a moment. If C is standing with a club over his head, he probably won't shoot at all. The urgency remains unchanged; the pace varies in proportion to the potential force of conflicting elements.

The pace of a scene is determined by the *interplay of conflicting elements*, provoked in varying intensity by a single situation. A reckless man and a deliberate one will move and speak in different tempi. The combination of their conflicting moods will determine the alternations of pace within the scene.

Pace is a matter of honesty in approach. It is no trick, but an integral element in a mood. Its vibrancy is dependent upon the degree of variety and intensity inherent in the situation. *Speed* is its least important element. *The Front Page* gave the impression of galloping along at break-neck speed, yet the greatest problem in its direction was to force each actor to speak and act deliberately. The pattern of its inherent cross-purposes created a sense of speed through contrast, not through haste.

(7) *Pitch*

Pitch is no more a trick than is pace. *Comedy is usually pitched* higher than tragedy; that is no stage discovery, but is inherent in the comedic mood. The essence of laughter is a response of relief following an apparent disaster. A man slips on a banana peel—a scream, then laughter. The scream may be internal and silent, but it is there. Laughter, then, is the emergence from hysteria. It is colored by the consciousness of inherent danger, and biologically fear will force the voice into a high key, ultimately into strangulation. The actor, seeing life in comedic terms, will see the banana peel, will feel the scream in his throat, and thus the mental reliving of the episode will throw his voice into a higher register. That is nature's trick, not the actor's.

The scale of tones in a voice is directly related to the intensity of the mood of the person, qualified by his original biological tone. High voices go higher at moments than low ones, but the ratio of change remains equal. The problem for the director is to cast his play musically, foreseeing those symphonic arrangements of contrapuntal tones which most vividly dramatize the mood of his play. An entire cast of bassos would destroy the effect of each basso individu-

ally. A single bass, on the other hand, may be a note of tremendous value to a scene.

FINIS

The stage manager calls half hour; the director's work is over. The play is out of his hands; it has been given back to the players. Regardless of its success or failure, he may look back over the weeks and put himself on trial. What has he given, what has he learned? How deeply does he care for the play he has done, or does he only care for its success? How deeply does he care for the theatre in which he has worked? Is it healthy and alive, giving promise of abundance tomorrow, or has the juice been sucked from a puckered rind? Has he done what he wanted; does he see a future that is worth struggling toward? He can hope to add no more than a handful of chips to the complex mosaic. He needs to know not alone that the tiny particles he contributes are bright and shiny; the gift of others must be shiny, too. The personal inquisition shoots questioning darts deeply.

The theatre is an echo from the living scene. Farce may present the case quite as clearly as tragedy. Aristophanes and Gogol evidence as profound an observation of the underlying thoughts and emotions of their day as do any of their more serious-minded contemporaries. The dividing line is reduced to a permanent vanishing point in Chekhov. It is well to remember, however, that although some of our contemporaries have called the theatre a social weapon, by itself it creates nothing, it initiates nothing. First the Armada, then the Elizabethan poet-playwrights. First Alexander II, then Chekhov. First 1914, then *What Price Glory?* The theatre follows in the wake of action, creating from the rubble of things past a tradition and a standard for tomorrow. It has contributed no original ideas; even pretenders to originality, like Shaw, are but filchers of the thoughts of other minds. They are intellectual pickpockets strutting the streets in the haberdashery of hard-earned riches. The theatre is a derivative art, and only when deeds and ideas have become the common heritage of a nation, a class, or an age does the theatre lend to it the stamp of its public endorsement.

These are times of diurnal drama in every headline. The thunderheads of revolution have dropped their cargo; the world is in the midst of a conflict too bitter, too searing, and too swiftly changing for the theatre to recapture. Most writers cannot write in an emo-

tional turmoil so profound. The theatre of the first decade following 1918 is dead; the theatre of tomorrow is still to be born. It is marking time, waiting for the backwash of action to invest it with new life and the softened edges of memory.

This is the theatre the young director faces. It is his future, and he should know what it holds in store. And as he looks forward, he should realize that what he has to contribute above everything else is not knowledge of the theatre but knowledge of the world that envelops his theatre. His eyes must be turned outward; he must see the things men see, and feel the things they feel. He is only a sounding board for the voices and the laughter of living things. He needs to master the technique of his craft, but he should not lose sight of the fact that it is only a tool to work with, an instrument with which to carve an image from the rock. His spirit alone will give life to the forms he may build.

THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

Harold Clurman

The Director as Interpreter

TO PUT it as simply as possible, the function of the stage director is to translate a play text into stage terms: that is, to make the play as written, clear, interesting, enjoyable, by means of living actors, sounds, colors, movement.

Contrary to a widely held assumption, no dramatic text plays itself in the living theatre. The most clearly drawn character from the reader's standpoint may be immediately rendered false, even unintelligible, when improperly embodied by a wrongly directed or wrongly cast actor. The scene that strikes one as highly effective in the book may become almost pointless if played with either a senseless motivation or in an inappropriate physical environment. In short, the function of the director is not merely "to edit" a theatrical performance, to see that it runs smoothly (in good tempo and with sufficient audibility!), but actively to interpret the text in every way so that the play in the theatre is conveyed to the audience.

The job of the stage director is not primarily a technical one, in the sense of a neatly presented bundle that somehow contains the play's meaning, but a job of interpretation. The actors, the sets, the costumes, the music, and whatever else is used to make the production must in relation to one another, and as a whole, constitute the play's meaning. The degree of talent which individual actors may possess is not so vital from the standpoint of stage direction as the use to which these talents are put, the direction they are given, the interpretation, in a word, which their talents serve.

Co-ordination and Interpretation

These are commonplaces, no doubt. Yet from reviews of plays it is clear that many theatrical commentators are under the impression that acting, stage setting, lighting, costuming, and stage direction are all separate elements of the theatre, to be considered departmentally, so to speak. The truth is that though the director does not act, he is or should be responsible for the kind of acting we see on the stage; though he does not usually design the sets, he is or should be responsible for the kind of impression the sets make, and this applies to everything else on the stage. The director co-ordinates the various elements of the production through his interpretation, which is the unifying principle of the whole. The director might be called the author of the stage production.

Let us illustrate this. In Clifford Odets' *Golden Boy*, the actor playing the protagonist, Joe Bonaparte, may either suggest a prizefighter who happens to be gifted with a feeling for music, or he may suggest an artist who happens to be muscular and agile enough to become a fighter. This is a problem of casting. The whole meaning of the play will change, according to the director's choice. Granted that it will fall on an essentially sensitive boy for whom the fight business is an accident, another problem faces him. The actor may tend to see the boy as an artist. If the boy is interpreted as a conscious artist, a potential "big man," the play's story will become extremely difficult to believe, and less typical than it should be.

The point of the play can be made only if the boy is seen as a growing "kid," a sensitive but not too special youth, in whom, as in most of us, are various possibilities awaiting the social environment to act upon them. Further, the director must determine whether the boy's character is made entirely by the events of the play or by factors that preceded the play's specific action. All these questions must be answered by the director, not simply in statements to the actor, whose temperament will usually prove stronger than his conscious will, but by work with the actor. Without such work (and sometimes even with it, if the director fails renewedly to direct the actor's attention to the problem), the play's meaning may be altered, perhaps to the point of absurdity.

This holds true of every aspect of production. In Clifford Odets' *Paradise Lost*, we have a play that is both realistic and poetic. Almost naturalistic scenes are meant to convey an import and a feeling beyond the moment, and even beyond the concrete situation. It is neces-

sary to make the audience sense this quality of the play almost immediately, for if it is missed, the play must produce a confused impression—the spectator does not know "how to take it." In this instance, the setting becomes a crucial matter. In the Group Theatre production the director failed to solve this problem. Note, I say the director failed, not the scene-designer. For it was not a matter of a "handsome set" or a realistically convincing one, or a plastically well-designed one, but a matter of style, of the feeling about the play as a whole which the set had to transmit to the audience with the rise of the curtain. The director had not been sufficiently aware of this problem when he undertook the production, and consequently had not stated it definitely enough to the scene-designer, so that it was never resolved for the audience.

Even a costume may have an interpretative significance for which the director, not the costume designer, must ultimately take the responsibility. In the Theatre Guild's production of Maxwell Anderson's *Mary of Scotland*, the costume worn by Elizabeth was far more ornate and splendid than anything worn by Mary. This was in direct contradiction to the intent of the play which was, in part, a contrast between Elizabeth's rigid, ascetic, "executive" nature, and the warm womanliness and estheticism of her rival, Mary. Be it noted again that the fact that the costume for Elizabeth was, abstractly speaking, beautiful, does not absolve the director from the blame of interpretative error or oversight.[1]

We might go on to cite instances of excellent acting that was beside the point of a play, much applauded settings that damaged the effect of entire scenes played within them, direction that has been praised for painstaking care and precision which was actually symptomatic of the emptiness in the director's conception of a play. They would serve to re-emphasize our basic thesis that every attribute of a director's technique is not something added to the pleasure of a theatrical production ("good script, fine acting, lovely sets, *plus* expert direction") but an instrument to make every element of the theatre bring forth the play's essence, its reason for being, its fundamental value as a work of art.

[1] The answer to this criticism might be that the intent was to convey Elizabeth's superior power as the ruler of a richer and increasingly successful nation, as well as Elizabeth's (conscious or unconscious) effort to compensate for her plain appearance. If this is so, it illustrates Mr. Clurman's point equally well; namely, that even the choice of costume is *interpretation*. J. G.

Interpretative Procedure

With this approach in mind, we may proceed to a closer examination of the technique of interpretation seen from the stage director's standpoint. It goes without saying that no hard and fast rule can be set down for all directors. The director is not a mechanic but an artist, and there can be no binding rules for creative work. Every director is a new personality, and his emphasis will vary according to his nature. There are directors for whom the spoken word counts most, others are particularly visual-minded; some stress the acting in terms of character, others movement in terms of actors, and so on. But there are problems in stage direction that confront practically all who work at it, and though their solution will depend on the individual, a recognition and definition of these problems may prove valuable as a starting point.

The director reads the script. In fact, he reads it several times. Even in this first step there are different types of directors. Some find it virtually useless to go beyond this point without preparing in their minds, and even putting on paper, a kind of outline of their future work. Others rely more on their intuitive reaction to what happens at rehearsal, and in the course of rehearsal develop their ideas for the play, determine the particular direction they wish the scenes and characterizations to follow. Max Reinhardt has his famous *Regiebuch* (literally, direction book), in which his entire production—line for line, scene for scene, detail after detail—is worked out before the first rehearsal. But I have heard Stanislavsky say that such preliminary planning is characteristic of the young—the rather inexperienced—director! Be that as it may, it is more useful, for purposes of exposition, to say that the director does work out a general conception of the production in advance of rehearsal, whether he commits his thoughts to writing or not. Personally, the author of the present article never feels confident that he is really clear in his thought unless he has stated it for himself in written notes. Naturally, the most telling work will not be done till rehearsal, in which everything previously conceived is truly tested.

When the director has reread his script, he crystallizes in himself a general sense of the play. This first sense of the play may not take the form of "a production idea"—which is a specific scheme for the working out of the production. The sense of the play is not an intellectual perception of the play's theme—this is a critical function which every intelligent reader will arrive at for himself. It is a personal

image or feeling peculiar to the director. My first reaction to Clifford Odets' *Awake and Sing!* was a sense of chaos. This chaos could be described in terms of conflicting colors laid on "cubistically" in uneven patches one over the other, or of incongruous combinations of objects, of voices in cacophonous counterpoint. While this chaos, like all disorder, had its comic side, it was, in this instance, essentially melancholy.

When the director arrives at his sense of the play, he will ask himself (a) "What features of the play have induced it?" (b) "What does it mean?" (c) "Why is it affecting or important?"

When he has answered some of these questions for himself, he will begin to note the methods the playwright has used to produce this effect on him. He will begin to examine the play's details; and he will decide which ought to be emphasized or minimized, according to a scale of values that he will evolve for himself.

From this point, he will begin to think of what *other elements*, besides those actually discovered in the playscript itself, *might be added* to heighten and vary his sense of the play. He begins, in other words, to think of the concrete means by which the play may be grasped by the audience. For example, in *Awake and Sing!*, the feeling of disorder and melancholy was heightened by making the settings, which originally called for a separate living room and a separate dining room, into one scene, so that we might see the whole apartment with its disparate and simultaneous activities at one time. What was typical of such households? For me, to mention one item, a large and prominently placed calendar always gave rise to a special feeling of almost comic gloominess; particularly when these calendars were decorated, as so often happens, with some picture of sentimental luxury.

None of these details were part of the original playscript. They suggested themselves, in reading, and when the playwright was told about them, he included them in the play, wrote new speeches around them, and added such other details as the alarm clock about which Bessie says "The clock goes; and Bessie goes, etc." Here we might make a digression to speak about the director's function relative to his possible contribution in the very making of the written play itself. But we cannot dwell on this here, since the director's direct collaboration in the dramatist's work is possible only in organizations that deal with new plays. Strictly speaking, moreover, the job of reworking or collaborating on a script is not the work of a stage-director, al-

though it may be helpful to point out that here, too, the director worthy of the name, may have a definite contribution to make.

The director works from the general sense of the play which, at first, may be as vague as you please, to specific details that will embody it in stage terms. So-called "pieces of business," bits of activity carried out by the players in connection with their lines or in silent moments, may come to mind. The introduction of certain types of sound—music or "natural" sounds like the animal noises in *Of Mice and Men*; physical, visual equivalents for the spirit of the whole play, like the bare platforms in *Golden Boy*, suggestive of the fight ring—all these accumulate in the director's consciousness.

The Spine of the Play

All of this finally resolves itself into one question the director must ask himself: What is the *basic action of the play?* What is the play about from the standpoint of the characters' principal conflict? Every plot has a superficial resemblance to innumerable others. To give his play its specific meaning, the director must decide what fundamental desire does the plot of his play symbolize, what deep struggle gives it shape and direction. What is the play's *core?* For Gordon Craig, *Hamlet* is a story of a man's search for the truth. Saroyan's *My Heart's in the Highlands*, to its New York director, was the story of people eager to give things to one another—lovers all, in a sense. For me, Odets' *Night Music* had to do with the search for a home.

Whether these formulations are correct or not, the point is that the director's most important task at first is to find the basic line of the play. I call it *the spine* of the play because my first teacher in this field, Richard Boleslavsky, used the word. Stanislavsky calls it the *super-problem*. The name does not matter, the exact phrasing may not be important, the definite intellectual consciousness need not exist. But in one way or another, the director must be inspired in his actual stage "effects" by the "spine" which he has chosen for the play. It is the basis of the whole production.

The Spine of the Characters

When the director has become sufficiently familiar with the play to have found its main line (or "spine"), his next step, spontaneously, will be to find *the main line (or "spine") for each of the play's characters.* How do they relate to the play's main line? If the main line of

Night Music is "the search for a home," what does the girl do about it? What's the detective in that play got to do with it? How do the minor characters typify the main line, in what way do they contribute? Do they make it develop, do they obscure it? Perhaps they are all connected with it, perhaps each is a subtle variation of the principal theme, and from the variations arise differences of mood, of color, of characterization. In any case, it is reasonable to suppose that no character of a play can be properly understood unless the play as a whole is understood. And we may presume that if the director wishes to help the actor to a proper interpretation of his role, he must have discovered the active center of the play as a whole, and the *exact position of the actor's part in relation to the whole.*

In other words, the director, at this point, must lay out his plan for the characters as he wishes the actors to convey them. His first job, as we shall see later, is not to say, this character stammers, that character is jumpy, the other character is soft-hearted, but to find the main line—"the spine"—the *basic motivation* which explains the entire behavior of each character throughout the play. Many characters will be angry, happy, hurt, jubilant, etc., in the course of the play. But what the director must find out, and make the actor understand, is how these moods are related to some permanent desire that possesses the character throughout the play and justifies his or her shifting moods and very often contradictory actions.

In *Awake and Sing!*, it is not very important for the director to inform the actress who is playing the mother, Mrs. Berger, that she is frequently strident (the actress can't miss it!); it is essential that she know that the character constantly wants "to take care of everything" —and that this desire is the source of all her qualities, positive and negative. The actor who plays her son Ralph in the same play need not concern himself with giving the effect of the "young idealist." He must *comprehend his basic action* in the play, which is "to get away from his environment." Since drama is action, it is best that these basic motivations or spines be stated in the form of a *verb*: *the desire is an action; the things it prompts the character to do are further actions.*

The Background

When the director is sure of the interpretation he wishes to give the play and the character line he wishes his actors to follow, he is almost

ready to begin rehearsals. He may deem it advisable, indeed it is almost inevitable, to seek for the general scenic world in which he finds it fitting for the drama of his imagining to be played. If there is a great deal of time for the rehearsal period, the director may go ahead with the actors before he has the scenic scheme definitely worked out; and the scene-designer may well profit by attending the rehearsals to acquaint himself with the play as it actually lives in the movement of the actors. This privilege, however, is rarely granted the designer, who is often called upon to make his plans without much knowledge of the production as a whole.

The director's sense of the play will have dictated something of the general visual mood of the play. He will have at least an abstract picture of the kind of setting the action needs. I do not refer to the properties: furniture, objects to be handled, etc. (these are usually indicated by the playwright), but to the style of treatment required. For example, what shall the scale of the sets be? The scale is not determined primarily by the realistic imitation of actual places designated, but by the inherent nature of the play. In Paul Green's *Johnny Johnson*, for example, the places represented, would, in life, be of imposing dimensions, but the play demands small sets for the quality of intimacy which is not only the play's style but even part of its meaning. Mechanical considerations may also have artistic significance. A many-scened play like *My Heart's in the Highlands* would be utterly ruined if any attempt to make it naturalistically convincing or to change from one place to another by obvious technical means (like a revolving stage, etc.) were planned.

The director should ask himself, in this regard, what he wants to *see* on the stage to give the play its proper life. In Odets' *Rocket to the Moon*, the script calls for a dentist's waiting-room. Shall we therefore build a shabby little room like so many we have seen? Will such a room convey the loneliness, the feeling of a dark inner sanctum, that the play's spine—"the search for love"—requires? Will not the fussiness, the badly assorted detail common to such a place, actually take away from the nature of the play, which has very little to do with a dentist's work as such? There were, consequently, comparatively few properties on the stage for *Rocket to the Moon*. On the other hand, *Awake and Sing!*, where the discordant environment was part of the story, required a clutter of small properties.

One more word ought to be added here, not only for its own sake,

but for the light it may throw on the director's relation to all his co-workers. The director does not usually design the scenery. But neither does the director leave this work entirely in the hands of the designer, as if it did not concern him. The scenic aspect of the production is as much the director's province as the acting. The director describes his requirements, he states the scenic problem of the play, he gives the designer an artistic, as well as a technical, objective to aim at. The designer does not take the director's guidance as a blueprint order, he does not simply comply to a demand from "above"; he makes the director's interpretation of his needs a creative springboard for himself, adding something to what the director has called for that only he, with his special gifts, can supply.

Casting the Play

The first step, after these possibly theoretical needs are satisfied, is to cast the play. In the commercial theatre, casting is often done by a producer with little thought of the director. Often, too, a director begins his casting with very little of the preliminary thought suggested in the foregoing analysis. In either case, the results are likely to be far from satisfactory. For in casting a play the director makes the first moves toward concrete embodiment of his idea. Casting is a step in interpretation. It is silly, as frequently happens, to choose an actor, and then think of what the part ought to be. In casting for the non-professional theatre, the limitations of available material pose a special problem that has to be surmounted as well as possible.

The importance of casting is widely acknowledged, but as a subject for study it is most lamentably neglected. Casting should be done with an eye to ensemble; that is, with a feeling for the relation of one part to another. You cannot cast your "leading man," for example, without giving thought to who will be your "leading lady." Not only the physical type will count, but the quality of your actors' personality. The problem of casting in *Golden Boy* has already been cited. If Lorna Moon, the "leading lady" in that play, is just a tough girl, "a tramp from Newark," as she describes herself, her relation to the boy becomes meaningless. She is definitely a "spiritual" creature. If the boy is cast to convince the audience that he is a prizefighter, to make the girl see in him a person new to her environment is to belie her whole action. The matter of age, too, is relative. In the New York production of *Men in White*, the actor who played Dr. Hochberg, a man

of sixty, did not strike the audience as a young man in make-up (which he was), because the entire cast was related to him by a properly balanced age-scale!

Yet casting for physical type is not entirely to be sneered at. In certain short parts where a quick impression is to be made, to have a convincing physical type—particularly if it is combined with a correspondingly apposite inner quality—is to make the director's task that much simpler, to say the least. Also, in certain plays—plays of actions, surface plays, melodramas, light comedies or farces—correct physical types are more important than in plays of deep feeling, or in plays in which the moral nature of a whole milieu is delineated. If there is a general rule, I should say it is to cast for basic acting ability and the actor's capacity to capture the particular quality that is most essential to the character he is to portray, and to the play itself.

Rehearsing and Interpretation

The director is ready for rehearsal. The thoroughness of the work done at rehearsal depends, to some extent, on the length of time available. In the Russian theatre today, the average rehearsal time extends over a period of three months. On Broadway three to four weeks is practically the limit. To my mind, four weeks means hurry. Wherever practical, more time should be taken. There are certain results that come only with time and care.

If the actors are not already familiar with the play, it should be read to them by whoever can read it most simply and smoothly. This is wiser than having the actors read the play for the first time with parts in hand, for the actor tends to concentrate immediately on his own part, and it is valuable for the actor first to seize the play as a whole. At the first few readings of the play by the actors, they ought to be warned not to try to give a performance—that is, a sense of a complete characterization. This is contrary to the routine of Broadway, where the actor most frequently fears that he will lose his job if he does not "give out" at first sight of his role. If the director presses the actor to an immediate "performance," the actor will of necessity employ the easiest indications associated with "the type of character" he is to play: growling for bad men, whinnying for age, breathiness for lovers, etc., etc. The actor is quick to form "habits" in his work, and a first reading that encourages a set way of playing a part is likely to keep the actor trapped in his first, and often conventional, pattern.

The actors, to begin with, should be asked to *talk* their parts as themselves, simply,—keeping the lines free of any big emotions or effects, using them as conversation between themselves and their partners.

First rehearsals are not so much for the director as for the actors themselves. At these first rehearsals the actors acquaint themselves with the play, its situations, style, and mood. Encouraged by the director's suggestions—which are best made after, not during, the readings—the actors will soon find themselves ready to begin acting in the accepted sense. For just as the director has had to prepare himself by studying the play, so the actor, if he is to be what he should be, will take inspiration from the play's text as he reads and rereads it with his fellow actors.

After a few such readings, the director will become aware of the paths the various actors are inclined to follow, sometimes unconsciously. He will notice that one actor overemphasizes the kindness that is in his role (perhaps he falls in love with this quality and exaggerates it), that another actor is unnecessarily timid and is repressing himself, that a third sees the most obvious side of his part and not the original quality it may have or may be given. From such observation, the director will learn what it is he must stress with each actor, for there is little point in the director's talking too much about qualities that come naturally and correctly to the actor.

After the early readings the director should pause to speak to the actors about the play. He might tell them something of his own feeling about it—if for no other reason than to fill them with enthusiasm. He might point out the theatrical possibilities that the actors may have overlooked, interpret the play in some striking vein, fire the actor with new ambition and love for the task he is called on to perform. A director should strive to make the production of a play a joyful experience for the actors engaged in it. . . . There are many hardened showmen who will tell you that all this is sheer artiness, a waste of breath and time. There are directors—some of them extremely talented—who, having worked out all the movement of the play, will put the actors "through their paces" from the first day. No nonsense and abstract gab for them! Certainly there is something to be said for this method. But for any play beyond the run-of-the-mill, this purely technical approach usually results in acting that is lacking in spontaneity and real verve. A performance that is allowed to develop normally, that is, without the push to results within five days

(or five minutes!), tends to create a freedom for the actor that, if it does nothing else, eases audiences with a sense that they are watching a human being rather than a puppet. This ease—that the audience may not be sufficiently conscious of to mention—makes it more receptive to the play as an artistic reality rather than as a device.

After the director's talk the play may be read again, and the director now might interrupt more frequently, to point out specifically how his general remarks apply to this or that moment of the play. Again the director may profitably take time to stop and give an analysis of the acting parts, at least in their salient features. It is of immense value for an actor to know "the spine" of his part, its "through-line." Much time is spent at rehearsals worrying the actor about this and that attribute, when an understanding of the character's essential *want* throughout the play would clarify much that puzzles the actor in the minor details.

At all times, in the first stages of rehearsal, the director should preserve a relaxed atmosphere. He must communicate a feeling of confidence that from the growing understanding between the company and himself, true characterizations will be born. The actor must not be put on trial. The director will do well to remember that what he is about to create are not characters wrought entirely out of his own imagination or probing of the author's text, but characters that have to include the actors themselves as integral parts of the whole creation. Only in this way can the actor fulfil his function in the theatre, which is not merely to illustrate a text, but to give it a living body, so that the dramatist's word becomes flesh in the actor's person.

In the procedure just described, there exists, no doubt, the danger of too much talk. When the director suspects that his discussions produce a kind of literary apathy or stimulate a debating-society atmosphere, he will ask the actor *to show* rather than to say. Characteristics that are only spoken about may be enacted. For example, the player in *Awake and Sing!* who was cast in the part of Jacob was asked to recount some memory from his boyhood days while he actually sewed a button on his coat. With this activity, a kind of homely repose came into the actor's demeanor. The director pointed out the relation of this mood to the character to be developed. Though there was no sewing called for by the text, and this was done as a kind of exercise to make clear in action what might have been vague in ex-

planation, the sewing was later used as a piece of business in the production of the play.

After the reading, discussions, and general preparation by such small *character improvisations* as the one just described, the director will notice that the actors are impatient to move, to do, "to get on their feet," in a word, to act! The moment for the second stage of rehearsal has arrived.

Improvisations

In the early years of the Group Theatre's work, when circumstances were more favorable for longer rehearsal periods, a week or two was devoted to improvisations. The commercial theatre is unfamiliar with this method, and scornful of it.

What are these improvisations? There are two kinds that are most useful for production. The first is to *make the actors improvise situations similar but not identical to those to be found in the play.* For example, the character Feinschreiber in *Awake and Sing!* has a scene where he rushes to his "in-laws" to demand some explanation for his wife's violent behavior. He is desperately nervous. He is almost afraid to repeat what his wife has revealed to him. A scene may be improvised in which the actor playing Feinschreiber is asked to imagine that on some previous occasion Feinschreiber, exasperated with his wife, struck her, something he has never in his life done before; that his wife shut him out of the house, and that he goes to his mother-in-law for advice and help. Such a situation calls for the same fundamental actions as the scene in the play. But because the scene is improvised, the actor cannot simply repeat memorized lines; he is forced to visualize the antecedent circumstances for himself, and he cannot anticipate the reactions of his partner (the actress playing his mother-in-law is not previously informed of the situation that Feinschreiber is going to play). He is compelled by the improvisation to watch, to listen, to react in character—and all the false steps in the logic of his thinking in the part are readily exposed. The same is true for his partner in the scene. There is no refuge in the playwright's written words behind which actors often mask their failure to grasp the true nature of their roles.

The second type of improvisation is based on the *doing of the actual scenes in the play with the actors using their own words*—substituting their own speech before they have committed the play's lines to

memory. As such improvisations go on, the actor comes progressively closer to the play's text, till he is finally speaking the author's lines without ever having been aware of learning them at all. The advantage of this method, I repeat, is that it teaches the actor to listen to what is actually said instead of waiting mechanically for a cue, and, generally speaking, to involve him in the play as a living texture of action and reaction. In the ordinary routine of rehearsal, much time that could be devoted to working with the actor on his part is taken up by the sheer physical effort of learning lines and co-ordinating them with the movements. In improvisation the actor's movements spring organically from his impulses, and since the "room" he improvises in can correspond to the ground plan of the set to be used in the production of the play, the staging can be built up on the basis of natural reactions to the play's inner demands. It would be pointless at this time to argue that all this is "theory," and unpractical. This method was used in such widely admired productions as *The House of Connelly*, *Men in White*, and *Awake and Sing!*

Interpretation and Basic Actions: "Beats"

Whether this or the more usual methods of staging are used, certain fundamental matters demand our attention. One of the greatest faults in the preparation of most productions is the time spent over minor details of readings, exits, entrances, for which the director feels called upon to interrupt the rehearsal so that they may be repeated till they are "right." In this process the sense of the whole may easily be lost, the actor may be left dangling over the sharp edge of innumerable small "points"; the sense of the part can be diluted by a confusion of tiny technical problems that impede the actor's spirit from reaching its main objective. Technical details, the accurate timing of crosses, the exact emphases and "build" in speeches, and so forth, should be left for the last, rather than struggled with at the beginning. Most vital is to give the individual actor and the company generally, a sense of the shape and form of each scene and each act. This can be done if the director will disclose the real actions of each scene: the *"beats"* of the play.

A play is not constructed on lines of dialogue. A play is fundamentally a series of actions. A character enters a room: what is essential to know is not what he says—"howdy" or "good morning"—but what he *wants*, what made him enter the room and what he in-

tends to do to get what he wants. His want may be immediately satisfied, or a contrary (someone else's) want may balk him. In this case we have a small drama, a *scene*. It is imperative for the actor to know *what the character is trying to achieve at each moment of the play*. These are the basic actions of the play. As each of these actions is achieved or, owing to conflicting currents in the scene, is transformed into a new action, "the beat" changes for the actor. The line of these "beats"—their interconnection, logic, movement—shapes the actor's part: gives it a beginning, middle, and end; gives the part meaning, movement, climax.

For example, the opening lines of *Awake and Sing!* are:

Ralph: Where's advancement down the place? Work like crazy! Think they see it? You'd drop dead first.

Myron: Never mind, son, merit never goes unrewarded. Teddy Roosevelt used to say ——

Hennie: It rewarded you—thirty years a haberdashery clerk!

Ralph: All I want's a chance to get to first base!

Hennie: That's all?

Ralph: Stuck down in that joint on Fourth Avenue—a stock clerk in a silk house! Just look at Eddie. I'm as good as he is—pulling in two-fifty a week for 48 minutes a day. A headliner, his name in all the papers.

Jacob: That's what you want, Ralphie? Your name in the paper?

Ralph: I wanna make up my own mind about things . . . be something! Didn't I want to take up tap dancing too?

Bessie: So take lessons. Who stopped you, etc., etc.[2]

During this conversation everyone is finishing dinner, but eating is only an incidental activity of the scene, not its main action. Ralph is calling attention to his problem; his action here is "to demand his due." This is directly related to the spine of his part which is "to get away" from his environment. Myron's action is "to quiet him," also closely related to the spine of his part which is "to make things good." Hennie's action here is "to provoke everybody," for she is in trouble herself and frustrated in her desire "to wrest joy from life," which is the spine of her part. Jacob's action is "to make Ralph understand something," for the spine of his part is "to find the right

[2] Jacob is the grandfather, Bessie the mother, Myron the father, Hennie the daughter, Ralph the son in *Awake and Sing!* J. G.

path for himself and others." Finally, Bessie's action is "to stop the argument," for she has to deal practically with the whole complex of the household's problems. The actions come to a climax with Ralph's leaving the table. The "beat" for him is over. His next beat is probably "to brood about his problem"—it is a *silent beat*: he has no lines. For the others the beat changes too with Myron's line "This morning the sink was full of ants. . . ."

The analysis of the play's beats, the characters' actions, can and should be made before the actual staging of the play is begun. The actors derive a basic direction from such an analysis and from the notation of the beats in their part-books, a guiding line that is the foundation for their entire work in the play. Without such groundwork, we may get a display of "general emotion" but not the meaning of the play. When the actors have understood their actions, it will be the director's job to help the actor play them truly, fully, interestingly. The actor's talent becomes evident in the manner in which he carries out these actions. But talent or not, they must be clearly presented for the play to become an intelligible, coherent whole.

It must be plain from everything that has already been said that, in our view, the function of the director is not merely to co-ordinate all the elements of the production so that the producer can "get the show on," but to work closely, that is, creatively, with all the people who make the production. This means, above all, the actors, whose work is the crux of the entire theatre phenomenon.

Working with the Actor: Stimulation and Demonstration

What are the laws, if any, about working with the actor? One cannot do justice to this subject without entering into a study of the technique of acting, something beyond our present scope. It is a subject, however, with which the director, to fulfil his function, must be intimately acquainted. From the directorial standpoint this subject may be approached as a matter of certain rehearsal problems. For example, the question is often asked "Should the director work by means of *explanation* or by *demonstration*? Should he tell the actor or should he show what he wants?" Another question that is frequently put is "At what moment should the business of the play be set?" Or again, "Is it necessary for the director to invent all the stage business? How much should be left to the actor?"

To begin with, it ought to be stated as a fact that very few directors

are qualified by talent to demonstrate the acting of a scene to a *good* actor. Unfortunately, this is not known to many directors, who are either bad actors or not actors at all. Their demonstrations are rarely convincing to an actor, sometimes not even clear. Moreover, when a director is particularly graphic, as is the case with such directors as Reinhardt or Meyerhold, the brilliance of their demonstrations may paralyze the actor rather than help him, since he may feel that at best his repetition of the director's action will prove to be merely a pale copy. For the actor with temperament, moreover, it is far more exciting to create than to imitate.

The director, generally speaking, should strive to *stimulate the actor* to the desired type of action rather than perform for the actor's observation. The director should suggest, evoke, create an atmosphere around the actor that will draw out and inspire the sought-for result. By asking questions, by stirring the actor's imagination, by indicating the proper channels for the actor's thought, the director can induce a creative response. Above all, the director must not force emotion from the actor, he must not push the actor to an effort that the actor is not prepared in his thought or spirit to make. The director must even prevent the actor from giving too much before the actor has taken the necessary steps of listening, understanding, realizing the situations in which he finds himself.

When the director, despite all this, finds it most expedient to demonstrate his meaning directly, it is best for him to say "This is *the kind of thing* I mean," rather than "Do this." The good director does not feel that *he* is giving the performance which unfortunately has to be seen through the persons of a number of hired mummers. The director must know and make the actors feel that he is a medium through which the actors come to realize their own and the play's possibilities, so that they can enact it as no others could. The good director will remember that there comes a time in rehearsal when the actor will be closer to his part than anyone else, and that at that moment the actor must be the part's and his own master. If the director fails in this, no matter how hard he has worked, no matter how brilliantly he has done his job in a general sense, his production will be only half alive.

In any event, if demonstration is the only way in which a director seems to be able to communicate his meaning, he should see to it that the actor makes what has been demonstrated his own. If this does not

happen, the director had better find another action more compatible with the actor's nature or abilities to convey the same idea. For "business" must not be imposed on an actor; it *must be made to come from the actor.* An actor carrying out a series of gestures and actions foreign to him will not only be "unhappy," but will remain emotionally static to the point where nothing he does can really stir the audience.

"Business"

The business of the play is often invented by the director before rehearsals begin. As I have mentioned, some directors begin by giving all the business for the play from the first days of rehearsal. Undoubtedly good results have been known to come with such procedure—especially if the director knows his actors well, and the actors themselves are facile craftsmen; but on the whole, this is not to be recommended. Certain pieces of business are so integral to the director's vision of the play that they may be presented as much a part of the script as an entrance or a plot move. For example, in *Awake and Sing!* Jacob crawls under the table to pick up pieces of a broken plate while he speaks of the shattered state of the world. Other pieces of business may be introduced when the actor has become easy in his part, that is, when he understands its fundamentals. Example: In *Paradise Lost* the young musician Felix comes to visit his pianist fiancée, Pearl. He is wearing glasses. He waits for her to appear. She comes in, and seeing him, stops. He approaches her, removes his glasses. She removes hers. They kiss.

Other bits of business suggest themselves to the director as he watches rehearsals. Often these are the best, as they generally arise from the director's growing knowledge of his actors. The actors themselves ought to be watched for *impulses which arise spontaneously* within them; and these need the director's encouragement to develop them as regular pieces of business in the play's action. The action or *business that springs from the actor's work on the part*—through what is called "inspiration"—is perhaps the most useful of all, for it is generally the freshest, the most effortless. Directors will do well to avoid forcing business on an actor who finds difficulty in performing it. The director of the famous Vakhtangov Theatre in Moscow has written, "The most appalling of all faults in a director is the pedantic insistence upon a particular inflection and a particular movement in a

particular part of a role." The present writer is wholly in accord with this view.

Placing the Actor as Interpretation

Where shall the actor be placed? How should he be moved on the stage? Certain directors are capable of working out exactly all the movements before the first rehearsal. This may have its advantages, but the ability to do this satisfactorily is no sign of genius in a director. Meyerhold, who is technically perhaps the most facile director in the world, changes his staging frequently before "setting it." Generally speaking, only the big moments, the dramatic high spots of each scene, have to be considered first. In the transitional moments, the actors may move where the logic of the scene and the drive of their impulses take them. Adjustments for the continuity and smoothness of the whole are not difficult to make.

Textbooks have been written to teach that certain sections of the stage are ideal for certain types of scenes. The important character must always occupy the *center of the stage*, for example; on the other hand, I know one director who has a phobia about stage center, and will strenuously prevent actors from using it, as he deems it too conventional to play scenes in that position! Love scenes must be placed right center, expository scenes left center, and so forth. All this, though based on "experience" and a certain amount of observation, is nonsense. Where scenes should be placed will depend on the type of setting, the furniture and other properties, and above all on the director's vision of the scene; that is, on his *interpretation of the effect* he wishes to produce, what he wants the audience to see, and in what manner. This must be judged by each director for himself. The center of the stage is determined not so much by geometrical measurements as by the *placement of objects or characters in relation to one another and to the audience*. The actor and the acting requirements of the scene usually may be taken as the best starting point for the judgment of proper placing of the actor on the stage.

Tempo and Rhythm as Interpretation

What about such matters as tempo and rhythm? Critics are particularly aware of "direction" as it manifests itself in "pace." The director need give little thought to these matters independently of the whole context of a play. The reason critics rarely fail to mention "pace"

when they discuss direction is that they know so little about the nature of direction, thinking of it mostly in terms of obvious mechanics. Though directors, under pressure, may have recourse to a forced speeding of pace, actually the correct pace for every play must depend on a correct playing of the scene, which is a question of a correct interpretation of the acting problem at each moment and the correct evaluation of each scene in its relation to the whole play.

Every scene has its own main point, its own climax. The relative importance of each scene will depend, naturally, on the line of the play as a whole. A feeling for variety of color, of sound, of movement, aside from the basic movement of the play itself, is to be taken for granted in even the least expert craftsman. There are directors known for the "speed" of their productions. Generally this is because their productions have little more to recommend them. Other directors are held to be "slow." This may mean only that problems, aside from "pace," have not been solved. Look to the heart of the matter, not to the clock!

Dealing with the Actor

There are times at rehearsal when director and actor seem about to reach an impasse with each other. The director is impatient with the actor, the actor "disagrees" with the director. This is not only a frequent occurrence; it is often held to be unavoidable, and there are some who even look forward to it, as if the theatre were a god-sent medium for hysteria and bad temper. I believe these unfortunate moments in rehearsal result largely from a misconception on the part of both directors and actors of their function in relation to one another, and therefore in relation to the whole production. Rehearsals are conceived as a kind of contest between director and actor. It is mostly in the hands of the director to show that he is there to help the actor. The actor is to some extent the director's instrument, but the director if he truly understands the theatre will realize that this instrument must itself be a creative person if the production is to come alive. If the director acts as a guide, an inspiration, and not as a self-sufficient entity, the actor will usually become his willing and eager follower. The actor's being must be respected for the director truly to triumph. It may be said to be a rule of the theatre that the actor will cling to anything or anyone who can help him. The director must be able to help.

When misunderstandings or disagreements do arise, the director will be wise to listen patiently, to seek out the cause of the actor's discomfort. Often the actor is right. Sometimes the actor is mistaken. If explanations will not do, the actor should be given the *opportunity "to try" what he prefers to do.* If the director is right, it will not be very difficult to convince the actor of this if the actor has had an opportunity "to do it his way." The director must be resourceful. It is dangerous for a director to win a forced battle. If he fails to convince an actor through one means, he must try to achieve his end not by a brutal reiteration of his point but by a fresh approach. He should find two or three different paths to the same point. If one piece of business will not do because of the actor's reluctance to perform it—for whatever reason!—the director should invent several new pieces of business of similar intention. A good maxim to remember is: the director is responsible for *the what*, the actor for *the how.*

If rehearsals are laboriously following one path—let us say the staging has occupied a good deal of the company's time—it is frequently useful to stop and return to a reading or to a "conference" around a table, to new discussion. *The actor's impulses must constantly be fed with fresh nourishment.* If there is time, it is even advisable for the director to revitalize himself by absenting himself from rehearsal for a day or two—or at least several hours! Or even by resting the entire company.

It is essential too that every act be run through a good many times without interruption from the director. Actors gain understanding and make progress very often by the sheer doing of their jobs. They themselves learn to feel when they are being true; they gradually sense the lack in their performance by becoming acquainted with the play through its repetition. The separate acts must be run through this way, and finally the play as a whole.

If possible, costume and make-up reviews should take place before any complete dress rehearsals are held. This is in line with another rule, that wherever possible, it would be wise to follow: *never begin two things at the same time.* For instance, if actors are learning lines, do not insist that they act their scenes fully; if they are being given positions, do not expect rounded characterizations at the same moment. When the sets are brought in, let the actors become acquainted with them—let them move about on them—before demanding a full performance.

Every rehearsal has its own purpose; don't expect or demand everything at once till the very last rehearsals. It is perfectly normal for "everything to go" when a new element is introduced. Directors are to be prepared for this, and to ask the actors to relax—not to worry—when they begin their first dress rehearsals. An actor, when he gets into costume and puts on his make-up for the first time, or when he first comes on the actual stage set under the new lights, generally feels thoroughly wretched. He swears that he has lost everything he has worked for. To clamor for a fluent performance under these circumstances is to increase the actor's sense of inadequacy. He should be made easy.

It is foolish to write about direction as if it took place in a void. The actual conditions of rehearsal are rarely the conditions that are implied in a theatre manual or in a critic's essay. If possible, avoid having an "audience" of friends or colleagues at rehearsals. Sympathetic or not, they end by making the actor conscious of things he must not concern himself with till he is ready to open. Warn actors from taking the advice, however well meant, of observers, even intelligent observers. Prevent such advice from being given to the actors. Even the playwright, when he is present, should make his criticisms through the director. For the actor at rehearsal is not a "finished product." The process of creation is especially delicate for the actor, who is at once the maker and the thing created, and the advice of outsiders—and at a certain point even the playwright may be considered an outsider—is almost universally in terms of the criticism of complete and static works of art. Such criticism is not only rarely valuable to the actor—it is more often than not, positively harmful. The motto for everyone concerned here is, "Do not disturb. Men working."

The director must interpret criticism leveled at his actors or his production in the light of technical problems to be remedied more subtly than is generally suggested by the critic from the outside. Even the audience reaction—the final arbiter in the theatre—has to be studied carefully before it is used as a guide for action. Some years ago at a preview of *Men in White*, there were unwarranted laughs during a crucial love scene of the first act. The director could not understand it. What were the actors doing that struck the audience as being funny? Only by a process of elimination was the director able to discover that the laughter was not provoked by anything in the actors' performance, but by a casual reference to the moon in a

scene that preceded the specific moment where the "bad laugh" was heard.

The director must view himself as the *leader* of a group. This is true in any type of theatrical production. The function of the leader is not to give commands, but to lead. He *must help the group realize its potentialities.* He must help each part to function at its best and in co-ordination with the demands of the whole. He must not sacrifice the individual to the ensemble, *he must see to it that the ensemble is served by the best efforts of each individual.* He must show the individual that he—the individual—achieves his truest stature by serving the ensemble. The director should not act "the enthusiastic audience" for his company; nor should he be its never-to-be-pleased mentor. He should be a balance, an instrument that helps release the miracle which is the final product that rewards the whole effort of the theatrical ensemble.

FORM IN PRODUCTION

Robert Lewis

THERE is, I think, a mistaken distinction between so-called "stylization" and "naturalism," the implication being that the former has problems of form and the latter hasn't. And truth to tell, many experiments in "stylization" have dwelt so much on their formal aspects that the meaning, or content, has been obscured, while the "naturalistic" tendency in theatrical production has led to inartistic formlessness.

Any production, if it is to take its place as a work of art, must have form. To be sure, *realism,* too, is a form; one of the theatrical forms. The mere fact that certain elements are assembled on a stage for an audience to behold when the curtain rises implies that the "life" depicted on the stage has been "arranged" or "formed" for us to see in a certain way. Even a photographer, if, let us say, he is dealing with nature itself as a subject, "arranges" it, or "catches" it, in a definite way for us to get a certain impression.

Realism, as well as other forms, can be approached in many styles, —style being used here to mean the particular manner of execution or the characteristic method of expression. A realistic play, in other words, can be played in the style of high comedy, tragedy, folk-play, melodrama, and so on.

Realistic Form

The general form of a realistic production derives from the fact that the emphasis is more on the "inner movement" of a play, while the form of what we might call a *poetic production* derives from a more careful control of the *theatrical* means of uncovering the intent

In the realistic production, however, it is not necessary to avoid entirely the *manner* in which the "inner movement" is presented; while in the poetic production, care should be taken that the theatricalization is the crystallization of the content, which includes its realities, and is not technical effect for its own sake.

By "inner movement" being the form in realistic production, the following is meant: The drama in a realistic play is communicated by the building of scenes purporting to show their *inner intention*; what each character *wants* in a scene; *why* he wants it; why he says what he says; the *psychological justification* for his actions. This logical, "inner" line is developed so that we see what each character, through his *behavior* in each scene, wants or stands for, throughout the play. And finally, through the relationships and conflicts of the desires of each character, we see what the play as a whole "wants to say"—namely, the author's *intention*.

Contrasted with the realistic production which is busy mainly with the "what" and "why" of an intention, the "poetic production" is interested, in addition, in the *"how."* The result arrives from saying, "I know *what* I want to say here, and I know *why*; now *how* can I say it in its clearest, or its most 'refined,' or its simplest, or its most 'heightened' way?" And so, one is led into the careful use and control of all the theatre arts to express an idea. One is led into *imagery*, in which one deals not only with concepts of things, but with things themselves; one is led into problems of *choice* or selection, where all the unessentials of nature are discarded to arrive at the particular vision of one's objective—as in the analogy of the sculptor who looks at the same piece of rock that everyone else sees, and in it he perceives a statue. He carefully chips away lots of unnecessary little pieces of good rock, and what is *left* is the statue: or, what he saw in the rock in the first place.

In the realistic production, the form remains, even though the execution may vary slightly through different staging, or through more or less intensity in the performance on different nights. In other words, if one actor has to denounce another in the play, the *intention* of the scene is clear, even though one night he may do it with a little more or a little less emotion than another night; or if once he does it with his finger pointing at the other character, and once without that gesture. Only when the original intention "to denounce" is not present at all is it fatal to the interpretation of the scene. On the other

hand, in a production where all the theatrical results are planned to be performed *in a certain way*, the entire intention of a scene or play can be changed or obscured, if the technical execution is improperly realized.

To explain more clearly what is meant by the different emphases of the forms of a realistic and a non-realistic production, it may help to give brief résumés of the directorial approach to two different productions with which I was connected: *Golden Boy* by Clifford Odets and *My Heart's in the Highlands* by William Saroyan.

In *Golden Boy* (staged by Harold Clurman) the director says to himself (and to his cast): "What is the author trying to *show* with this play? What is its *theme?*" After some discussion, it is decided that the problem posed in *Golden Boy* is something like this: How do people exist, or how do they satisfy their egos, in a world where success, fame, glory, etc., are the criteria? As author, Mr. Odets, to pose this question to the audience, writes a story of a sensitive boy who starts out in life as a violinist, but feeling the urge to break through the scorn of being an unknown—a "failure," so to speak—he deserts his natural bent, becomes a prize-fighter, "bangs his way to the lightweight crown," gets his fame; but with it comes worse loneliness, worse unhappiness and emptiness, and, finally, death.

The director and the actors then arrive at the intention of each character in the play in relation to the main theme. What does each character do in the play to *forward* this theme? For example, the young violinist-prize-fighter feels that in order to deal with this problem of "being somebody" in a society that worships success, he has *to fight his way to the top.* That "inner urge" is his function in the life of this play. That desire *motivates* him from the first scene to the last. Let us take another character, the gangster in the play. His feeling (in relation to the theme of the play) is that the only way to live under the present "set-up" is to gain possession of everything, to own everything, to get all the money, all the power. Then you "lead the parade." And this urge to *gain possessions* guides *his* motivation all through the play. Even the most minor characters can be fitted into the general scheme in this way. For example, Mr. Carp, the philosophical friend of the family, has only one satisfaction for his ego in this world where everything has to be "built up" to exist; this is *to tear everything down*, to minimize every effort, to deride all success.

Having arrived at the general intention of each part throughout the play in relation to the theme, the next step is to see how each character fulfills his main intention through the activities he does in each separate scene he plays.

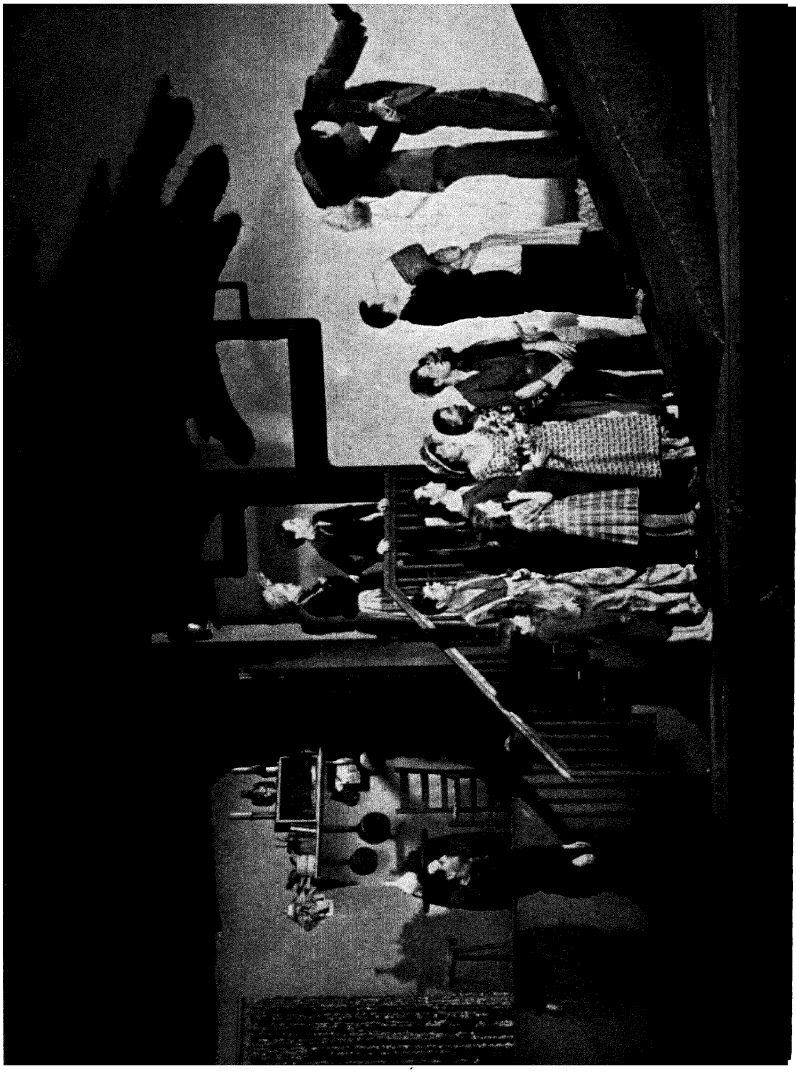
This is, of course, a very sketchy outline of the breakdown of the acting parts in a play, but it is intended to show where the form of the realistic play exists in the performance. *It exists in the successful scene-by-scene fulfillment of the main intention of each character in relation to the theme of the play.* Of course, at the same time that the actors are working, the director attempts to get his scene-designer, costume-designer, et al. to express the theme of the play, each in his own department. In the case of *Golden Boy*, the designer accomplished this through getting the "struggle" quality in the tiny sets placed in the center of the stage, each like a little prize-fight ring; through the color of warmth in the home-scenes as opposed to the stark white glare of the fight scenes, and so on.

Poetic Form

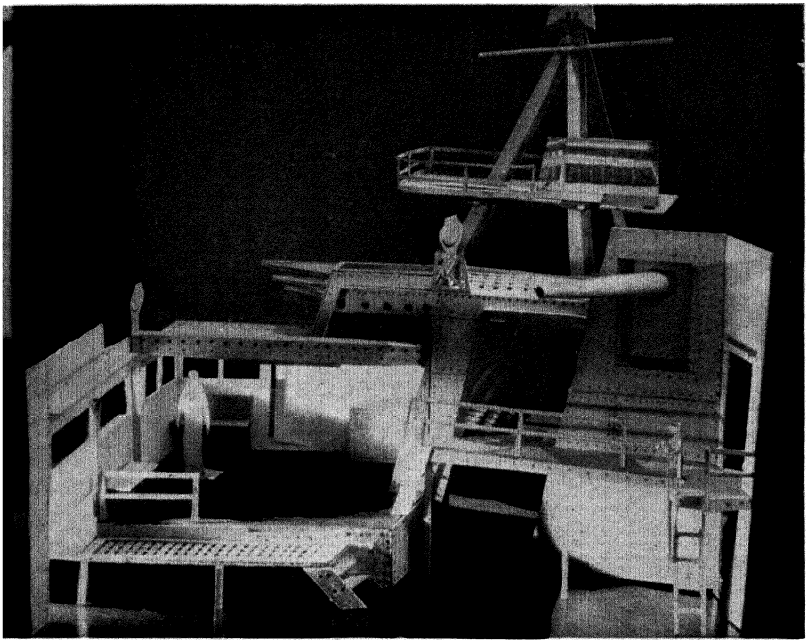
Now let us take a production like William Saroyan's *My Heart's in the Highlands* which presented problems outside the realistic sphere. This does not mean that the acting had "stylized" movement, or anything like that. But the nature of the script, which was an episodic and poetic treatment of an idea, demanded a production which would crystallize it in theatre terms; for without this treatment, it would have seemed disjointed and choppy. In addition to the usual work on the psychological meaning and development of the performance, it was necessary therefore to find the *poetic* expression of that content, the clearest way to say it, the simplest, or if you will, the most "refined" way; to look for the highest expression of a given impulse (always remembering to justify that expression); to arrive at an *image* to convey the feeling.

For example, at one point the old man with the trumpet plays a song for the villagers and they give him food. The feeling I had about this moment was: the people are nourished by art. The image that came to my mind was: *a plant flowering as it is watered.* I translated this into staging by having the old man above on the porch, playing his trumpet, with the villagers below grouped tightly togther built up like a tree. This picture was built up from people kneeling, to a child held high on somebody's shoulders; by having each person

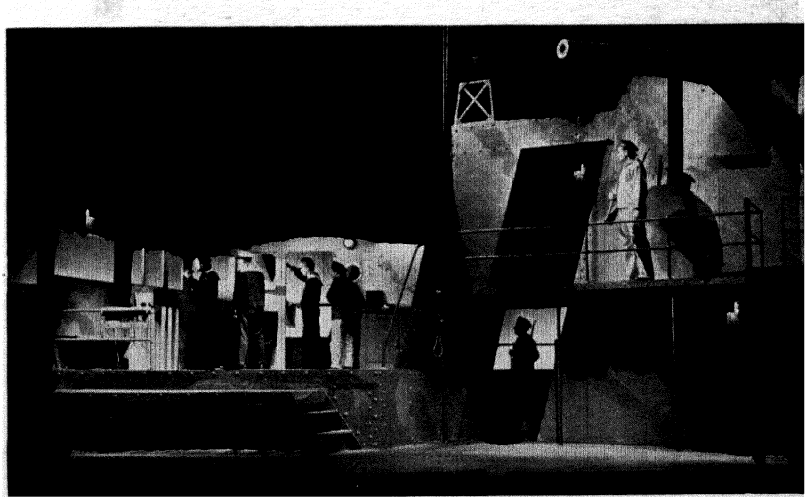
Saroyan's *My Heart's in the Highlands.*
(*Photo: Alfredo Valente*)



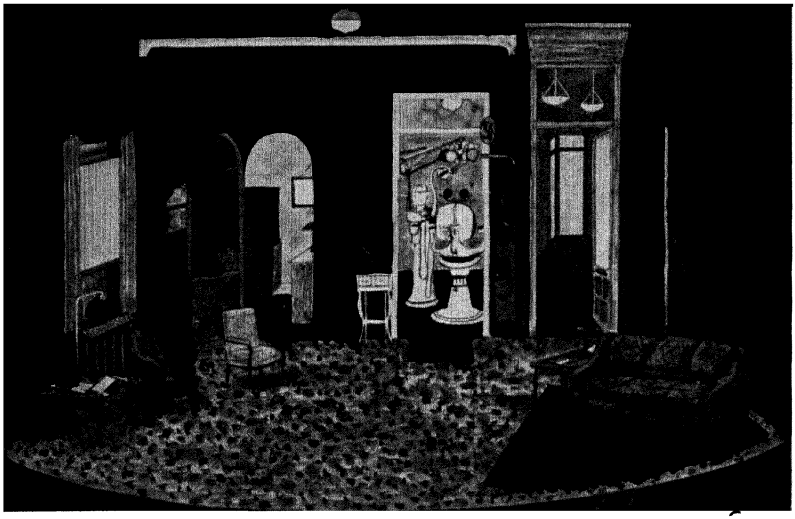
Saroyan's *My Heart's in the Highlands.*
(Photo: Alfredo Valente)



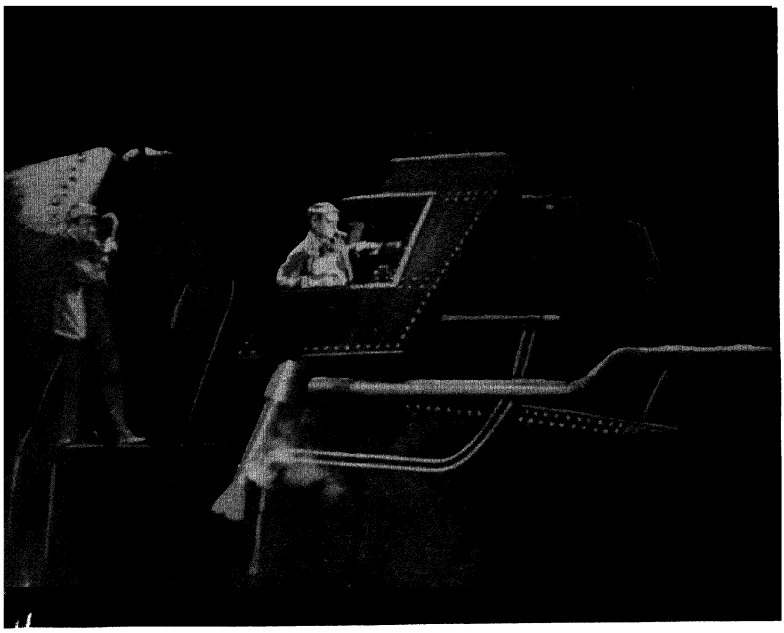
Model designed by Mordecai Gorelik for *Sailors of Cattaro.*



Photograph of the setting designed by Mordecai Gorelik for *Sailors of Cattaro.*

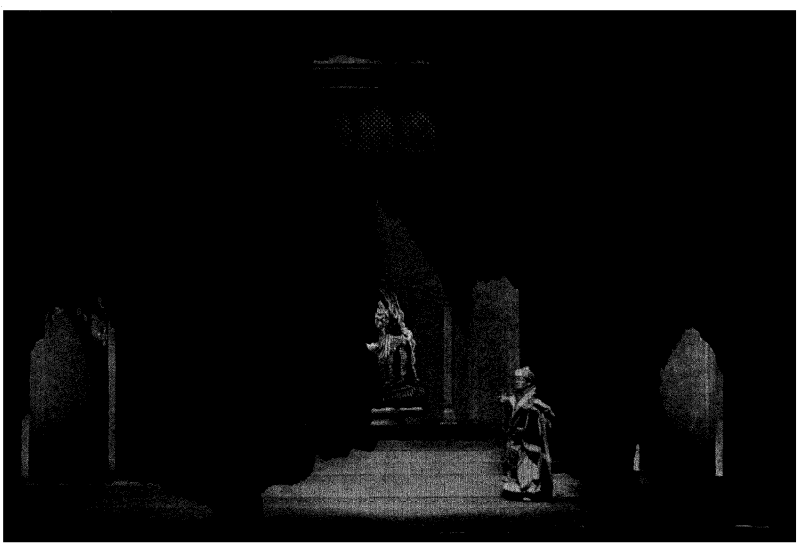


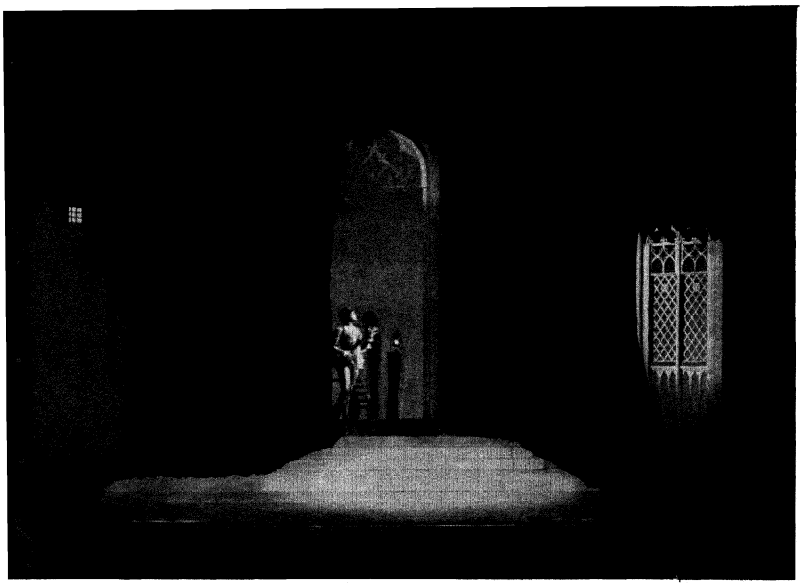
Sketch by Mordecai Gorelik of setting for *Rocket to the Moon*. An example of selective realism.



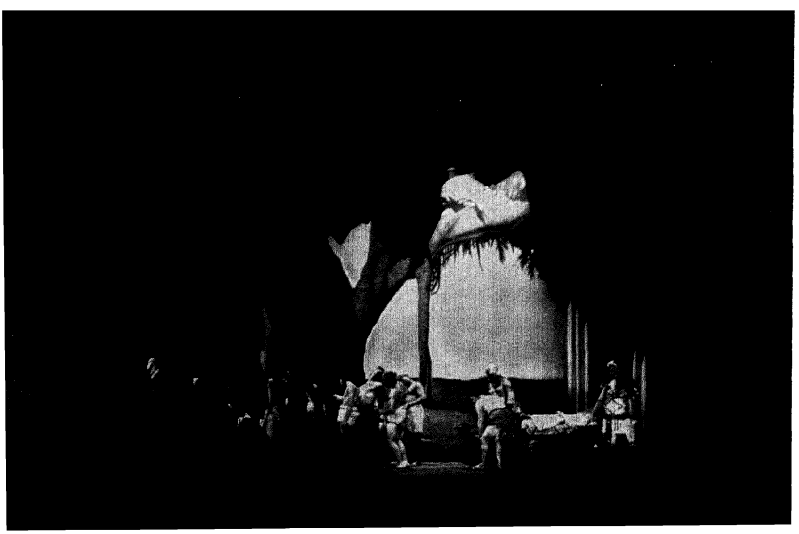
Setting by Mordecai Gorelik for *Casey Jones*, illustrating dramatic metaphor. (*Photo: Ralph Steiner*)

A semi-permanent setting designed by Lee Simonson for *Marco Millions*, illustrating the variety that can be obtained from one basic unit. The scenic frame used here was later used for two other productions. (*Photos: Vandamm Studio*)





The setting designed by Lee Simonson for *Marco Millions*: above, a third effect; below, a fourth effect. (*Photos: Vandamm Studio*)



conceal his colorful article of food, and slowly, as the music played, all of them holding aloft their offerings, as if these were growing out of the branches of a large tree. Toward the end of the piece the whole group swayed slightly with the child on top holding a gaily colored chicken. It is to be understood, of course, that this kind of staging is possible only when everything has prepared for it: the scenery, the lighting, and the music. In *My Heart's in the Highlands* all these elements helped to create and blend the various moods of the fantasy. (For setting, see photograph.)

Poetry in the theatre has too often been identified solely with the spoken word. Poetry has meant to many people that the author has written his play in verse or in poetic prose. Actually, however, "theatre poetry" is created by the successful unification of *all* the theatre arts: words, movement, music, light, décor, etc., into a *single creative expression.*

It is evident that to achieve this unification a source of *control* over all the elements must be present. And that is, obviously, in the hands of the director, for it is he, more than anyone else, who is responsible for the interpretation of the author's intention. Without the director as a centre from which each theatre artist works, here can be no hope of co-ordination, for each artist sees in a play something interesting for him to turn his talents toward. The scene designer has a wonderful idea for a set as he reads the script, the actor sees his part interpreted in a certain way, and so on. Each person's ideas might be exciting in themselves, but they are invalid if they do not arise from a single conception of what direction the production is to take. This does not mean that the director is to be a dictator who says to the designer, musicians, or actor, "I want you to perform your job in a certain way. This is the set I want, the music I want, etc." It is not, in other words, power that he should seek but control, as an orchestra conductor must have control. He should say, in effect: "This is what we are trying to say with this production, this is what the author wants to get over to the audience, and this is how we want to get that intention over; in this style, or in this mood. Now *you*, go, and in your own way, because you have been chosen, and through your own medium, make your contribution to what this production wants to express."

(Of course, a poetic production is *possible at all* only with this centralization of artistic control. But it is the sensible way to proceed

with a realistic production, too. The artistic results will be finer, and incidentally, many costs can be cut down by this procedure. I have found that many useless expenditures are the result of the lack of artistic control and proper understanding on the part of the many departments of a production.)

Directorial Control and Form

All of this must seem quite obvious, but it crops up with particular gravity where form is concerned. Too often the director's ideas of centralization or form which are taken for granted when a play goes into rehearsal, may be disturbed and finally discarded before the production opens, with much resulting waste and chaos. The reasons are, I think, that except where the director has full authority, he is looked upon as a sort of traffic cop who is to provide the safe passage and arrival of all the artistic goals of each contributor to the production. He is supposed to satisfy completely the author's dream of how each line should sound and each moment should look, if that author happens to be present, and he is supposed also to give the producer everything that gentleman thinks should be in the play. If the director doesn't comply with all these requests, he is "unco-operative" and has to deal with the power that these people can wield.

The basic misunderstanding comes from the fact that the director is the one from whom miracles are expected. When a director works with an actor or designer, he studies that artist's limitations and does not force him beyond his capacities; he uses his good qualities, and does not demand that he perform in a way that is untrue to his nature. But this privilege is not always given to the director. An attempt is instituted to force the director to change certain spots or parts of his design and still not lose what good work he has accomplished. And this point may be the beginning of the end. Good directors work out a plan, a design; and bits and pieces of this cannot be altered too often without some effect on the whole. What results from such tampering with his pattern is that perhaps a few moments are cleared up but the basic spirit of the whole is gone.

In good theatre, rarely does any excellence result from the patching together of the excellent suggestions of many hopeful minds, but rather from the successful realization of *an original creative impulse.* It should be understood that the director is an interpretative (perhaps even creative) artist. And a play is not a dead thing which will submit

to only one kind of treatment. There are possibilities of different presentations of the same work with the author's intention always respected, but seen through the eyes of different interpreters. For the interpreters are living organisms, too! It is blind of an author to demand that nothing be altered from his original dream of how his play will be performed after he gives it over to the theatre workers. He has every right to expect that his intention, the "meaning" of his play, be respected to the letter. But he must also be resigned to the fact that his music is going to be heard through the particular instruments of his interpreters.

Finally, this goal of unhampered artistic control, which alone can insure the creation of form, will be more the norm, and less the happy accident, when there are more organized theatres (1) where the interest is in the creation of productions, not in their exploitation alone, and therefore where the leadership is in the hands of the artists; (2) where it is possible to educate all the departments in the theatre toward common techniques which will insure integrated productions; (3) where there is the opportunity to experiment in different forms—experiments which cannot be completely successful with a group of people meeting for the first time to engage in a four-week rehearsal period. Special problems of movement, or choric speech, or what you will, can be solved only where there is sufficient opportunity for training.

DESIGNING THE PLAY

Mordecai Gorelik

The Designer Reads the Script

OF ALL the factors that go into stage production, perhaps scene design is least understood by theatre people and laymen alike. Even producers and dramatic critics often do not know what a particular setting is doing, or not doing, for a show.

A good setting can seldom, if ever, salvage a bad play. But it can do a great deal to make a distinguished play look like an average one; or conversely, it can make a commonplace play look like an important one. Even on a purely commercial basis, a play with poor settings has the salesmanship of a man or woman in frowzy clothes.

Artistically the stage setting can be as subtle as the actor. Just as a good actor can read a sentence many different ways, changing its meaning each time through the slightest change in inflection, so the designer can alter the meaning of the scenery with the slightest change in proportion, color, line, or detail. He is as significantly a man of the theatre as the actor or director. He is not merely an architect, painter, or decorator who happens to work in the theatre: he understands something of that great riddle, the psychology of a stage performance; he knows, after long training, how actors use his settings on stage.

[1] The art of designing for the American professional theatre is determined, to some extent, by the practical conditions under which the work is carried out. For example, the designer's services to any play depend on his agreement with the director, and in a professional production are tabulated on his contract with the manager. This contract is an official form printed by the United Scenic Artists of America, the union to which all professional designers belong.

Membership in the United Scenic Artists requires an initiation fee of $500 and

An important condition is the fact that the total period given the designer for getting up ideas, sketches, and models, and carrying the work to completion, is limited by the time allotted to the production; in the professional theatre this is usually not more than four to six weeks. This means that his work proceeds at top speed. He must think fast, work fast, make quick and sure decisions. The time element is one of the basic problems with which one has to deal. An extra week—better still, an extra month—of preparation, is of great importance in the final result.

This is something, by the way, which no producer ever seems to learn, even though it causes unnecessary expense and worry over each show, and may even result in unavoidable delays. Producers never begin talking over a script with the designer until the cast is chosen, even though the script has been on the producer's desk for months. It would be much better practice to let the designer see the script even before it reaches its final stages, so that he can live with it in his imagination. The artistic idea is all-important, and it is seldom born the instant one reads the script. It has to have time to incubate. As long as the essential idea develops, it does not matter if the script changes afterwards; the designer can make corresponding changes in his scenic idea.

In any case the work begins the second time one reads the script. I say the second time, because the designer reads the script the first time just for the joy of reading a good play—if it happens to be good. In passing, it should be noted that some training is necessary for reading plays, even as literature. The lines of dialogue are really only a disguise for the action. One must learn to see back of the written lines, visualizing the *movements* which are taking place, seeing in one's mind the characters and the locale in which they move. The dramatist's stage directions—"a fireplace, left," "she enters, right," do not take the place of one's own imaginative work. (Incidentally, "right" and "left" in the stage directions are the players' right and

dues of $4 per month, along with other assessments. The union maintains a closed-shop agreement with the theatrical managers to the effect that no one who is not a member of the union can design for the American professional theatre. The use of the official contract is mandatory. It specifies the terms and dates of payment, as well as the duties of the designer. These include the making of sketches, models and blueprints, the supervision of building, painting and lighting of the settings, the selection of properties and lighting equipment, and attendance at dress rehearsals.

left—the opposite of the audience's; "downstage" is toward the audience, and "upstage" is away from the audience.)

After this preliminary reading the designer analyzes the script with great care. It is not enough to work from the author's description of the setting, no matter how detailed or clearly stated that may be. In fact, many designers deliberately avoid reading the author's directions until later on. Speaking quite seriously, the author must not be taken too literally, and he will not be thankful if he is followed uncreatively. He does not, and should not, want to interfere with the designer's creative work, if this artist knows his business. The designer is a specialist, and may have ideas which the author has overlooked.

Nevertheless, it is also true that one can often get a great deal from the dramatist himself, if he is willing or able to discuss the settings. Some authors are keenly aware of surroundings and the values of inanimate objects; for others, "a primrose by the river's brink" remains nothing but a yellow primrose.

If conferences with the dramatist are optional, those with the director are not. The director (who is sometimes the same as the producer) is the field marshal of the production. He is responsible not only for the actors' rehearsals but for every production element, including the settings, the technical work, and even the amount of time allotted to scene or light rehearsals. In the inception period, the designer's work does not differ, so far as the scenery is concerned, from that of the director. The designer must see, quite as clearly as the director, how the actors are going to move, what the important scenes are, the "line" of the production, and so on. (The whole point of the production may change if the show acquires a particular leading lady instead of some other leading lady.) Like the director, he must ask himself, "What will this show *say* or *do* to its audiences? How will my settings *help* to say or do it? How will the actors *use* my settings?"

Individual directors vary in their method of talking with designers. A few merely accept any suggestion the designer puts before them. Some sound out the designer until they feel either that he is *en rapport* with the play, or that he is fundamentally removed from it and that someone else should design the settings. Very few directors are prepared for being sounded out by the designer. It may, indeed, be necessary for the latter to take the initiative. I ask a great

many questions in order to get my bearings on any show. These questions may be somewhat disconcerting to directors who believe in the "two hearts that beat as one" theory, but in the long run they help to clarify things. The Group Theatre directors have often told me, "Go ahead and ask your irritating questions. We always get stuck on some of them, but in figuring out the answers we help our own work as well."

Among the questions that occur to the designer during his study of the playscript, there are many which he can answer for himself, others which he must tally with the director. He can follow the entrances and exits simply enough, and he should learn them practically by heart. (It is good practice for the beginner to write them all down.) The times of the year, the times of the day, the lapses of time between scenes or during scenes, the succession of locales in a many-scened play—all this can be learned from the script. You may decide for yourself what are the "big scenes"—"big" in significance, dramatic intensity, or pageantry. But this last question and its implications will always have to be checked with the director.

Tone and Meaning: Dramatic Metaphor

What is the "atmosphere" of the locale? What quality does it have which makes it an integral part of this play and of no other play? What is the style of the author, what is notable about the historic period of the play or about its geographical location? What is the *dramatic metaphor* of each setting, and of the settings as a whole? What is the presumable history of the locale? What will the actors' movements be like? Will their actions around a table best convey the theme, or is a fireplace or stairway the natural center of the action?

The scene is a dentist's office. Is the dentistry a factor that is important for the story? Or should the point be, merely, that it is the office of a professional man? . . . (See *Rocket to the Moon* by Clifford Odets.) The scene is a battleship. Is it the heavy steel plates that are important, or the fact that certain tragic events on this ship are taking place on an idyllic summer's day? . . . (See *The Sailors of Cattaro* by Friedrich Wolf.) The scene is the home of an Italian fruit peddler in New York City. The home is not just a box in which the characters knock around. No matter how poor and shabby, it is divided into distinct areas on stage: the cozy corner where the

older folks sit and philosophize in armchairs, near a window filled with plants and a canary in a cage. On the other side of the room is the dinner table, where the younger people always seem to gather to carry on their more lively affairs. The steam radiator is the small boy's favorite perch in summer, and sister is always at the family bureau, which she prettifies with imitation flowers from Woolworth's. All these are distinct playing areas, each with its own pathos . . . (See *Golden Boy* by Clifford Odets.)

It is the *dramatic metaphor*, probably, which sums up, for each setting, all the thoughts which the designer may have. This metaphor is a piece of dramatic compression. Thus, the attic bedroom of the *Three Sisters* is not only an attic, not only a bedroom, not only a girls' room, not only a European room, not only a room of the period of 1901, not only a room belonging to the gentlefolk whom Chekhov wrote about. On top of all that, and including all that, it may be, for the designer, the scene of a *raging fever*. There is a fire going on outside. The whole house is restless, tossing about in this fire-atmosphere, unable to sleep. People wander about dumbly, or blurt out sudden confidences, as if they were light-headed. The designer shows the fitful reflection of the distant fire on the walls of the room The beds are surrounded by screens, as they might naturally be, yet the arrangement stresses the idea of a sickbed. The lamp is burning low; next to it a table and chair are heaped with clothes and other objects in disorder . . .

Rightly done, the setting has an electric effect on the audience. The audience knows instinctively what the designer is saying; it knows how the designer is describing the room.

Or let us take an example at random from the movies. There is a scene in *Public Enemy*-in which the body of a gangster, wrapped in hospital sheets, is thrown in at the door of his family. The scene is unforgettable. One of the things that makes it so is the front door of the little home in Brooklyn through which the body is hurled It is a most ordinary little door, with a glass panel screened by muslin curtains—such a front door as you will see in tens of thousands of self-respecting, law-abiding, poorer dwellings. The door has a metaphor of *good people*. That is one reason why the mind is so shocked at the strange, almost Egyptian horror which is flung into the scene.

The metaphor does not have to be spectacular to be effective. One

of the most perfect scenes in *The Long Voyage Home,* directed by John Ford, is the brief, transitional shot of the *Glencairn* on the morning after the drunken carouse. We look toward the bow of the *Glencairn.* No sailors are visible. There is a breeze, kicking up spray as the ship plows toward the north. This is *the healing sea*—a metaphor which makes a perfect transition between two important actions on the boat.

As we study the script, we try to penetrate closer and closer to the deepest significance of the play. For myself, I usually work from the climactic scenes onward. That is, I try to visualize the most poignant or most striking scenes. I try to understand the dramatic progression in intensity, or the change in quality, from one scene to another. When I know that I have provided for these essential scenes, I make the other scenes fit in. The climactic moments are like the piers of a bridge, on which the cables are afterward spun. I try, also, to fasten upon a *central scenic motif* for each setting. Does the composition of the room revolve about a door? A table? A view from the window? A color? A texture? Just as the director must find a central action, so the designer must find a central scenic theme related to this action.

An extraordinary amount of pre-vision is required of the designer. His sketches are made, his models and working drawings are halfway finished, about the time the cast begins rehearsal. It will take four weeks before the production as a whole acquires its final meaning; only in the last week of rehearsal, as a rule, will the full significance of the play dawn on the cast and the director, no matter how well thought out the show may be before it starts to rehearse. The process of rehearsal is a voyage of discovery. The director can only set the course and rig the sails; just what he and the cast will eventually create he cannot know for certain. Yet the designer must already have arrived at his artistic destination before his colleagues have set out on their quest.

Sketches

For today's audiences the stage has the appearance of a lighted picture inside the gilded frame of the proscenium. For the scene designer, however, the stage is a cubic area having a base of about thirty by seventy feet and a height of sixty or seventy feet. The proscenium opening occurs at the lower, front part of this area; the

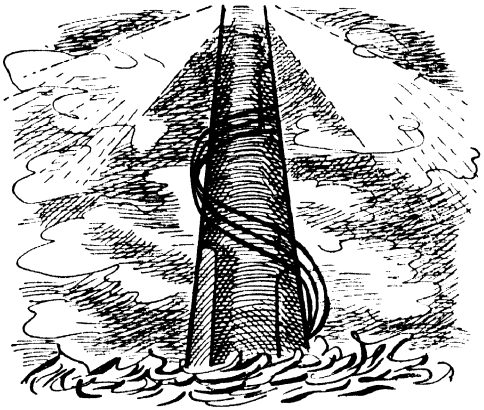
opening is usually limited to a width of thirty-five feet and a height of sixteen feet. The stage setting occupies the area immediately back of the opening—a space roughly forty feet wide, twenty-five feet deep, and (including borders and cyclorama, when these are used) thirty feet high. The remaining floor area of the stage is for storage of scenery, for properties, switchboards and dimmer boxes, sound-effect machines, and sound-mixing tables. Between the extreme height of the setting and the gridirons which are next to the ceiling of the stage is the space in which additional scenery is "flown" out of sight.

The *gridiron* is a series of steel girders to which lines and battens are attached for the purpose of flying scenery. Part way up one of the side walls of the stage is the *fly gallery*; this contains a *pin-rail* where the ropes, or "lines," of the rigging are tied. One or more flymen, as needed, work here during the performance. The stage also contains another balcony, a much lower and smaller one, closer to the proscenium. This is the *electrician's balcony,* which faces the permanent stage switchboard.

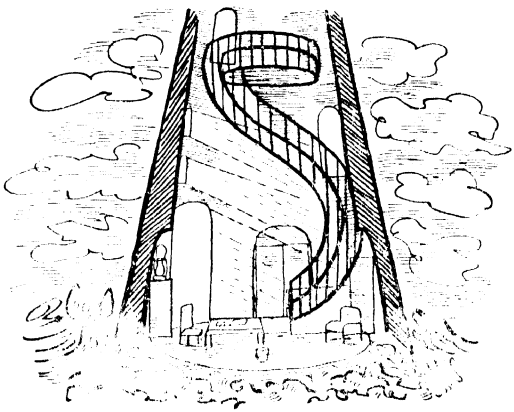
The *floor* of the stage is of soft pine boards, to accommodate the *stage screws* which are screwed into it; these screws hold down the end of stage braces, which have, at the other end, prongs which fit into brace cleats in the stage flats. In this way any flat or set of flats can be quickly supported and held upright on the stage . . . Normally the whole setting area of the stage floor is made up of trap doors, any number of which can be removed to permit entrances and exits through the floor.

The units of *lighting equipment* have swivel joints and are clamped to iron pipes. The bulk of such equipment hangs on a horizontal pipe above the setting and just back of the proscenium opening. Additional units flank the setting on vertical stands, or "boomerangs," with more equipment scattered at strategic points, including several places in the auditorium.

It is curious how many laymen imagine that the designer does not need to know much about the organization and equipment of a stage. The designer, they think, does nothing more than paint a picture, which the stage carpenter, the scene painter and the electrician try to approximate on stage. Nothing could be further from the truth. The designer must know the stage as an expert. His designs correspond to stage conditions; at their best they are not only limited but inspired by the special conditions of the stage. Some designers begin



Thunder Rock, 1



Thunder Rock, 2

Thunder Rock, 3

all their work with a *floor plan* on graph paper, to make sure no idea will occur to them which will not work on the stage floor.

Still it is true that others begin by searching out an idea, the right idea, in apparent disregard of stage conditions. It is the creative idea that counts. If the idea is vivid enough, there are always ways to make it work on stage. If it is too large or too small in scale, it can always be made to give the desired impression, even in practical stage terms. If it is not well adapted to sight lines or shifting, some way will always be found to overcome those difficulties. *But if the fundamental, creative idea is not there, no amount of mechanical efficiency will ever take its place.*

My own method is to jot down some sketches, usually extremely rough and very small, containing what I conceive to be the *poetic image* of the scene. This is really a form of thinking on paper, for I do dozens of such drawings, throwing them away as quickly as I do them, until they overflow the waste basket. I pay no attention to whether the idea can be put on the stage in the form in which it first occurs to me.

In designing *Thunder Rock*,[2] which calls for a lighthouse interior, my first mental image was that of the *exterior* of a lighthouse, isolated against a stormy sky. That idea remained the essential one long after it had been put to use in creating the *interior*. In the same way the dressing-room scene of *Golden Boy*[3] was based on an original idea which showed the prize ring, not the dressing room. I simply transferred the whole atmosphere and spatial quality of the ring to the dressing room. As a result the offstage fight acquired much greater vividness.

For a many-scened play it is well to find the poetic image which will apply to the whole series of locales, if possible. The production of *Golden Boy* was shaped in part by the fact that I chose the image of the prize ring for the whole play. It was as if each scene were set up in a prize ring, as if a gong rang for the start and finish of each scene, as if the actors came toward each other from opposite corners each time. The ground plan of the settings suggested a diamond shape, as though one saw the square "ring" from a dynamic corner

[2] Robert Audrey's *Thunder Rock* revolved around a disillusioned journalist who sought to isolate himself from the world.

[3] Clifford Odets' *Golden Boy* dealt with a youth who renounced music for a career as a prize-fighter when he succumbed to the struggle for wealth. Odets conceived the play as a symbolization of modern competitive, *laissez-faire* society.

view. Of course this conception could not be merely schematic. It worked properly because it was adapted to the content, the style, and meaning of the play. *Men in White* was another play that could be "summarized." All the scenes were laid inside the same hospital, partly at my suggestion. I saw the physical action of the whole play as a movement down interminable hospital corridors. Not all plays, however, lend themselves to this kind of poetic summary. A play like *Casey Jones* required that each scene have its own separate treatment. The poetic image of the locomotive scene was "the iron horse." Any living quality which the *Casey Jones* locomotive had was imparted to it by a vivid consciousness of that image, even though I added many other touches such as arbitrarily *curving* the locomotive and covering it with black velour. In the same way the pool-table scene had an image of starched white cleanliness, while the Fort Henry station scene was based on the image of autumn plenty.

Research

Designers do not agree on what is the best time to do library or other research. Some begin research before they work on an idea, some think up a basic idea and do research afterwards. I myself have never evolved a principle about it. If you don't get a good idea at once, you do more and more research in the hope of finding one. Sometimes this takes a long time, getting one all wrought up and sleepless; and sometimes, to be utterly candid, one may never get a fully satisfactory idea, but must make the best of any idea that occurs to the designer. Still, a dogged determination, untiring research, and a little more time can sometimes do wonders. One can sometimes find a splendid idea at the last moment as a result of continued thought about inferior ideas which came earlier.

Where does one do research? If possible at the very spot where the action is supposed to take place. I have gone, sketch-pad in hand, into copper mines, steel foundries, hospitals, river barges, lighthouses, farmhouses, textile factories, police stations, Fifth Avenue mansions, palaces, and hovels. I never travel without going into every kind of place, public or private, into which I can get entry. In order to put dramatic scenes on the stage one must have a richly stored imagination and a background of a million pictures.

Scene design, perhaps more than any other graphic art, demands a wide culture, a life of experience and travel, and of reading. You

spend far too much of your income on fine illustrated books. You keep files of clippings taken from magazines and newspapers—pictures of almost everything conceivable, (I started my own file in 1917, and am constantly adding to it.) You keep samples of strange textiles, of wallpapers, of wood veneer, papier-mâché, and metal. You have shelves stocked with merchandising catalogues, including those from Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck. And still you find it necessary to do additional work at the public library. In New York City, designers are fortunate in having the aid of the Art Reference Room and of the Picture Collection, both at the Astor Library. The Picture Collection, a most helpful and practical institution, has an assortment of clippings that can be borrowed for studio use.

It scarcely needs to be added that the designer must be intimately acquainted with the historic periods of architecture and interior decoration. What is more important, he must know not only the earmarks of style, but the spirit of, the reasons for, the style of each period. The same is true of geographic styles. More often than not the designer has to work with historic and geographic styles at the same time: he may be called upon to design a Mexican play of 1860, a French drama of 1673, or a comedy laid in Bulgaria in 1885.

It is no less vital that the designer know the masterpieces of painting and sculpture. He should be able to detect the kinship of some particular dramatic scene to the work of Renoir, Whistler, Cézanne, Lukas Cranach the Elder, Reginald Marsh, Chagall, Meissonier, Praxiteles, or Hans Arp. The designer who does not have this sort of understanding is professionally illiterate, however gifted he may otherwise be.

Models and Blueprints

At last the designer can make formal sketches—if he has time. (Very often we don't have time, until the models are almost completed.) The sketches show as exactly as possible how the settings will look on stage. They are drawn to scale (¼ inch = 1 foot is usual), and are fully colored. Before the designer can draw them he must have arrived at a fairly accurate plan of the setting, which he tries out on graph paper.[4]

There can be no hard-and-fast rule about the sequence of sketches

[4] In the professional theatre both sketches and models are sent to the office of the United Scenic Artists, where they are registered and stamped.

—models—blueprints. There are designers who begin with an approximate floor plan and rarely do models. Some begin with scaled sketches and afterwards make models. Not many follow my own procedure, which is: rough sketches, research, more rough sketches, rough ground plans, models, finished sketches, blueprints.

It may seem an anticlimax and rather surprising that one shall make any finished sketches at all, when they come so late in the design process. One reason for the finished sketch is that it remains a record of the work. More immediately important, it sums up, orchestrates, the work that has gone before and helps greatly in solving details of architecture, properties, and painting. It should be added that this method, while craftsmanlike, has the disadvantage of lacking sales value with producers, who want a finished sketch before them from the start, so that they can see what they think they are going to get.

As a rule I start work on the model before I begin drafting, and I never design without making models. I do half my work on the model, working on it as a sculptor does on his clay. I honestly cannot see how a true scene designer can work without models. There are designers who get along without them, but the result tells in the fact that their floor plans are almost always static—a box shape whether for interiors or exteriors, and a type of setting which is fundamentally unrelated to the actors.

Some scenic artists set up their models inside a model stage, complete with miniature lighting equipment. Others feel that the results achieved in this way are not satisfactory; that the miniature stage does not really approximate stage conditions. I set up my own models inside an open box which consists of little more than the model of the stage floor and of the proscenium opening.

Ordinarily I begin the model work, not with the settings, but with the furniture or other large properties, placing these on the model stage area where they are properly in sight lines and of most value to the actors. When the properties are well placed, I start building the settings around them.

The scene designers' models that are displayed in public are usually exhibition models specially built for that purpose; they are made of wood, pressed fibre board or heavy cardboard, and are carefully painted. In everyday practice scenic models are crude paper ones, often uncolored; they are intended only for the eyes of the director

and scene builder. Two-ply or three-ply kid finish Bristol paper is well adapted for the working model, especially if it does not have to be colored. It is also possible to use colored paper, heavy cardboard, wood blocks, balsam wood, modelling wax, wall paper, textiles, wire, or any other material that strikes one's fancy. Rubber cement, Scotch tape, heavy glue, and nails serve to fasten the model together.[5]

Once or twice the director escapes from rehearsals long enough to examine the model. Sometimes he brings members of the cast with him, and usually the stage manager calls several times to make written notes while surveying the model. The director's visits are bound to result in some alterations. Furniture is pushed a fraction of an inch here or there. Doors may be taken out, added, or made to exchange places. The scale figure, a piece of cardboard with a human outline, is carried around to all parts of the model. (I have a cardboard figure named John Barrymore who has starred in most of my productions.) The director, with the model before him, gets new ideas for action. Occasionally he sees that he can get along without something he had thought he needed; or he may find that he needs something additional. When he has approved the work, the designer is ready to turn to the drafting. Like the model maker, the *draftsman,* if the designer employs one, is an expert in his special field. Over and above his ability to turn out mechanical drawings, he has some initiative in details of design. He has a knowledge of mouldings and ornaments, and of materials like imitation glass, tin, papier-mâché, rubber, or cellophane; he has also had training in the actual construction of stage scenery. Many designers have, at one time or another, served an apprenticeship as draftsmen for older scenic artists.

The rough drafting is done by the scene designer or his draftsman on "detail" paper, then transferred, still in pencil, to tracing paper, and is sent at once to be blueprinted. It has long since become unneces-

[5] If the designer in the professional theatre can afford to do so, or is pressed for time, he employs a *model maker.* The model maker is a wonderful craftsman in his own right. He knows offhand the exact width, length, and height of a regulation kitchen table, a three-quarter or full size bed, a kitchen stove, pool table, or grand piano; the height of a park railing or the width of a railroad track. He makes parts of a model come together magically and stay put, or come apart just as swiftly when one is experimenting with it. With the neatness and precision of a watchmaker, he will build a paper spiral staircase faster, almost, than one can draft it. He can dig up paper that is a perfect imitation of marble, or of velvet, or of steel. He can make miniature kerosene lamps out of false pearls from the five-and-ten-cent store, trees out of sponges, people out of sealing-wax.

sary to make drawings in ink on tracing linen for this kind of work —fortunately for scene designers, who need every moment of time that can be saved. More recently the "blueprints" are being turned out, at no greater expense, with white backgrounds, as in the originals —making for greater practical use of the prints.

A set of blueprints for a production includes several diagrams. First, there is a *ground plan* showing the position of the scenery on the level of the stage floor. This plan includes the whole area of the stage, the positions of backings and set pieces, and of any hanging scenery which touches the floor. If the production makes use of traps in the floor, these are also indicated. If there is more than one setting, there is a ground plan of each. If the scenery is shifted on a turntable or on platforms, these are shown. In addition to the ground, or floor, plan, there are *front elevations*, *sections* (when necessary), and a *hanging chart.* The latter shows where drops, curtains, cycloramas, borders, or flown pieces are hung from the gridirons.

Finally there are *detail drawings* of more elaborate sections of the scenery and of all properties which are to be built to specification These detail drawings are in larger scale than the others, anything from ½ inch = 1 foot, to actual size. All drawings are thoroughly dimensioned. Pieces of scenery that are in any way unusual are drafted to show construction. Specifications include numbers of wood trim or moulding, as given in lumber catalogues, numbers and types of hardware from hardware catalogues, and the kind of material to be used for flats in case they are not ordinary scenery linen. (Flats are sometimes covered with a thin wood veneer known as "profile," or they may be covered with velvet, duvetyne, or other materials.) For numerous drawings see "The Scene Technician's Handbook."

Sight Lines and the Design

Among the laws which govern scene design there is one whose existence is hardly suspected by the layman. This is the law of *sight lines.* The need for keeping the setting and action within the audi ence's range of vision is one of the most fundamental requirements with which the designer has to deal.

Few indeed are the productions which can claim to have perfect sight lines for every spectator in the audience, whether he is in one of the boxes or in the top balcony. Faulty sight lines are common, for

instance, in the New York theatres, whose shallow stages and short auditoriums create very poor lines of vision. Even if the settings are fully visible from all angles, there is a certain amount of optical distortion, especially when platforms are used on stage. At the front seats of the orchestra, the spectators' eyes are on a level with the actors' shoes. In the boxes nearest the proscenium, the spectator misses almost half the stage; in recompense he gets a perfect view of the electricians and stagehands in the wings opposite—or would get that view if it were not cut off by masking. The upper balcony gets a good view of the whole stage floor and the tops of the actors' heads, but very little of the back wall of the setting.

Even when the setting is an almost facsimile interior the law of sight lines directly affects the design. A supposedly square room on stage never actually has walls at right angles to each other. The side walls are designed at an obtuse angle to the back wall, in order that they may be more visible. (The audience is rarely aware of this trick: the opening-out of the side walls must be extreme indeed before the spectators become conscious of it.) For the same reason, windows, stairways, and other features occurring in the side walls are often "jogged out" so as to be more fully in sight lines.

The smaller the frame of the setting, the greater the risk of poor visibility. Very small scenes, like the interior of an automobile or of a small cabin, have to be made several times larger than normal, the designer relying upon optical illusions in order to make the result look "real." Small scenes of this kind also have to be made extremely shallow in order to be fully visible. Since they are normally shallow in life, that presents no special difficulty.

When a small scene is low as well, the difficulty grows. A front opening that is too low makes the scene all but invisible to the balconies. In that case the ceiling may have to be sloped back from the proscenium frame to the back wall of the setting—a device which is at once visible to the audience. An alternative method is to build the setting high enough to meet visibility requirements, but to play optical tricks with the walls in order to make them look much lower. Painting out in dark color that part of the wall which is above the desired height is one such trick. It is not a very satisfactory solution, and indeed no perfect solution has ever been found for this problem, so long as a facsimile picture is necessary.

The sight lines also affect the scene design indirectly, through the

movements of the actors. It is impossible to design a room in which the most important entrance is located in one of the side walls, because an actor coming on from the side can never make his entrance as impressive as when he comes on from the back. The placement of furniture is likewise affected. Furniture must be placed in a way that is naturally plausible, pictorially composed, and serviceable dramatically. But in addition it must be so placed as to keep the actors in sight lines. A couch may have to be slanted at an oblique angle so that when two people sit on it, the upstage character, who is the center of attention, is fully visible, while the downstage character is seen either in profile or in back view.

One interesting way of meeting the sightline problem in interiors is to show two walls instead of three—an arrangement which brings a larger amount of wall space into good sight lines. This "triangular" type of setting is almost always more dynamic than the type of setting with a long back wall parallel to the footlights, as the dramatist August Strindberg observed long ago. Its quality is also distinctly more intimate, concentrated, or "cozy."

Stagecraft and Composition: Pictorial Principles

To the extent that the stage setting resembles a picture, it obeys the laws of painting. It must have pictorial composition, meaning that there is a center of visual interest, to which the other visual elements are related. The center of pictorial composition on stage, aside from the actors, is, logically, the central scenic motif.

If Lee Simonson chose a long, curving ramp as the dominant scenic element of his design for *He Who Gets Slapped,* it was because the action was best played on, or around, the ramp. But in turn the ramp had to become the pictorial center of the design. It had to be designed as the central feature of a painting—which is a somewhat different problem.

This distinction is by no means as fine-spun as it sounds. In order to translate a scenic element into a pictorial element the designer must be aware of a number of pictorial "first principles."

For instance, the principle of *contrast.* Form is defined only by means of contrast—of light and shade, color, or line. When he incorporates a circus ramp into his scenery, the designer must know how the ramp contrasts with surrounding objects in appearance. He must know, also, in what way it contrasts with the figures of the actors in

their costumes. The delicacy of the ramp structure may be in contrast with the solidity of the surrounding walls, if the circus is indoors. Or the weight of the ramp may be in contrast to the flimsiness of canvas, if the circus is in a tent. The color of the ramp may be in contrast to the color of the walls, or its curved line may be in contrast to the straight walls. The ramp may be in contrast to the stiff forms and costumes of non-circus people, whereas it may harmonize in line, color, and decoration with the costumes of the acrobats and clowns.

The present writer believes that a significant design can be constructed only on the basis of an essential contrast somewhere in the design, whether in terms of mass, line, color, texture or lighting. A necessary ingredient of drama is a sharp definition of form; and form must have contrast in order to be defined. A playwright cannot write dramatic scenes with nebulous, uncontrasted characters. In the same way a scenic artist cannot create visual drama without visual contrast. (I have sometimes corrected a design that lacked visual significance by checking over every part of the design to see if a contrast had been provided. Sometimes I found the design was monotonous in color, sometimes it lacked contrast between thick and thin, heaviness and lightness, shallowness and depth.)

On the other hand the pictorial composition must have *unity,* as well as contrast. A contrast is significant only when the contrasting elements are fundamentally related in some way. It is not enough to contrast the curved ramp with the straight walls: we must be convinced that such an arrangement is architecturally plausible, for instance. Still, this plausibility may be conveyed in a purely visual manner by pictorial design rather than by factual testimony. For example, the curve may be repeated as a theme in the designs of the posters on the walls; or the straightness of the walls may be repeated in the stanchions lining the ramp. Ramp and walls may be united in color, or through a *balance* of large and small areas.

Note that in the design for *Thunder Rock* the massiveness of the stone tower is contrasted with, and balanced by, the fine lines of the stairway; the hard texture of the stone both opposes and complements the fleeciness of the clouds. The circular motion of the stairway echoes the circular ground plan of the tower, while the stone studding is repeated—more freely, to be sure—in the gathering of the clouds.

The rules of *selectivity* apply in scene design just as they do in painting. We have noted how the designer must look for the scenic

motif of each setting. When he finds it, this process of selection does not stop. If the motif is a double door, he must select a concrete pair of doors out of an infinity of possible double doors. Finally he must select certain details of those doors, suppressing other details which are not relevant to the mood or history of the locale. The work of *simplification,* or *suggestion,* is obviously part of the work of selecting. We do not need to show a whole cathedral if our intention is made just as clear, or even clearer, with a single Gothic pillar.

The rules of selection apply with equal force to matters of *style.* Each play has its own genre and its own personality. Clearly it would be a mistake to dress a light comedy in heavy construction, somber colors, rigid lines, and Rembrandt lighting: the gaiety of the play would have to struggle against the quality of the setting. One would have to look for light types of architecture, pastel tints, gracious curved lines, bland or sparkling illumination. Again, there are all types of comedies. *The Man Who Came to Dinner* is different from *Paris Bound,* which differs in turn from *My Sister Eileen.* Theoretically, at least, a scenic style appropriate to one of these plays would be inappropriate for the others.

The problem of style has been very much slighted on Broadway of late. The prevailing style, actually, is that of romantic naturalism; and few designers make any real effort to handle a production by tailoring its style to measure. Yet the naturalistic ideal in scene design has no real logic, and always tends to break down in practice. This is especially true of *exterior scenes.* So long as the objects in a design are man-made and inanimate, as in interiors, they lend themselves fairly well to replica. But the moment you must simulate sky, ground, trees, and growing plants, you are forced to adopt a style which is conventional to some degree. It is not easy to find a naturalistic way to put a frame around a supposedly natural sky.

In planning exteriors, designers resort to the device of slicing the stage depth into three or more planes. In the foreground they arrange an architectural, decorative, or abstract frame through which the rest of the picture is viewed. In the middle ground there are other elements of scenery which may be used by the actors; while in the farthest depth is a painting of distant scenery on a backdrop, or a sky cyclorama with a *ground row* of distant trees, mountains, fence, or wall. Three or more planes of lighting are also established.

In a larger sense the question of scenic style is not a matter of

stagecraft but of the whole theory of scenic art, to which I shall refer later. It is well to realize that stagecraft is not quite the same thing as scenic art. Scene design as a craft has received much attention in the United States; and surely it is indispensable that the work be understood from a craft point of view. Still a word of warning may be necessary. A scenic artist is not one who practices the craft of scene design. A scenic artist is an artist in the theatre, one who uses his craft in aiding the theatre to respond creatively to its audiences. A designer who has nothing to say is not an artist, no matter how skilled he may be as a craftsman.

Shifting

Ingenuity is a cardinal virtue in a scene designer; indeed it is not only a virtue but a prime necessity. He never designs heavy constructions when lighter ones will do; and he learns to get a maximum effectiveness out of light construction. The true scene designer has a "feeling," an affinity, for structures which are light, portable, and demountable. For the master designer the whole world is made up of such structures, just as to painters like Cézanne the world is made of prisms. In a many-scened play, not only lightness of construction, but every kind of economy becomes essential. A different platform for each scene is never used if the same one will do for two or more; it is wise to "repeat" everything within reason so long as the audience does not suspect it, or so long as the audience itself approves.

It is in the matter of *shifting* that ingenuity is taxed to the utmost. The problem of scene shifting, along with that of sight lines, is basic to the art of scene design. Methods of scene shifting must be reliable, labor-saving, and swift. More than that, they must not hurt the artistry of the settings. Indeed it is a sign of the true scenic artist that he makes a virtue of necessity, getting artistic qualities out of the very limitations which the shifting problem imposes on him.

The number of devices for shifting is theoretically endless. In practice, however, there are only a limited number of methods. The commonest, least imaginative, and usually slowest way, is to erect setting number 1 inside setting number 2. At the end of the first scene, as soon as the curtain drops, the stagehands remove the properties of the first scene, and the first-scene flats are either dragged offstage or hoisted to the flies. The properties of scene number 2 are then brought

into position, and the curtain is ready to go up again. This scheme will not work, in most cases, if the shift has to be very fast.

The alternative is to use some kind of platform on which an entire setting can be mounted, properties and all. Sometimes the smaller of the two scenes is set up on a platform, and is lifted, furniture and all, to the wings. More usually the settings are erected on platforms which can be wheeled into place. Scene number 1 is removed in its entirety and replaced by scene number 2. The *platform method* allows of much faster scene-changes; also it takes fewer men to operate, though the initial cost is higher.

Simplest of the platform methods is the *revolving stage,* or *turntable*—a round platform occupying most of the stage. It turns like a phonograph disk. The ordinary way to use it is to erect two scenes back to back, scene number 1 playing while scene number 2 is set up. The turntable may also be divided into smaller segments, so that three or four scenes may be pre-set. In that case the proscenium opening must be reduced to frame in the small settings, yet not be narrowed so much as to cause bad sight lines.

Max Reinhardt and his designers have made brilliant use of the revolving stage. For a production of *The Merchant of Venice,* for instance, Reinhardt pre-set a canal with a gondola, two streets, two bridges, Shylock's house, Portia's house, and a court of justice, all on one turntable, as if the whole business were a section of Venice; it was even possible for the actors to move from the street to the house as the stage turned . . . Two or more revolving stages may be used instead of one large one, or they may be used in combination with other types of shifting. It is even possible to build the disk in concentric rings which may move at different speeds or in opposite directions —a device which has proved its worth in musical shows.

Mobile platforms, or *trucks,* may also be used for shifting. They are mounted on casters, and may be free-wheeling or move on tracks.

For *Men in White,* which required almost instantaneous shifts, I used a long sliding platform which moved parallel with the proscenium opening. Setting number 2 was erected on the offstage end of this platform while setting number 1 was playing on stage. I chose this scheme rather than the revolving stage or other possible devices, because the long truck had a quality like that of a hospital corridor—a quality which became part of the action and meaning of the play itself. For *Golden Boy* I used three platforms. Scene 1 came on stage

on tracks from the right. Scene 2 moved in similarly from the left, and scene 3 came downstage on tracks from the rear. Each of the platforms stood out boldly on the stage, giving a hint of the appearance of a prize ring in every scene.

The *jack-knife stage* is another variation of the platform stage. Two trucks are used. Each is pivoted at one end, the end nearest to the side of the proscenium. The platforms are swung into the proscenium opening from either side of the stage in an arc of a quarter-circle. It may be remarked that platform units do not always carry a whole setting: sometimes they contain only part of a scene, two or more platforms uniting to create the whole setting. An interesting example of scenes thus put together was Donald Oenslager's arrangement for *Of Mice and Men*. Each setting was made of sections carried independently on two revolving stages and a truck which moved down from up stage.

Many European stages contain *elevators* capable of raising part or all of the stage, or of lowering it to the basement. By means of *elevator stages* scene number 2 may be set in the basement of the theatre while scene number 1 is playing overhead. The elevators sometimes carry turntables. A few American stages, such as the Belasco Theatre and the Radio City Music Hall, contain elevators, and the Music Hall elevator includes a turntable; but to my knowledge none of our professional theatres has facilities for shifting below the stage. These need a good deal of room, and the land rental in the principal American cities tends to make such installations prohibitive in cost.

One way to shift scenery efficiently is, of course, to design scenes which have a minimum of things to shift. The *semi-permanent* setting meets this requirement. The designs by Lee Simonson for *Marco Millions* were a classic instance of this type. A decorative neutral frame occupied the back wall and the sides of the stage. Nine scene changes from Venice to India, Syria, Persia and China were accomplished by changing the "plugs" which fitted into the three openings of the frame; there were also changes of properties, draperies, backdrops. The central feature of *Men in White* was a structure suggesting a hospital in an almost abstract fashion. This structure remained permanently on stage. Different rooms in the hospital were indicated by means of properties—a bookcase, a table, and chairs for the directors' room, scrubbing sinks, and an operating table for the operating room.

Still another way of shifting is not to shift any scenery at all! The *simultaneous* setting makes this feat possible. The simplest way is to divide the stage arbitrarily into compartments—as many as six or more, if there is an upper story. The action moves from one area to another, together with the stage lighting. The scenes not in use may be curtained off or merely left dark. *She Loves Me Not,* designed by Oenslager, used this method, the design consisting of six cubicles. A type of simultaneous setting more integrated with the play was exemplified in *Desire Under the Elms.* As designed by Robert Edmond Jones, this showed four rooms in a New England farmhouse, as well as a porch and the yard outside. When not in use, any or all of the rooms could be closed in with a shutter of weatherboards.

It is possible to visualize in this way certain plays whose authors did not conceive of that type of production. For *Sailors of Cattaro,* whose stage directions originally called for four or five different places on a battleship, I designed what looked like a forward section of the ship, including the decks, superstructure, control room and other areas. A curtain resembling a tarpaulin masked off the control room in the scenes when this locale was not required. Not only did the design solve the shifting problem, but it allowed for simultaneous acting in different parts of the ship—something which would not have been possible if each scene were complete in itself. In the same way, for *The Young Go First*—whose script called for the bunk-house of a CCC camp, the barracks street, and a hillside—I combined all these elements into a landscape. Settings of this kind are less expensive to execute and to handle on stage, and may be even more dramatically effective and imaginative. However, one must have a thorough insight into the play in order to design it in this way. Nor do all plays lend themselves to such treatment.

Realization of the Design on Stage

An experienced designer almost automatically has no inspirations which cannot be used on the stage. Nevertheless, if he has daring and imagination as well as experience, he is always trying to do something which was never done before, and the element of risk is therefore ever present. He must go out on thin ice to solve the problems which he has insisted on handing himself. *He* will have to bear the consequences, not the director, the builder, the painter or the stagehands,

and certainly not the producer, since the latter relies on the designer's efficiency.

This is the second occasion when the designer sometimes doesn't sleep nights. He broods on all the things that may go wrong under actual stage conditions. That beautiful shade of green may never emerge from under the stage lights. That wonderfully effective piece of scenery may become too heavy for rapid shifts. The delicacy of the whole sketch seems impossible to get in the actual setting. That chair which looks so perfect in the sketch or model may, for some odd reason, turn out wrong. The intensely dramatic light and shade in the model can only be approximated on stage, where the actors' faces must be fully revealed at all costs. That very helpful angle in the upper platform of the model—will it really be in sight lines? That plan of shifting which looks like the perfect solution—does it in fact leave room for the properties and the storage of scenery offstage? It is consequently necessary to have a thousand apprehensions, and to prepare for every eventuality; to check with co-workers, especially with the carpenter, the electrician, and the property man.[6] Stage production under modern conditions is a little like going over the top under an enemy barrage. The experienced people of the theatre acquire a resourcefulness and cool judgment under strain which would single them out in any other profession. Where experience is lacking, the burden on the scene designer is naturally doubled.

At the earliest possible moment a floor plan is sent to the stage manager. The stage manager, with the help of the designer's assistant (if he has one), chalks out the plan or plans on the stage floor, so that the actors may know the confines of the settings during rehearsal. The property man calls for a list of properties. Certain items are unimportant scenically, hence are his responsibility alone, as a rule. The rest he will "chase" for the designer, rounding up unheard-of articles in unheard-of places for the designer's inspection. There are visits also by the painter, the upholsterer, the maker of stage lighting apparatus, the dealer in lighting fixtures, lamps, and lanterns. There may also be visits by the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker, the dealer in cradles and the dealer in coffins, the tin man, the iron

[6] These technicians are undismayed by any problem, no matter how exotic, in the professional theatre. The designer will listen to their suggestions and opinions with the same attention which they accord to him.

man, the sand man; for one never can tell when a production is going to need their services or the services of a printer, a plumber, an animal trainer, a glass blower, or a motorboat mechanic.

The building of scenery is a special problem in the non-professional theatre. (See Scene Technician's Handbook, pp. 576 ff.). For Broadway it is almost always done by contracting shops, unlike the procedure in Europe, where each theatre has its own workshop. When the working drawings or models are completed, the business manager of the producing firm sends over two or more contractors to estimate the cost of building. The same routine is followed in the case of the painting. Some contractors will figure on both at the same time. Sometimes designers prefer to put in bids for designing, building, and painting the whole show instead of limiting themselves to the designing contract.

It is essential that the designer understand fully how scenery is built. Scenery is of two types: framed and unframed. The first includes elements such as the drop and the curtain; the second includes the flat, the parallel, the built piece, and the set-piece.

The *drop* and the *curtain* are too well known to need explanation. It may be said, in passing, that drops and curtains, like all other parts of stage scenery, should be rendered flameproof. In the case of linen used for drops and flats, the material can be treated before being worked on, while solid, constructed pieces may be painted in a flameproofing-and-whiting preparation on the back of the scenery.

Drops, curtains, and cloth borders are finished at the top with webbing, grommets and tie-lines, at the bottom with a pocket for chain-weights or for a wooden or pipe batten. The so-called *gauze drop* (it is actually made of scrim cloth or bobbinet) is a special form of the drop, much employed for illusory and magic effects; it seems opaque when lit from in front, but becomes virtually transparent when lit from behind. It is also used for effects of distance, since it creates a haze when hung in front of a painted backdrop. Drops which are partly linen and partly scrim are also used. Draped curtains are sometimes an integral part of the stage setting, but are more often used for masking. Black velour or black duvetyne draperies are the standard material for masking, since they absorb light to a high degree.[7]

[7] Webbing is a wide, closely-woven tape, of the kind used for upholstering the seats of chairs. Grommets are metal eyelets. A batten is a long strip of lumber having

The *cyclorama* is a special form of backdrop, necessary for most outdoor scenes. It hangs in a curve behind the setting and is painted to give the effect of a sky. In some theatres the cloth cyclorama has been replaced by cycloramas made of concrete faced with slightly roughened plaster. Ideally, these concrete "cycs" are built in the shape of a half-dome; but they are also useful even when built in the more conventional cyclorama shape. The plaster surface refracts light in a way which gives an impression of infinite space. They are, of course, much more expensive than cloth cycloramas and must be permanently installed in the theatre.

In the past half-century there has been a marked tendency away from unframed scenery and toward solid construction. Simplest of framed units is the *flat*—a rectangular frame with linen stretched over it. It is used for sections of wall, for backings behind door openings, for ceilings (in a modified form), and so on.

The *set-piece* or *ground row* is an irregularly-shaped flat which rests on the stage floor. Its most common use is to mask horizon lights. It is disguised as a low wall, a ridge of ground, distant mountains.

The *built piece* is, typically, a window, door, fireplace, stairway, post, massive arch, or any other piece which requires facsimile, solid construction.

The *parallel* is the standard stage platform. Its sides, which fold together when not in use, are built in skeleton construction, its top fitting like a lid on the sides when the parallel is opened for use.

Light weight is obviously the first requisite of scenic construction. A requirement which runs a close second is that the scenery be able to fold up or come apart quickly. Professional scenery is built to be taken apart into 5′-9″ widths. (The lengths do not matter. The reason for the 5′-9″ rules is that the scenery must be able to travel in railroad baggage cars, whose door openings are six feet high.)

In general scenery must store well, becoming flat and compact when not in use. In the case of large productions this becomes necessary even during performance, in order not to clutter up the area backstage. (There is almost never enough room backstage, especially on

various uses on stage. A pipe batten is a long section of iron pipe, sometimes used instead of a wooden batten; its commonest use is for carrying the stage lights, which are clamped to it. Masking is the general term for scenery that hides or screens off any part of the stage from the view of the audience.

New York stages, which are inclined to be much too shallow.) All pieces of heavy construction come apart from all flat pieces. Thus solidly-built doors and windows are made to separate from the flats into which they are inserted, the flats themselves being stacked together separately from the built pieces. For joining and separating parts of scenery, two principal devices are in use: *lashing,* which consists of tying together adjacent pieces by means of a thin rope that passes in and out of lash cleats; and *pin-hinging,* which employs hinges whose center pins can be removed.

The man who builds scenery must be one of the most ingenious and responsible workmen in the theatre. Ordinarily he runs his shop by day and, as "house carpenter," is in charge of a stage by night. Taking over the designer's drawings, the builder must make detailed construction plans from them, parceling out the work among his helpers. He must never be at a loss when asked to build something that no one in the world ever built before—whether it be the mountains of the moon or the inside of a human mind. The interior of a London drawing room, an impassible jungle, cathedral spires, a subway car—all may be grist for his mill. Where building experience is lacking, the scene designer's difficulties will be endless, and he may have to forestall them in the non-professional theatre by proper adjustment, substitutions, or simplifications in his design.

Supervision of Construction and Painting

While the scenery is being built, the designer must visit the carpenter shop or wherever the scenery is being built, to be sure the work is going well. He is responsible for the way in which the work is executed. No designer has the right, after the show opens, to complain that his designs were spoiled by the builder, painter, electrician or anyone else.[8]

[8] I make it my practice to accept full responsibility for the appearance of the settings on the opening night, regardless of all accidents they may have encountered on their way from the drawing board to the stage. It is true that sometimes a poorly considered idea of the director or producer, too much economizing, or serious meddling by someone else in authority results in bad settings. Nevertheless the designer is finally responsible. He should know clearly from the start what he is after; and once the designs are agreed on, he must fight to carry them out. If he feels that he is being ordered to make mistakes he must be ready to accept his share of the blame, or else dissociate himself from the production. Scenic work is carried on under great stress. A designer who is unsure of himself is no asset to a production. And a designer who "passes the buck" when something goes wrong is a serious liability.

The routine of supervision is sometimes taken over by a *technical director.* Although technical directing is a specialty, the technical director as an institution is seldom met with in the theatre. The job is usually *ex officio* to other work. It may be taken on by anyone from the designer's assistant to the business manager.

While keeping an eye on construction, the designer is also preparing sketches for the scene painter. The painter works with the aid of the designer's colored models, scaled sketches, colored elevation drawings, and patches of color or samples of fabric. The work of the painter needs the same supervision as that of the carpenter, and the designer must be familiar with the painting methods that are in use.

Most scene painting is done in heavy water-color paint (very much like calcimine or the paint used for show-cards). The powdered color is mixed with a thin solution of water and glue. After being stretched on the frame, the linen of the flat is given a coating of *size* or of *priming,* in order to close the pores of the material. (Size is a mixture of water and glue, while priming is regular scene paint in which an inferior pigment, such as whiting, is used.) The flat is then painted with the required color. Scene paint dries very quickly, turning out several shades lighter than when applied. The difference between the wet and the dry color is so great that even the veteran scene painter finds it necessary to test out samples before painting the flats.

Large drops and cycloramas are not sized; they are painted in transparent *dye* color, which dries about the same shade as when applied. It is not advisable to paint drops in opaque color, since ordinary scene paint tends to crack or flake off when the drops are folded up. *Oil* paint is also used, generally on furniture and on built pieces such as doors and windows.

Scene painting is an art in itself. Both the designer and the painter must understand what the stage lights are going to do to the colors of the scenery. A neophyte can ruin his settings with poor painting. On the other hand, some extraordinary effects are possible under stage conditions. The backdrops which I designed for *Night Music* had a neon-light phosphorescence. From out front they seemed, even to experts, to be projected in light. In fact, however, they were a combination of airbrush painting and a new kind of pigment. Certain actual phosphorescent paints are also on the market and are used for magical effects; they require a pitch-dark stage in order to be seen

Scene painting, even more than impressionist easel painting, is not

meant to be effective at close inspection; it must carry to an audience. Experienced scene painters have developed an uncanny ability to make their work tell at the required distance. The scene painter's work remains magical even on today's stages, when so much of the settings are actually constructed in wood. For instance, built panels are often simulated with paint, deluding the eye even a foot or two away.

Ideally, the painter, like his confrères on the stage, should be ready to paint anything and everything, whether it be mouldings, forests, a masterpiece by Rubens, a Gobelin tapestry, or this year's Picasso. He should attempt to render a vivid imitation of any sort of texture, from satin to stucco; and he should learn to do his painting on any actual texture from the sheerest gossamer fabric to the crudest lumber.

Scene painting is done either on vertical paint frames or spread out on a large floor. Outside New York the American practice is frequently to do the painting on the stage itself—not on the stage floor, but on a *paint frame* which is hung against the rear wall. The painters work in front of the frame on a scaffold, like house painters doing the front of a house. In New York a number of scenic studios use paint frames, and have additional space for working on the floor. Painting on the floor is the usual continental method: the painters, wearing sneakers, walk up and down over the drops, working with brushes attached to bamboo rods.

Many different techniques are used in applying pigment. These include *spattering* (sprinkling one color over another with the brush), *stippling*, and *spraying* with an airbrush. For coarser effects one color is sometimes dragged over another, or the powdered color itself may be thrown on dry and "slapped" in with a wet brush. Modulated effects resembling old plaster walls or faded wallpaper are got by dabbing color on the flat with a sponge or rolling it over the flat with a paint-soaked and twisted rag. *Glazing,* more customary in the case of oil paint, consists of applying thin layers of color over each other, or sometimes of rubbing in layers of color, one over another—a process which gives a deep, rich tone, especially to woodwork.

Drops often require careful painting of ornaments, figures or perspectives. The designer's drawing is transferred to the drop usually by the "squaring" method. The design is ruled into squares. The drop is ruled off to correspond, and the painter copies the drawing with a charcoal stick, one square at a time. The ruling is done by means of a "snap line": a fishing cord, rubbed with blue chalk or

charcoal, is stretched taut over the canvas; plucked with the fingers, it snaps back against the canvas, leaving the mark of the line. An alternative method to "squaring" is to project the designer's sketch onto the drop by means of a stereopticon. This method is increasingly used by mural artists but does not seem to be practical under most scenic studio conditions.

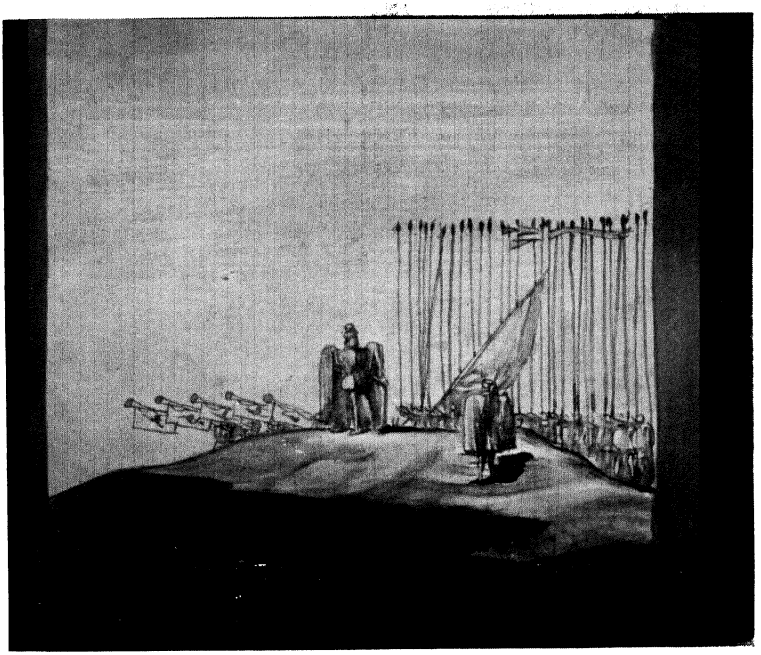
Setting Up the Scenery

The work of supervision includes the finding and approval of properties. It also includes last-minute, minor changes at the request of the director.

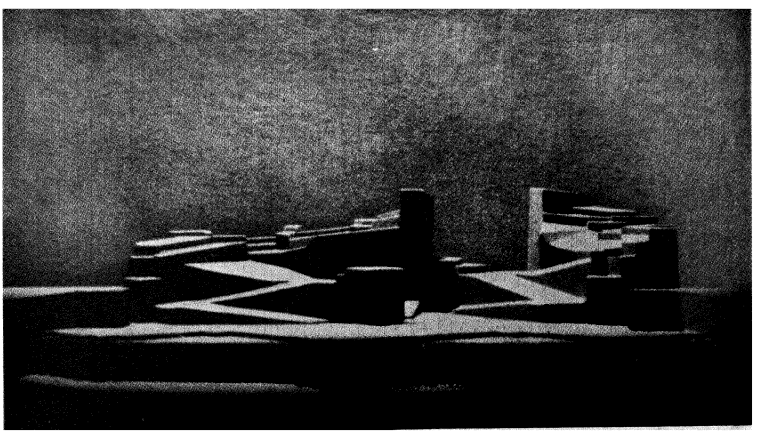
Normally the tempo slows down a little during the time of supervision. The designer takes advantage of the lull to visit the theatre, talk with the stage manager and director, and sit "out front" for one or two rehearsals. This is often the designer's first chance to get acquainted with the cast, which has now been in rehearsal for two or three weeks. At any rate it is generally the first time he manages to see the cast in action for any length of time. An experienced designer knows that his work has no meaning apart from the work of the actors. Their movements, their gestures, can teach him more about his own special field than any amount of study in painting.

When the scenery has been completed to the satisfaction of the designer (and of the director and producer), it is brought to the theatre. In preparation for the new play, the stage of the theatre has meanwhile been cleared of the débris of past shows. The stage rigging has been made ready to handle the coming scenery, in accordance with the designer's blueprints. Much of this preparation consists of "spotting lines": that is, the flymen find and test the ropes necessary for attaching any scenery which is to be flown. The stage electrician, also, is extremely busy. He and his assistants set up portable switchboards and dimmer boards, make cable connections, sort out lighting apparatus, and prepare the colored gelatine mediums which are used in front of the light-projectors.

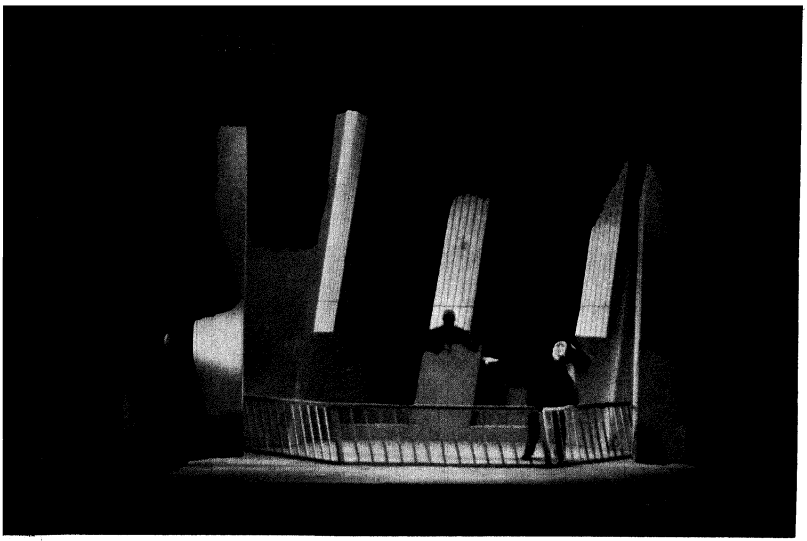
Every stage must have a large scene door opening on an alley, through which the scenery is brought to the stage. The scenery is received from the transfer men by the stagehands. It is then assembled under the direction of the carpenter who built it, with the aid of the house carpenter (the carpenter in charge of that particular stage), and in consultation with the designer and stage manager. Depending



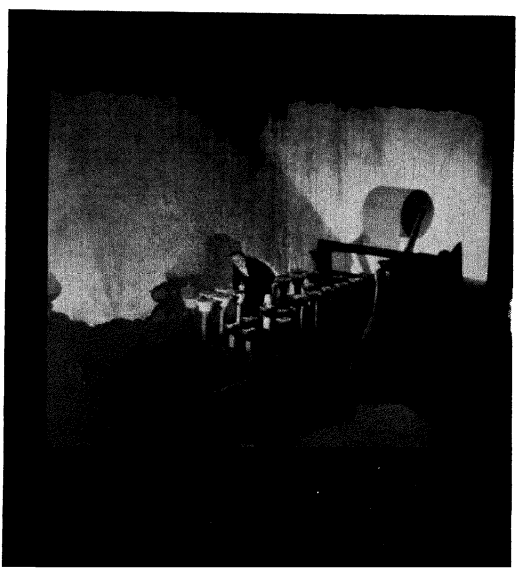
Setting by Oscar Strnad for a production of *Hamlet* in Vienna. A suggestive symbolist setting. (*Photo: Museum of Modern Art*)

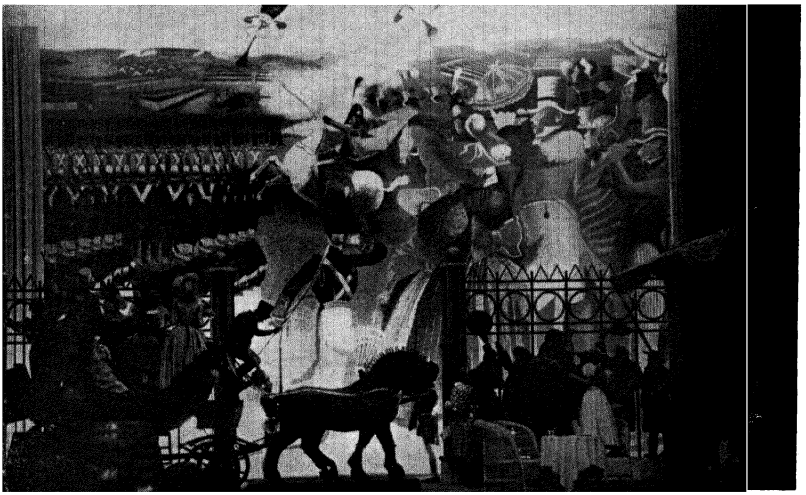


A plastic setting designed by Norman Bel Geddes for *Lazarus Laughed* (*Photo: Francis Bruguière, courtesy of Norman Bel Geddes*)



ettings by Lee Simonson for *The Adding Machine*, illustrating expressionism.

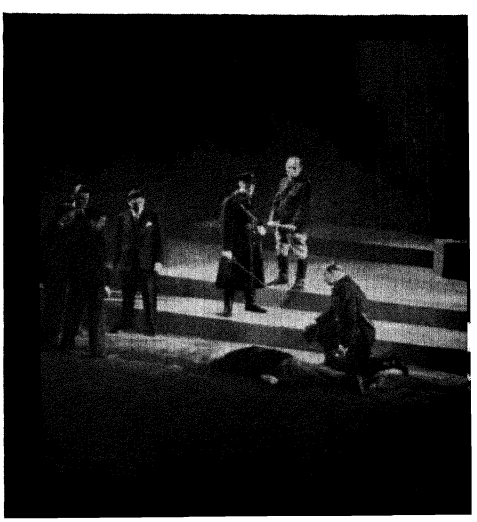




Setting by Williams for the Moscow Art Theatre production of *Pickwick Papers*. Theatricalism, with emphasis on painting.

Setting for the Meyerhold production of *The Lady of the Camellias*, illustrating a moderate use of constructivism.

tting by Sven Erik Skawonius for a Stockholm production of *The Inspector eneral*. Theatricalist design, with emphasis on painting.



Setting for the Dallas Little Theatre production of *Julius Caesar*, illustrating the use of the space stage. (*Photo: Lawrence Joseph*)

on how elaborate the show is, the work of setting up may take anything from a few hours to several days. When the settings are assembled and in working order the builder's responsibility ends, and the house carpenter takes the show in hand.

No period is more interesting for the designer than when the new scenery is being carried in. The stage has been cleared for action and swept clean of the actors' rehearsal chairs, cigarette butts, and old newspapers. Lights overhead flash on and off, turning all colors of the rainbow as the electricians test out their connections. Strange sounds come from the property section, where the prop man or the sound man is trying out his offstage noises; one may expect to be overwhelmed by sudden gusts of music, the roar of crowds or of airplanes. The stage is like a citadel on which all the forces of production are converging for an assault.

The dress-rehearsal period is a trying, as well as interesting, one for the designer, as for everyone else. The problems which arise for him at this time are all minor ones, but they are endless. Taken together, or even separately, they may make the difference between a splendid scenic production and one that simply doesn't hit the bull's-eye. They may require innumerable phone calls to the painter, upholsterer, property studio, flower store, light-fixture shop, and other places at a time when one is occupied with the lighting, and at a time, too, when everyone's nerves are on edge.

The designer must carry a pocket notebook at all times, for jotting down matters that need attention. Along with the notebook comes a flashlight, for making notes in the dark. (It is always dark in the auditorium, and on stage the lights are constantly jumping on and off.) The flashlight also helps to keep you from barking your shins on the seats of the auditorium—a customary experience with designers, especially with those who are thorough enough to roam all over the dark theatre from boxes to balconies in order to check on sight lines.

At the end of each day's rehearsals, all the notes should be sorted out and typed in duplicate or triplicate. Copies should be given to the stage carpenter, property man, or electrician, as may be necessary. The designer's assistant follows up to make sure that the corrections are carried out.

The dress-rehearsal period is the time when all the designer's apprehensions threaten to come true. It is the time when he must have confidence in his work, if he is to be of further use to the production.

It is then that the producer, the director, the author, the leading man, the leading lady, the extras, and various other friends drop in, glance at the scenery and make ominous remarks calculated to destroy the morale of any scenic artist who has not had at least twenty years of such experiences. Their usual question is: *"Is that how it's going to look?"* It is well to remember that all scenery looks strange, shabby, uninspired, and generally dismaying when it is first brought into the theatre. The best advice to a young artist under these circumstances is to put on a smile and murmur something politely noncommittal.

After an anxious half-day of studying the scenery from the time it is set up, one may begin to recapture one's artistic grip on the setting, to become re-acquainted with the designs in their new, concretized form. This includes an acquaintance with the actual stage properties, which are brought on and arranged in their predestined places by the property man under the vigilant eyes of the designer, director, and stage manager. From now on, too, the designer really learns to know the *stage manager*, who is going to be his best or worst friend for the rest of the production process. It is essential to win his co-operation, making allowances for the fact that the stage manager has been "taking it" from the time rehearsals started, that his work has been exacting, his hours long, his routine endless.

Lighting and the Scene Designer

It is during dress rehearsals, also, that the designer gets to know the stage *electrician*, who must be a man of infinite patience and steel nerves. He must be the kind of person who can, if necessary, go twenty hours at a stretch, sorting out his connections while plugging and dimming lights at orders which must seem to him, at the switchboard, to be insanely capricious. It is the electrician, probably, who does the most dangerous work known on stage—balancing himself at the top of an extension ladder forty feet in the air, sometimes, with stage lamps glaring into his eyes and burning his fingers. That balancing act always becomes necessary—in New York theatres, at least—before the lighting can be done effectively. There is usually no other way to reach the crucially important first-border lights once they are hoisted into place.

In the modern theatre the type and position of stage lighting units are worked out in advance with the greatest care by the designer or by a lighting expert employed either by the designer or the manage-

ment. (The designer is of course responsible, in all cases, for the result.) The equipment to be used is shown on the blueprints. Each unit is numbered, and the area where each projector is to strike is charted beforehand. During rehearsal the designer, his assistant, or the lighting expert sits in the auditorium calling for different lighting units by number. It is now customary to use a telephone line from the auditorium to the switchboard. This eliminates the need for yell ing oneself hoarse, and makes it possible to experiment with the lights even during cast rehearsals, since the orders can be given to the electrician in a low voice. The cast will not mind the maneuvering of the lights, provided the changes are not too violent.

Modern stage lighting is one of the most subtle factors in scenic art. Its possibilities are almost without limit, even in its present imperfect state. Although it lends itself to amazingly beautiful effects, it is equally treacherous and disappointing. Both artistically and mechanically, its nuances are such that theatre people, after some fifty years of intensive experience with it, still find it a mysterious quantity. It is impossible to do justice to the subject in the present chapter. Here we shall consider only those lighting questions which happen to be inseparable from other phases of scene design.

The designer's concern with the lighting begins, of course, with his very first ideas and sketches. He must visualize the type of lighting which is to be used, its psychological effect, its color, and its modifications, or intensifications, in the course of the play. In laying out ground plans and elevations, and in constructing models, he must be sure that he has provided means to illuminate the actors and settings. Failure to observe this rule is one of the commonest defects in the work of beginning designers. Too often a setting is designed, drafted, and executed without regard for the operation of the stage lighting equipment, with the result that the stage cannot be lit properly.

The designer should take care to provide apertures, masking pieces, and ground rows wherever necessary, in some cases incorporating these as intrinsic parts of the design. A long, closed corridor may contain an overhead rafter which masks a lighting unit. Or it may be possible to put a window or other opening into the design at some strategically located spot where a lighting unit will do the most good. Also care can be taken to anticipate the effect of colored light

and of highlight and shadow on the setting. For example, there is always a concentration of light at stage center, so that any object which is shown there must be comparatively dark in value and dull in texture; otherwise it will "jump out of" the scene.

In addition to the ordinary light projectors used for general and local lighting, there are many special lighting effects. Simplest of these are the stereopticon projections. These may be static projected images, or they may operate by means of a clockwork mechanism so that the images change or dissolve. Kliegl Brothers, the Century Lighting Company, and other manufacturers list stock effects of this sort; they supply flames, falling snow and rain, shimmering water, drifting clouds, and even a flight of angels from heaven! Other projections can be made to order. These effects cannot be used except in connection with a completely, or almost completely, dark stage. In practice, however, this difficulty can be met: the scene is slowly, or even swiftly, darkened in time for the effect—a process which does not seem to disturb the audience if well done, and which may even add to the dramatic tension.

Before and just after the first World War, some brilliant technical work in lighting was carried out in Germany. The best cloud-projector known to the theatre, the so-called *Wolkenapparat*, dates from this period. The famous light technician, Adolphe Linnebach, perfected a stereopticon capable of projecting whole backdrops in light, the image being thrown from behind onto a translucent drop. In the United States the device was successfully used by Lee Simonson for the Theatre Guild production of Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* and Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*.

For Clifford Odets' *Night Music* I used comic projections which were thrown on the front curtain during shifts. Brecht's *Mother* made use of a projection screen hung above and behind the actors. The productions of the Living Newspaper have made good use of projected images in many different ways. Not only stereopticon projections, but news flashes, moving film titles, animated cartoons, and motion picture films have all appeared as parts of stage productions.

Aside from the lighting units and special effects, the designer is responsible for the lighting fixtures, including table lamps and wall brackets, which are part of the setting itself. These can be found and purchased in department or specialty stores. Two or three New York firms provide fixtures such as old-fashioned lamps, chandeliers, ship's

lanterns, street lamps, imitation torches, or imitation candles, especially wired for stage use. Any fixtures not in stock can be turned out in a few days in accordance with the designer's drawings.

The stage setting does not really take form until it is lit. Even the most capable designer does not fully know what his settings will be like until he has lighted them. As in the other departments of production, the unexpected must always be expected. The lighting begins to play strange tricks, sometimes changing the whole appearance of the locale in an instant. In some places the scenery becomes unpleasantly flattened out, in other places it shines too much, or its color turns bilious and crude.

The most delicate readjustments are necessary: a change of "read ing" on the dimmer, a slightly different angle of throw. Often it is necessary to repaint some parts of the setting which are getting too much light. Many properties have to be "antiqued" so that they will tone in with the setting and not look, in the bright stage light, as if they had just been brought from the furniture store (as indeed they often have). Occasionally a major operation becomes necessary, such as repainting the setting completely—an order which, in the Broad way theatre, only a very sought-after designer working for an affluent producer will dare to give.

Properties

The music lover who attends a symphony may fully appreciate the total effect of the music; but he must begin to have an expert knowledge in order to tell just what the wood-winds are contributing, what is the part taken by the brasses or the percussion instruments, and in what way the theme is handled by the violins.

We have observed that the average theatregoer knows only vaguely what the scenery and costumes do for any particular show, and that even experts are sometimes baffled. We may concede that the activities of the stage lights are almost too subtle to follow from "out front"; but it may still surprise us to learn that even those very tangible and material elements, the stage properties, merge into the performance in a way that eludes attention.

When a property is correctly chosen and used, it often goes partly or completely unnoticed by the spectators. The audience, intent on the stage action, may watch someone playing a piano and be aware, incidentally, of the character of the piano. But the trained eyes of the

director or designer take note of the shape, size, color, and "period" of the instrument, its position relative to the setting and the other furniture, the moments when a character leans on the piano, touches it with apparent unconsciousness, moves away from or returns to it. Like the human actor, the piano acts continuously, if more inertly, on stage. Let the piano be badly chosen and wrongly placed, and we shall be conscious of it at every moment, just as we become painfully aware of an actor who is miscast and misdirected.

If we wish to learn how stage properties behave, let us induce the property man of some recent hit to point out for us in the storehouse some of the "props" which were on his list. *Ladies in Retirement* is an excellent choice for that purpose. Those huge logs which fit into the fireplace tell us at once of an ancient house on the Thames marshes. During the scenes when storms rage outdoors, the logs will create a roaring fire. . . . That long, paddle-like instrument is called a "slice"; it is an antique, and was originally used to turn loaves in the bake-oven. It will stand in the corner all through the play, giving an uneasy suggestion of the central crime of the play and the torments of hell-fire to come. . . . On the side-table is the statue of the Virgin with candles and a *prie-dieu* before it. When the candles burn, we shall know that Ellen Creed is begging forgiveness from her conscience.

It would be difficult, in fact, to find a drama in which the properties are more vivid. Leonora's silver box disappears into Albert's pocket. Louisa's telescope, through which she looks at the world in wide-eyed asininity, almost betrays the plot which Ellen and Leonora have so carefully worked out. Emily dumps on the floor an apron-load of driftwood, seaweed, and a nasty dead bird. The arrival of a letter frightens Albert half out of his wits, while Leonora's pink silk dressing gown shakes even Ellen's iron composure. Leonora's wig on the wig-block in the third act makes us feel "as though the missing woman had suddenly come into the room." As the curtain comes down, the two old simpletons are playing happily with their jackdaw feathers.

All those objects seem so utterly "right" on stage that one almost thinks they got there by magic. In fact they have all been very carefully selected, designed, and tested out in rehearsal—a process which is not without its tedious side.

There are a number of ways of assembling stage properties. The more expensive second-hand furniture stores are one source of sup-

ply for handsome interiors. Cheaper furniture is usually bought outright. In the case of expensive furniture, the producer arranges, when possible, to rent the furnishings on the basis of weekly payments of ten percent, to apply to purchase. In New York, properties may also be rented from stage property studios. There are a few of these, each containing several floors of storage space. In these chilly, barnlike places one may discover anything from papier-mâché "iron" stoves to park benches, Victorian wax fruit, chicken-wire boulders, muzzle-loading guns, or infants made of sawdust and sand.

Often such unusual properties as gymnasium apparatus, surgical supplies, or railroad hardware must be found. It is up to the property man and designer to scour the city in order to locate the objects required. A good "prop" man is invaluable for such forays.

Sometimes the most diligent search will not uncover the desired article. In that case the property is built to specification. At times the real thing is too cumbersome or too expensive for stage use, or requires so long a search that it is cheaper to have it built. It is manifestly not practical to put a two-ton safe on the stage when one can create a perfect imitation weighing no more than fifty pounds. Nor does it pay to decorate a stage setting with a $12,000 Sung Dynasty porcelain when a $12 imitation can be built, painted, and substituted.

A good property man knows where to lay hands on objects which no one but the playwright or designer ever heard of. Or if necessary objects cannot be found, he will, with the aid of drawings by the designer, make them for you at short notice. He will build to specification a French telephone of the year 1906, an elephant-head trophy, a medicine bottle that will shatter at the merest touch. He will bring you newspapers from Melbourne and Alaska, Swedish telegraph blanks, luggage stickers from hotels in Palm Beach and Cairo. And if they are not available, by any chance, he will have them printed up. He will put together a clock which can be dropped and broken into fragments but repaired perfectly for the next performance. He can make an imitation gas stove that will actually cook a steak. He will supply you with live monkeys, wrecked automobiles, sinks with running water, or any other object that was ever seen or never seen before.

The designer must also know all about window curtains, draperies, and upholstery. He must know fabrics and be able to visualize their appearance on the stage. (They never look the same on stage as

they do off stage.) This is also part of the property man's job, for he hangs the draperies up on the setting, and will even do upholstery in a pinch. There are some New York firms, however, which specialize in providing fabrics for the stage and in doing extra-quick jobs of upholstering. Their workmen, in a few hours, can make a modern sofa over into a perfect reproduction of a horsehair settee of the eighties.

The furniture used for stage settings must be designed, chosen, or altered with the greatest care. Good taste is important, but this is not enough in itself, since furniture that is perfect in a home may look wrong on the stage, or be wrong for the actors. There have been cases of well-known designers ordering whole suites of luxurious furniture to be thrown out and new ones substituted—an impressive gesture if it can be afforded. Major corrections of this sort are very expensive; the designer who does not make such grave blunders is the better master of his craft.

The dealer in artificial flowers is another figure seen backstage. He can supply at short notice orchids or clover blossoms, rubber fruit or preserved pine-needles, fireproofed hay by the bale or palm trees by the yard. Then there are artisans who come in to lay rugs or linoleums, ironworkers who build iron railings or circular steel staircases. On more than one occasion I have had loads of sand delivered to the theatre to be strewn over the stage floor. The designer must never confess himself unable to find the right man for the work at the right time. In territory beyond New York, his difficulties may be greater; there are fewer specialized workers and there is a narrower field for the selection of properties. Under such conditions, the scene designer must possess ingenuity and adaptability.

Practice and Theory

The word *craftsman* is a good word, one which any designer is proud to bear. In conclusion, however, it is advisable to consider the theoretical side of the designer's work. Of late, there has been a tendency in our theatre to consider that anyone who is not a craftsman in a narrow sense is something either more or less than what a designer should be. It is supposed that a scenic artist who knows consciously what he is doing is on the downward path artistically, since discussing is not creating, and the artist (it is believed) should create as effortlessly as a bird sings.

Yet, like all good craftsmen, no designer can work without theory of some sort. Those who imagine that they are getting along without theory are all too frequently guided by the rags and tatters of theories which they have picked up, decked themselves out with, and forgotten. Nothing is more appallingly bad than bad theory. On the other hand, nothing is more indispensable than good theory. Theory is not something *in contrast* to practice; it is practice itself, in condensed form. The application of a theory may become a very practical, even urgent matter.

We may ask, for instance, whether scenic art consists of making the scenery as "natural" as possible. Obviously it will make a great difference if this is not the main requirement, or not even one of the main requirements.

For most laymen it goes without saying that a setting must be naturalistic; but every professional designer knows there are limits to the use of naturalism on the stage. There are many other accredited stage techniques besides that of naturalism, as we may learn from a brief historical review of scene design in practice.

Naturalism happens to be a very new standard. For thousands of years, up to the time of the Italian Renaissance, stage illusion, especially the naturalistic type of stage illusion, scarcely existed. The Greek stage, even in its final period, consisted of a long platform backed by a permanent architectural façade. Almost all the stage effects of this theatre were distinctly *conventional.* During the Middle Ages and the time of Shakespeare, the stage was almost equally conventional, with an emphasis on the stage platform, which projected into the audience. Performances in these theatres were *ceremonials* rather than illusions of real life. The spectators did not have the present-day experience of looking into a lighted box as if seeing visions in their own minds. The stage setting was not intended to be an illusory picture. Scenery was frankly scenery.

The *picture stage* as we know it today was introduced during the Renaissance, at which time many amazing illusions of day and night lighting and of architectural perspective were achieved on the stage for the first time. Systematic illusion in scene design reached a new plane about fifty years ago, when facsimile and replica were the ideals of scenic art. With certain modifications the style of *naturalism* remains current on our stages. It can be seen especially in the case of

interiors, which, in many cases, present an exercise in interior decoration rather than in dramatic designing.

Still it is not hard to show that even in the case of naturalistic interiors some dramatic problems remain—that of *selectivity,* for instance. The designer must conjecture the past history of the room. When and how was it built? Who furnished it, in what taste and under what circumstances? How have time and fortune dealt with it since it was first put together?

Such questions become very pertinent in the case of a play like *Craig's Wife,* by George Kelly. Mrs. Craig carries her duties as a housewife to the point of fanaticism. She knows what every stick of furniture cost, and she knows its position on the rug, to the half-inch. The audience must surmise this the moment the curtain goes up. We may be sure that any stage interior which would invite Mr. Craig to smoke in the living room with his feet on the couch would do violence to the meaning of the play.

Whatever merits there may be to pure naturalism, it has become evident that it is not the final reply to all questions concerning the future of stage production. At the beginning of the present century a new theory arose, based on the idea that drama consists fundamentally of dramatic poetry and that the stage setting must first of all be poetic and lyric rather than naturalistic.

With naturalism thus challenged, the way was open for many alternative ways of staging to assert themselves. Some of the new methods which came to the fore were more drastic than others. All of them shaded off imperceptibly from moderate to pronounced changes. The most cautious tendency, that of *symbolism,* may be described as a rather attenuated and romanticized naturalism which uses a suggestive background. In the United States the school of symbolist design has been led brilliantly by Robert Edmond Jones and has continued with the work of Lee Simonson, Jo Mielziner, Donald Oenslager, Aline Bernstein, and a whole galaxy of other American designers.

This type of design dominates Broadway theory and practice at the moment. It is quite as illusory as naturalism, but is more selective and clean-cut, more positive in color, and more poetic and concentrated in mood. Like naturalism, it is distinctly pictorial.

In the section on stagecraft we made a number of comparisons between scene design and easel painting. It should not be assumed,

however, that stage settings are, and always have to be, pictorial. Among the many types of setting which have been evolved in the past quarter-century, there are a number which are not fundamentally pictorial. There is, for instance, the *plastic* setting, whose essential quality is that of *sculpture* rather than painting.

The plastic setting is not so much interested in looking like a painting or in creating pictorial reproductions of other times and places. Its first care is to mould the cubic area of the stage into sculptured planes—steps, ramps, ledges—with which the actor can work, and which the stage lights can illuminate in dramatic fashion. The creation of this type of scenery is attributed to the Swiss designer Adolphe Appia. In the United States the plastic stage has been used by a number of designers, chiefly by Norman Bel Geddes in his settings for *Arabesque, Lysistrata, Hamlet,* and *Siege.* The settings by Lee Simonson for *Tidings Brought to Mary* and *Back to Methuselah* also fit into this category. (See also Bel Geddes illustration facing p. 450.)

It should not be forgotten that sculpture is governed by many of the laws of painting. Therefore the plastic setting, like the picture setting, also obeys the principles of unity, contrast, selectivity, and style.

Still, if there are such resemblances, they should not keep us from being aware of the differences which also exist. The newer methods of staging lay a far greater emphasis on the *actor* than do the techniques of naturalism or symbolism. The actor becomes the designer's first and most important stage property. The designer comes to feel that if the necessary effect can be got by the bearing, gesture, voice, and costumes of the actor, no further scenery is necessary. The designer supplies only those suggestions and fragments of scenery which are immediately necessary or directly helpful to the actor.

Indeed there have been productions, such as Orson Welles's *Julius Caesar,* in which the emphasis on the actor was carried so far that there was apparently no scenery at all. The professional reviewers spoke of *Caesar* as a "no-scenery play." But in fact it is impossible to stage a play absolutely without scenery. The Welles's *Caesar* used large platforms, the stage walls were painted crimson, and a huge battery of stage lamps was also used to suggest the background. In such productions the actors work as if in rehearsal, on a stage which is largely an open cubic space. This scenically negative type of staging is known as production on a *space stage.* The chief scenic interest of the space stage, apart from a heightened awareness of the actor, lies in the

fluctuations of the lighting. The lighting as a rule becomes richer than in pictorial or even sculptural productions.

By the twenties the movement away from naturalism had gone so far that many leading directors and designers turned their backs on it completely, declaring that stage conventions must be brought back into the theatre. The theatre, they affirmed, must again become *theatrical.* The inspiration for the new *theatricalist* designs came from the traditional stages of the past, from oriental staging, from forms used in the circus and ballet, from folk theatres and carnivals. In these designs the psychology of the picture-frame stage was left behind, and the designers thought of the stage as a platform once more.

The term *presentational* has been used to denote that type of staging which emphasizes the stage platform and a direct relationship between the performers and the audiences. Presentational staging removes that invisible "fourth wall" which remains in picture staging even after the curtain is lifted. The actors are in direct contact with the audience psychologically, instead of behaving as if the audience were not there. The presentational method is also known as *direct* staging. The average Broadway musical show, it may be observed, is much more presentational, or direct, than the usual Broadway dramatic show.

Among European examples of the presentational were the productions by Jacques Copeau at the *Vieux-Colombier,* Paris, in which the architecture of the stage served as the stage setting of every play produced there. (There were minor changes for each play.) At the *Redoutensaal* in Vienna, Max Reinhardt erected an acting platform at one end of a Rococo ballroom. The only scenery used was a handsome Rococo screen which stood permanently in back of the platform. In Moscow Eugene Vakhtangov produced Gozzi's *Princess Turandot* with a prologue in which the members of the cast lined up before the curtain in evening dress and costumed themselves for their parts in view of the audience. In the *entr'actes* the curtain remained up, while stagehands in costume burlesqued the preceding act.

The anti-naturalistic form known as *expressionism* originated at about the same time, in Germany. Expressionist designers deliberately ignored many of the principles of replica. Instead they twisted and distorted the appearance of places and things to accord with the rather violent, convulsive mood of the expressionist plays. The idea was to show how environment looks to someone who is under stress of emotion. The film *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari,* with its creased,

angular planes, its writhing lines, was a vivid example of this technique. An American example which comes to mind was Cleon Throckmorton's designs for *The Hairy Ape,* in which the foc'sl and upper deck of a ship, and the cells of a prison, were presented in disturbing diagonal lines. Expressionism has all but vanished from the professional theatre, but it still seems to influence our little theatres.

In the same period another anti-naturalistic stage form appeared. It was known as *constructivism.* Constructivism in some ways was the antithesis of expressionism, since it was objective in tendency. It was altogether non-representational, consisting of scaffoldings whose only purpose was to afford the actors greater freedom in bodily movement. The type of acting done on these platforms and steps became almost acrobatic. In the twenties three examples of constructivism appeared in New York: *God Loves Us,* designed by Woodman Thompson; *Pinwheel,* designed by Oenslager; and *Loudspeaker,* designed by Gorelik.

In the Soviet Union, where constructivism originated, it has long since been abandoned. Its influence remains, however, in present-day Soviet design, which has returned to romantic naturalism but still makes remarkable use of levels, ramps, and platforms. Recent American instances of this type of *modified constructivism* were Gorelik's designs for *Sailors of Cattaro,* those of Howard Bay for *Marching Song,* Oenslager's *Gold Eagle Guy,* and Boris Aronson's *The Gentle People.* The plastic settings by Geddes for *Lysistrata* and *Hamlet,* described earlier, may also be considered a variation on the constructivist principle: their abstract geometric platforms, steps, and levels differ from constructivism only in being sculptural instead of skeletonic. The conception of scene design as *machine for theatre* also seems to owe its beginnings to Soviet designers. The machine-for-theatre setting is a highly technical conception, not easy to explain to the layman. Its innovators regard the setting as a kind of machine which serves the actors and the dramatist during the period of a performance. It is not only a replica of an environment, not only a stage picture holding mood and atmosphere, but an apparatus having a life of its own on stage. Yet the setting need not be regarded as a machine in a literal sense. What is machine-like is the precision with which the different scenes of a play are geared to each other and to the actors.

The machine-for-theatre idea is especially serviceable for a play of many scenes, in which case this type of setting works out as a more

functional variety of semi-permanent setting. The English writer Huntly Carter once said, of Rabinovich's model for *The Sorceress*: "The model of the scene had the appearance of a scientific toy which can be taken to pieces and put together in different forms." The extremely dynamic, functional quality of the machine-for-theatre setting may be seen in Rindin's designs for *The Optimistic Tragedy,* in which a large number of locales are all built upon a central mechanism. This mechanism is a raked turntable containing a pit, the whole turning on an eccentric pivot. With the help of additional fragments of scenery it was possible to vary this arrangement, turning it into the deck of a ship, a battlefield, a stockade, and so on. The changes were made swiftly, sometimes in view of the audience, and there were occasions when the scenery moved in the middle of a scene.

Among American designs on this order *Men in White* is an instance, while the settings of Harry Horner for *Lady in the Dark* may be considered a recent example.

In Germany before Hitler, still another method of setting arose. The *epic* method, as it came to be called, looked upon the stage performance as a sort of glorified lecture, to be accompanied by loudspeaker comments and lantern slides projected above the heads of the actors. Settings became even more *functional* than the constructivist variety, consisting, as far as possible, only of those elements actually used by the actors: for example, doors were used without walls if the doors were necessary to the action but the wall was not. Scene design became utterly non-illusory. Even lighting was used in a purely functional manner, to illuminate, not to imitate sunlight, moonlight or a parlor lamp. Directors like Erwin Piscator were not convinced that the purpose of theatre is only to tell romantic stories. They asserted that even science, politics, and statistics could be dramatized in a functional, explanatory manner suited to those topics—with analyses and editorial comment thrown in.

In a number of his productions Piscator enlarged the scope of the play by bringing in film sequences. For *Schweik* he used a background of film shots and animated cartoons, along with two treadmills which carried fragments of settings past the spectators. In his production of a play called *Competition,* a number of oil derricks were actually built on stage in the course of the play . . . With the coming of Hitlerism this new tendency, like all other progressive movements in Germany, was outlawed, and most of its adherents were forced into exile. Lately

some of the scenic practices of epic theatre have gone into the work of the Living Newspaper productions in the United States.

Considering, therefore, that so many different methods of work are open to the designer, it is evident that he cannot avoid working in a particular style or combination of styles—whether he is aware of it or not. Unless he is a super-genius who creates a perfectly new style every time he sets his pencil to paper! Failing that amount of genius, even the very gifted designer must make up his mind about the style he uses for any show.

There is little danger that scene designers will run amok. The tendency at this time is to suppose that a designer is someone who understands his own specialty and nothing else, and to keep him within bounds. This is so despite the fact that in the insurgent movement that created the modern American theatre about twenty-five years ago, scenic artists like Joseph Urban, Robert Edmond Jones, Norman Bel Geddes, and Lee Simonson were leading figures. Care should be taken lest this "control" of the designer end in checking the designer's imagination. A vigorous approach to style is one of the tokens of a vital theatre.

It is natural for the designer to feel just a little disinherited as the opening night nears. Just as the actors and the director are getting into high gear, preparing to leave the ground and to soar into the upper reaches of imagination—is the very time when he comes to the end of his work. He is no longer wanted around the premises. No one will have any patience with the last-minute improvements which he fondly believes are still necessary. The stage settings have passed out of his hands and have become the asset—or liability—of the production as a whole. The moment has come when the designer must separate himself from his offspring and let it make its own way in the world.

LIGHTING THE PLAY

A. Feder

WHEN I discuss modern man-made light as a means of illumination for the theatre, I cannot escape a feeling of humility at the thought of our poor efforts to imitate the everyday wonders of Nature herself and our puny attempts to adapt them to the theatre. Never in my life did this truth make me feel so humble as on one morning at daybreak, in Chicago. I had just finished the job of lighting the Gertrude Stein opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts,* in which we had tried to achieve an ethereal effect through the skillful use of light on a cellophane setting. I was in the New York 'plane waiting to take-off. I was completely exhausted after hours of nerve-wracking strain in the theatre and many sleepless nights, when the ship took off. We rose into a luminous mist, so white and so brilliant that, for a few minutes, the interior of the cabin was almost unbearably bright; then a second later we flew above the clouds into the oncoming dawn. All this happened so fast that it paralyzed my senses with its sheer beauty. To see the elements surpass with such ease any human effort makes one realize how inadequate are the tools of man.

I am constantly being asked, "What kind of spotlight do you need to give afternoon sunlight?" and my only answer can be, "Where and when do you need this sunlight?" To answer this in any other way it would be necessary to explain that for the whole approach to this subject one must have, first, a credo, then an understanding of the tools, and, finally, the ability to apply them.

My credo is that lighting is the means by which we see all that this world contains; and although science has discovered new variations

in the tools of light, it is the art of lighting itself that creates new emotional values among people.

Lighting Techniques and Styles

At the present time there are in the professional theatre about 24 to 30 productions at the height of any season, classical plays, mystery dramas, serious plays with great emotional content, comedies, and musical shows. (Of course, we also have operas and ballets, which also require lighting.) A curious fact about these diverse types of entertainment is that though they all use the same basic equipment no one associates the lighting of one type of show with the other. The reader may well ask wherein lies the difference and why, because is it not true that in the drama one runs the whole gamut of emotion? The difference lies simply in the conventions of the various styles of direction into which the theatre is divided.

In its uses, stage lighting has gone through the same metamorphosis as any of the other arts, such as painting, where the masters of the day provided the patterns of future directions. In the art of lighting, the technique has changed gradually from its original methods to those applied at present. New radical systems usually turn out to be stunts. The only concrete approach, as in any other art form, is the painstaking application of one's own style to the requirements of the particular style of production.

The different styles of drama require different approaches which may be designated as "lighting techniques." What are these techniques? First, there is the technique for the *classical drama*, for the plays of Aeschylus, Shakespeare, and other masters. In producing them, the décor has become much simpler. Although human nature has not basically changed through the years, customs and habits have changed. The written word sounds and says the same, yet the pictorial sense of those periods has no great meaning for us, and this has restricted the scenic designer to the use of form and color. In applying light to that form, time and space can be forgotten. Instead, light can be used arbitrarily to heighten the interpretation of the play as the director wishes it.

An extreme example of changed locale appeared in the production of *Macbeth*, as directed by Orson Welles. We knew that Shakespeare set *Macbeth* in medieval Scotland, but in the Negro production the play was placed in Haiti in the period of Jean Christophe.

As to décor, Nat Karson, the designer, set the play in a castle laid in a jungle, actually using only one set for the entire play. The limitations of a one-set play and the small size of our stage made it difficult to create the illusion of distance and perspective. And this production offered other difficulties; the physical structure of the castle was real enough, but the backdrop was a stylized design of huge tropical leaves, and the director required that at times this setting should take on all the mysticism and fantasy of Negro spiritualism. The most important step was the clarifying of the real and the mystical scenes, and their order of appearance.

In one scene, for example, as Macbeth was seen coming down the steps of the castle, the stage was realistically dimming into a deep twilight. The problem to solve was how to bring in a completely incongruous quality of lighting within the general dimming of the stage into nightfall. The device decided upon was very simple. All the lighting that covered the entire acting area was deliberately vibrated, which allowed a beam of light inconspicuously to dim in and cover Macbeth, and so at the end of that scene the same device was used to take it off. Another example occurred at the beginning of the second act, which is the plotting scene between Macbeth and the murderers. Here the stage lighting was realistically dimmed down, but allowed one shaft of light to remain on, in the stage center, which in turn became the frame for the murder of Banquo. In the scene after this episode, the character Hecate started to drag the body of Banquo across the stage, where a beam of light about four feet behind the proscenium arch flowed in while the center shaft flowed out. This was deliberately stylized. But at the completion of this interlude, all the lights were suddenly thrown on, revealing a realistic moonlight-drenched scene, with couples dancing as at a ball. It will be seen, then, that because the director and the designer deviated from the original script, it was necessary to light this classic in a manner that would create a balance of fantasy and realism in light.

A second technique involves *comedy*. In spite of the various attempts in scenic technique to change the physical form of realistic interiors, most productions of comedy still use facsimile interior, decorated sets with the fourth wall removed. When the curtain goes up in a typical theatre, this type of set presents a definite problem from the point of view of light. The actor moving within this space seems only two-dimensional, and to light him properly calls for the creation of visual

light sources, so that the devices of lights behind the proscenium and archways framed for side lighting can be used. The acceleration of emotions in most comedies has a definite effect on one's visual senses as well,—and there lies the most important function of light in comedy.

At the sacrifice of the subtle shadings that one might be able to achieve in lighting a set, there is a certain point below which the intensity of lighting should not drop for comedy. I went to see *You Can't Take It With You* but arrived late at the theatre. When I entered, the curtain was already up and the burst of light that greeted me actually made me blink because of its brilliance. Yet watching that show for nearly two hours, I found this intensity of the lighting definitely in keeping with the pace of the comedy.

In modern *serious drama*, the situation is about the same as in comedy. Playwrights usually set their serious plays in very realistic surroundings. Here great strides in lighting have been made. As lighting equipment was being developed, the means became more flexible and duplicating Nature became the order of the day. It became possible to indicate subtle variations of the time of day, the color tints of the seasons of the year, and the moods required by the situations. For example, in the second act of Nazimova's revival of Ibsen's *Ghosts*, in the scene between Oswald and his mother, it has stopped raining and twilight is fast approaching. Oswald tells his mother that he has inherited an incurable disease, and she is stunned by this news. As the conversation is reaching its maximum intensity the room becomes a nondescript void in dimness, and the two figures become counterpoints against the endless vista of the fjords of the Stewart Chaney design.

Of all the styles in lighting, the musical is the one form that has been the most abused. A *musical comedy* is usually a combination of all forms, the plot often is derived from an original drama and put to music and lyrics to fit personalities from all the crafts of the theatre —dancers, singers, comedians, movie stars, and so on. To light a heterogeneous arrangement of this sort requires an understanding of *all* styles of lighting; the basis of lighting a musical show lies in its contrasts. In the evolution of musical lighting, certain conventions which came from the early vaudeville theatre still persist. When each set required a concentration of light on one performer, the entire stage was blackened out, leaving only a "follow-spot" on the performer, thus focusing all eyes on him. Today the most obvious use of the

follow-spot is still the basis of musical lighting. All the performers insist on their own follow-spots regardless of other attempts to light the setting.

A test of the skill of the worker in light is the problem of describing visually the changes of time, space, and reality in the musical form. In the recent production of Al Jolson's *Hold On To Your Hats*, one of the settings was a large reception room of a broadcasting station. There were huge windows in the back walls overlooking the city of New York. The singers were covered by a follow-spot, and the inside of the set dimmed down, silhouetting the windows against the skyline. They finished the lyrics and went into a dance; then, with the stage slowly dimming up to degrees of color, dancing couples appeared, until the entire stage was filled with dancers who presented a dream sequence to the song. At the height of the dance there came a break in the music, and the principals picked up the song again. The lights began to dim as the couples all drifted off, with the principals leaving on the final bars of the song. There was a moment's lull, and as the comedian walked on the stage the cue for the realistic lighting of the whole set came up to its full intensity. This is a typical musical comedy treatment, and the lighting technique, strangely enough, bears similarity to the classical drama, especially in its arbitrary changes of styles. The chief difference is the musical's complete freedom not only from time and space, but from reason.

In addition to these typical examples, two very important additions to lighting technique took place during the last decade. The first one was the "living newspaper." This form of theatre was developed by the WPA Federal Theatre, and its uniqueness lay in the treatment of news or documentary matter in visual form. As this dramatic form took shape, it became necessary to dramatize the facts and figures, using dialog through loudspeakers, alternated with light projections, in presenting events of importance. At first the simple musical comedy sketch technique was employed; then impressionistic lighting followed it. Later a definite pattern was reached, as in the production of *Injunction Granted*, which was based on the organizing problems of labor unions. The décors in this play were a permanent unit set on a revolving table, with a permanent cyclorama as a backdrop. A pencil beam of light appeared lighting a face. It spoke and disappeared. This was repeated twenty times in quick succession; then the voice of the loud-

speaker boomed out, "Strikes are outlawed," and the cyclorama became an enormous newspaper bearing the headline, "Injunction Granted."

All over the country during the life of the Federal Theatre, variations of this technique were being slowly evolved. This type of production reached the epitome of its style in *Power*. After building up the case against public utilities, the play came to a climax when Congress authorized the formation of the Tennessee Valley Authority. The producers, in order to symbolize the conclusion of the play, projected a slide with the three letters TVA which were telescoped to "infinity" on several layers of gauze curtains on the stage. Gradually all the actors came on the stage between the gauze curtains, lighted from the sides. This was the cue for the entire stage to become a huge motion picture screen for a vista of Muscle Shoals pouring over its spillways, with the letters TVA superimposed. Truly something new in dramatic presentation was here developed. For the first time in the theatre new tools were borrowed from other fields, in both direction and light; the commentators from radio, the motion picture machine from the films, and the terse commentaries from the *daily newspaper*. So the new "workers in light" had to adapt musical comedy and realistic lighting to new fields.

The other new technique was the use of light *in the third dimension*. This appeared in the Welles-Houseman production of *Doctor Faustus*. The basic problem to solve in the Marlowe *Faustus* was, as in the case of producing Shakespeare, tying together time and space in the continuity of the script. Orson Welles, who staged it, wanted people to appear and disappear, out of a black void. It was decided to work within a complete black shell with the Elizabethan type of apron projecting out into the theatre proper. To complete the premise of blackness, the floor was also painted black. Furthermore, the performance was run continuously, with no intermissions, putting the entire burden of changes in tempo and space into the realm of the worker in light. A very curious phenomenon appeared in this production. In the past, light had been the tool to illuminate what was to be seen; now light itself was to take the place of the illuminant, with its own patterns becoming the media in space. By carefully worked out planning with the director, the stage took on new freedom, because by its very darkness one could light up a scene at the back of the stage,

and with no intervening landmarks, the entire space in the foreground disappeared.[1]

The above is aptly summed up in Brooks Atkinson's review in The New York Times of January 31, 1937:

> Believing that the Elizabethan stage was a platform for acting, an apron stage has been boldly thrust into the faces of the audience and the settings reduced to a sombre background of hangings. Modern stagecraft is represented in the wizardry of lighting; the actors are isolated in eerie columns of light that are particularly well suited to the diabolical theme of *Doctor Faustus.* On the Elizabethan stage the lighting was supplied from heaven; the plays were for the most part played in the afternoon under the open sky. Beguiling as that must have been for pastorals and gentle poetics, electric lighting is more dramatic because it can be controlled. The modern switchboard is so incredibly ingenious that stage lighting has become an art in its own right. The pools and shafts of light and the crepuscular effects communicate the unearthly atmosphere of *Doctor Faustus* without diminishing the primary importance of the acting. And when the cupbearers of Beelzebub climb out of hell, the furnace flares of purgatory flood up through a trap door in an awful blaze of light, incidentally giving the actors a sinister majesty. On an unadorned stage, the virtuoso lighting gives the production the benefit of one modern invention that is most valuable to the theatre.

The Development of Lighting and Lighting Tools

For the understanding of the "tools," or means of lighting it will be unnecessary to go into the history of lighting before the advent of electricity. One can begin with modern electric lighting as an art. This is much too vast a subject to cover in one chapter; it is like trying to state the essence of a play in one sentence. For more detailed discussion of the theatre lighting art prior to 1930, therefore, the student may be referred to four books, each a radically different treatment of the subject. Taken in the following sequence, these studies comprise a progressive history of developments.

The first is the late Louis Hartmann's *Theatre Lighting*, a book written about a workman's experience in Belasco's theatre which gives

[1] This is the space stage that has been used effectively in a number of productions.

the history of development in equipment from the gaslight era to 1930. Belasco was an exacting producer and went to any length to achieve perfection in realistic details. He had a lighting workshop installed in his theatre, so that Hartmann, who was lighting director for twenty-five years, was able to make many interesting experiments.

The *baby spotlight* was a product of Belasco's laboratory. This new spotlight's distinct advantage was in the smallness of its size. Hartmann also states his premise of procedure in lighting the average show, with illustrations of fairly adequate pieces of equipment, and ends the book by minimizing most of his researches, because he felt that they were all extra-curricular additions and did not basically affect the art of lighting.

The next book is Harold C. Ridge's *Stage Lighting*. It covers the art theatre in England, with descriptions of equipment available in British and German theatres, and includes limited chapters on color and lighting control. It is interesting to note that their lighting equipment does about the same job as ours. But there are a few exceptions: For instance, their method of lighting a cyclorama is much better calculated than ours. The type of equipment they use for that purpose was German in origin. It has a special lens which projects *horizontal bands of light that follow the contour of the backdrop.* Besides brief explanations concerning switchboard control and the mixing of color, Mr. Ridge devotes a large portion of his book to a charming little art theatre where a great number of experimental plays were given. In the handling of the various techniques of light, one notices that use is made of the same spotlight equipment as ours to project a beam The same type of switchboard control is employed, and many arbitrary rules prevail in lighting productions—for instance, *front balcony lighting* and *beam spots* from the "house" or auditorium.

The third book, *Stage Lighting* by Theodore Fuchs, is a very comprehensive work giving complete information on equipment, experiments in light, shade, and color, as well as descriptions of productions by well-known producers. Fuchs's volume can be used as a handbook for beginners, because the author has done his research well. He has painstakingly combed all the laboratories for experiments concerning light and shade on sculptured objects, and discusses basic electrical requirements for the understanding of the equipment. He double-checks various color theories and their usage in light; he illustrates all the present lighting equipment procurable from our lighting com-

panies, and devotes the last half of the book to ways and means of manufacturing equipment yourself.

Finally, one may refer to *The Torch of Civilization* by Matthew Lukiesch, research director of the General Electric Company. His book provides not only a résumé of the developments of light sources since the beginning of man-made light, but a key to the future of the tools of lighting.

The first thing I discovered at the beginning of my work was the cumbersomeness of available equipment, and I realized that the future of the flexibility in lighting lay in discovering more compact tools. Yet, for a period no real basic changes occurred. Although the equipment took on fancier trimmings, and the design of the borderlights and spotlights took on cleaner lines, basically the lenses and bulbs were the same. However, a revolution was on its way.

First, with the idea borrowed from Germany, the lighting companies designed a *tubular bulb* which burned with its base up. It has the peculiar characteristic of having its filament in the opposite end of the tube, leaving a large empty space of glass between the socket and the filament, to absorb the heat. This bulb made possible a new tool in lighting. We may all remember the old stereoptican machine which projected slides on a white screen. The principle of that instrument appeared in the way the light passed through a series of lenses which converged their beam at the slide and then objectified that through an additional lens at the other end. This new lighting tool used the same principle. It objectified its light source by means of a special reflector, eliptiloid in shape, and, owing to the construction of the new bulb, required only 1/3 of the light source to be within the curvature of the reflector. The advantage lay in the fact that the beam could be projected in any shape and any direction. Unfortunately, up to now its efficacy has been limited because of the delicacy of its precision adjustment, and its uses have been confined to front light, either from the balcony or from ceiling beams. Furthermore, the character of the light is sharp and very hard.

Then, in Hollywood, the *Fresnel lens* was exploited, helping to supplant the archaic five-foot projectors, with more compact 14-inch Fresnel "incies" (incandescent light sources). The important feature of the Fresnel lens was that by means of a scientific design in curves on a thinner piece of glass, more actual light was emitted from the same

light sources. Naturally, this was of tremendous advantage when the intensity of a 1000-watt spot could be achieved with a piece of equipment half its size and half its wattage; and it was a definite step forward in the flexibility of lighting.

The next important single development, which is hardly being touched in the theatre, was the advent of the *spotlight bulb*. For years attempts had been made commercially to coat the upper half of the inside of a bulb with silver paint and project its beam in one direction. It was not until 1932 that Clarence Birdseye (the frozen food man) was successful in perfecting this process. Subsequently, the major lighting companies, realizing the commercial potentialities, brought out an entire line of spotlight bulbs. These bulbs open up a new horizon for the worker in light in the theatre. The chief advantage of these bulbs is their small size, as one can achieve more flexibility of light sources in the condensed space usually allowed for lighting equipment in most productions. As these lamps began to be used, the bulb companies made variations from intense beam spots to flood reflector bulbs. All of these are valuable for use in lighting.

It is the task of this chapter to view also the future possibility of new lighting tools—for example, the new *fluorescent tube*. A few years ago Claude Neon brought out a gaseous tube with a red neon gas which is familiar in all electric signs. Subsequent gases like argon and mercury were developed and also used. Then, out of the laboratories came a new discovery of chemical salts that could be applied to the insides of gaseous tubes. In the combination, the lighting field acquired a new tool, namely, a brilliant, luminous light source which has no wire filament and emits a high color penetration light. Its physical properties even in its present weak intensities are able to give us a color penetration on materials which reflect their own intensified color. This can readily be seen in any of the shop windows where the fluorescent tube is installed in place of the ordinary type of lighting. The drawback for use in the theatre is the difficulty of control. At the present time the only way of lighting a fluorescent tube is by means of a *shocking coil* which excites the gas between two electric poles within the tube in order to ignite it. This process makes this kind of lighting inflexible, and confines its uses at present to general illumination in any place except the theatre, where absolute flexible control is necessary.

My most important interest in *fluorescent* is what happens to color, because color in the theatre has not begun to touch on the unlimited

numbers of tint variations of light and shade that are possible. In the study of painting, red, yellow, and blue are the three basic colors. *In light the three basic colors are red, blue, and green,* which are also spectrum colors. The most important point of all is that our eyes are attuned to the three colors, red, blue, and green,—therefore, giving us a perfect sense of balance in our visual judgment of color in light. The fact to remember in lighting is that except for fluorescent light, all our light sources have tungsten for their filaments. We know that the weaker the light sources, the more yellow the light; the more intense the light sources, the whiter the light. We all forget that any material we use as light filters would naturally be partial to the red side of the spectrum owing to the metal in the filament.

It is important to understand the principle underlying the use of *gelatin.* Gelatin is poured in very thin sheets, mixed with a color dye, and when a piece of this is put in front of a light source, it acts as a filter cutting out all other spectrum colors except its own value. Originally, only primary colors of the most obvious sort were made and the use of gelatin is only a matter of thirty years. Prior to gelatin, colored water and colored glass were used. In the course of time various workers in light, like painters, began demanding shades and tints which were secondary and tertiary values of the original primaries. Now there are 75 different color gelatins.

As in light-source development, forces outside the theatre were at work which advanced the use of color in the theatre. One was the development of cellophane, whose texture permits more transmission of light than does gelatin and enables color to take on better spectrum values. Unfortunately, cellophane is not fireproof and the colors are limited. Yet in producing the Gertrude Stein opera, I used cellophane colors to light cellophane scenery and the resulting iridescence was definitely responsible for the production's visual quality.

The best technique we have today that can approach what fluorescent does is a method employed called *Whiting Technique.* The development of the technicolor film opened up a new process in the filtering of color, and this type of filter is one of its by-products. The difference in its technique is that the old type stock-color gelatin changes the color of materials. This new gelatin acts more as a filter, because it intensifies existing colors in the materials. This is a valuable contribution to lighting because it brings out true color vibrations in materials without a deliberate color change of the whole ensemble. When it was first

used in the Federal Theatre in the production of *Pinocchio*, the filter that was partial to red was used with an ordinary follow spotlight on the marionette; the marionette took on a fourth-dimensional quality of a body in space, unlike anything I had ever seen.

There is another color filter to be found in the *Strobile paint technique*. It is a filter which, when used in combination with surfaces painted with Strobile paint, creates a phosphorescent luminosity and is entirely dependent on powerful light intensities. This filter is not used widely in the theatre up to this time because it cuts out too much light.

Lighting Control

In summing up our tools of light in the theatre, we come to the most important problem of all—namely, *control*. Electricity, as we all know, is a harnessed force. Its magic lies at a point in its dynamos where it turns from waterfall power to electrical energy, but once that has taken place it is earthbound by wires and conduits, and it is then piped like water drawn in all around us.

The control of light has the same characteristic as the control of a piano. The layout of the piano keyboard is so arranged that it becomes a servant to the user. The problem of controlling light in the theatre is basically the same. One has to lay out the board control in such a fashion that, with a minimum of movement, the lighting equipment will give the user all the tonalities in light that a piano does in music. (And here the struggle for progress still persists in the commercial theatre.)

Dimming of light was first used in the old gas-lit days by increasing or reducing the flow of gas. With the advent of electricity the dimmer plate was evolved. At first it was a very crude coil device, which acted as a channel for detouring the current of the bulb when dimming it. The next step was in developing maximum and minimum dimming.

The advent of the motion picture theatre proved a great boon to *switchboard control* in lighting. From the early 1920's to the early 1930's the overscaled motion picture theatre stages, with all the fancy, colored light trimmings in the theatre proper, created a demand for some organized method of board control. Although there was no great basic change in the structure of the dimmer apparatus itself, methods of banking the dimmers together in groups with auxiliary master dimming handles were devised. But so large was the actual dimension

of these switchboards that the problem of men to handle their controls caused a further step to be taken—namely, *pre-set control.* A device was designed electrically by means of which each circuit switch has three or four little sub-switches. When an entire switchboard through its circuit switches had all been put on the same individual button control, by pressing that button's general master the entire stage could be lit. This method at first left out one very important problem—namely, the pre-setting of dimmers themselves. The first successful installation of the pre-setting of the switch control and dimmer control was in Radio City Music Hall. The pre-set dimmer control technique was made possible by an entirely different principle of apparatus. The radio industry and its development of various types of tubes opened up the avenue in developing a tube which acted as a transforming device in the construction of a new type of dimmer. This changed the entire panel control to a fraction of its former size; for example, the dimmer board of The Roxy Theatre is 15 feet long by 7 feet high, whereas the entire control of the Radio City Music Hall, which is a much larger stage, is less than 6 feet long, with all the bulk of the apparatus put in some other part of the stage, and all managed by remote control. One immediately realizes the importance of this development to facileness in light. It is now possible through this type of device for entire groups of lights to be controlled by the simple manipulation of a tiny rheostat switch, the size of a radio dial.

In the field of control of lighting for the theatre, the future for resourceful tools is tremendous. What we know of light itself is still in its embryonic stages, but what has been accomplished, despite its crudities, has shown a tremendous stride since the advent of electricity. The future looks bright.

Lighting Procedure and Layout

Although to the rest of the country the Broadway theatre is the standard for theatrical productions, because New York is the haven for leading actors, directors, playwrights, composers, and designers, it is not true that Broadway has the best theatrical conditions for the production of plays. The high price and limited areas of real estate have necessitated very cramped stages, making lighting a difficult problem. Therefore, it may be helpful to describe the procedure for production under these conditions, which are not, however, confined to Broadway. In addition, it may be helpful to illustrate the general ap-

proach to lighting a series of plays in a single theatre, where the lighting has to accommodate itself to a great variety of demands without much change. A practical knowledge of lighting equipment and technique should enable us to light plays in different theatres and under different circumstances. Simplifications of method, when these are necessary, are chiefly a matter of experiment and ingenuity. I shall illustrate lighting practice by means of the lighting of *Ghosts* for the Nazimova production in New York, and of a layout for the Ann Arbor Festival:

(1) *Lighting Ibsen's "Ghosts."* As a painter, having blocked out his composition, finds the key to his mood, so the "worker in light," having laid out his equipment, must solve the key to the scenes. In *Ghosts*, the entire first act is played on a rainy morning; the second act takes place during the end of the same day, dimming into evening; and the third act is the continuation of that night to dawn.

First Act

It is obvious that, considering the sombreness of the atmosphere, one would choose color tints of light blue and gray, but one must remember that the tragedy of this piece does not reach its height until the middle of the second act. In the first act, Mrs. Alving's happiness is quite apparent in the joy of having her son home with her; so, in spite of the rain, the light on the actors must have a definite warmth of color to give them a visual vitality. In the mechanical execution of the above, it was important to have two qualities of light over the entire acting area: a warm and a cold, which, hung from the front, from the first pipe, and from the side, made it easy to blend the two values at will. The illusion of the fjords in the morning, seen through the windows, upstage left, was created by using color values of the same gray-blue as the inside of the set; the perspective was achieved by the projectors' upstage left shooting shafts of light through the transparent curtains of the conservatory, which acted as a curtain of mist and softened the backdrop.

Second Act

In the second act, as stated in the beginning of the chapter, I used a very simple device to create an illusion in the scene between Mrs. Alving and Oswald. Our eyes are tuned to light intensity as well as

color; as the intensity diminishes, there is a natural dilation of the pupils to admit more light. In order to utilize this principle, the best plan is to resort to side-lighting, because it gives the actors a three-dimensional quality; regardless of how much one dims the lamps, the actors will stand out. This was the principle of the big dimdown in the second act. The scene was lit in a high key, with the windows downstage right about the same value as the large bay window up left. From the audience's point of view, the illusion of on-coming darkness was accomplished by reducing the overhead spotlights, and by the lighting outside the fjords dimming into twilight. That left the window downstage right, the predominating source of light in the room, with the vertical tormentor lights giving form to the actors. This shifted the light interest, and concentrated the illusion on the two figures sitting on the couch.

At that moment Oswald confessed to his mother the discovery he had made about himself, that he was doomed to feeble-mindedness. That speech was the cue for the beginning of the dim down, giving to the audience the illusion of two vague forms shrouded in a sea of mist. Then Mrs. Alving got up, walked toward the door (stage left), where the glow from the chandelier was barely visible on her, and went back (upstage left) to the table with a lamp on it. She stood there for a moment, and put on the light. Instantaneously the hook-up[2] of lights from the pipe above and from the balcony front washed in, and the entire scene changed in character, lifting the very action of the piece. She returned to the couch, and put on another lamp there, which automatically switched on that hook-up, and the scene ended with the fire glowing on the curtains in the back.

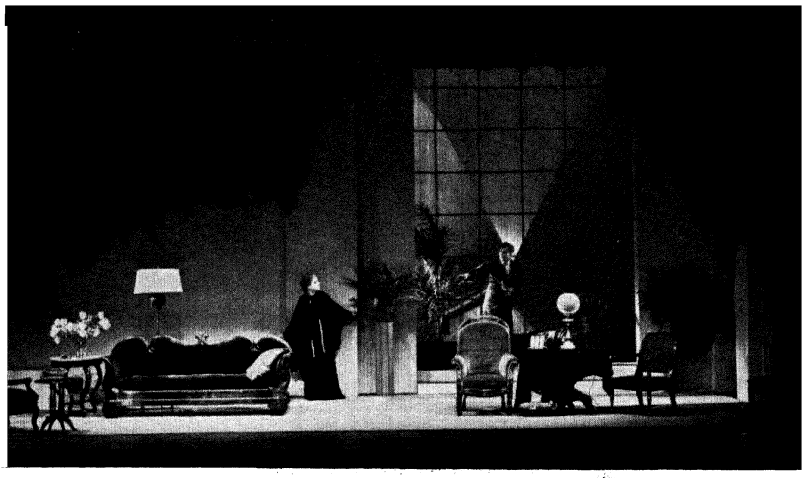
Third Act

The curtain went up with the lighting the same as we left it at the end of the second act, except that the curtains over the French doors were drawn. All the actors were seated around the table, front stage left, and as the scene progressed, Mrs. Alving and Oswald moved to the couch on stage right, while the other characters made their exits.

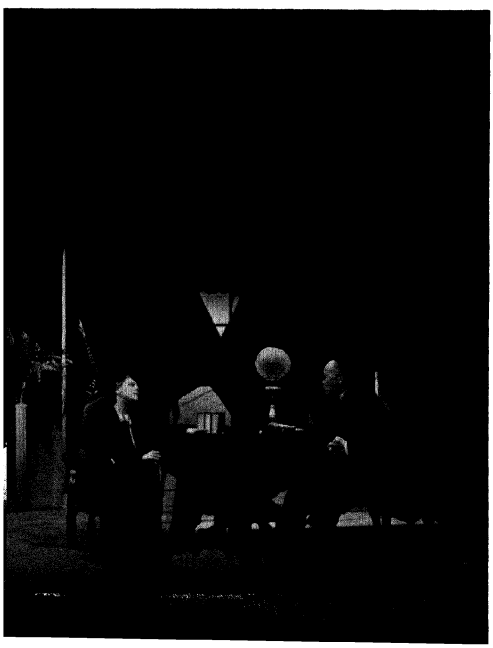
[2] A hook-up is a simplification for board control of a group of lights, regardless of their location, all directed toward a particular area that we wish to control by means of a master dimmer. For example: as in the case of the above, there were two spotlights on the first pipe, there was one lamp on the balcony front, and one section of foots nearest that part of the stage, all hooked into the little prop lamp, making the board control foolproof.

Macbeth, Act II opening: greeting of king. Photo emphasizes the highlight from stage-left across the entire scene, etching the actors in space, the rest of the scene in semi-darkness. Photo does not show reflection of intense light on the backdrop.

Macbeth, Act II end: masquerade scene. Note that more of the background has been made luminous.

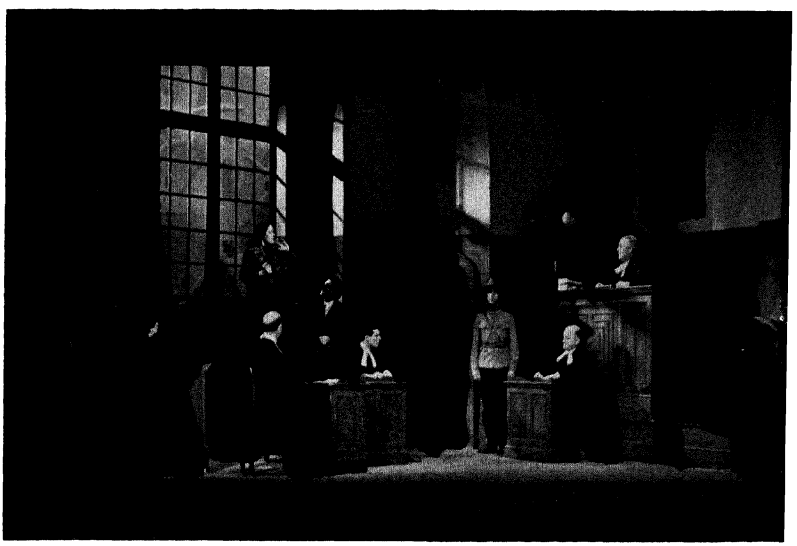


Ghosts, Act III: sunrise scene. See pp. 368, 369. (*Photo: Vandamm Studio*)

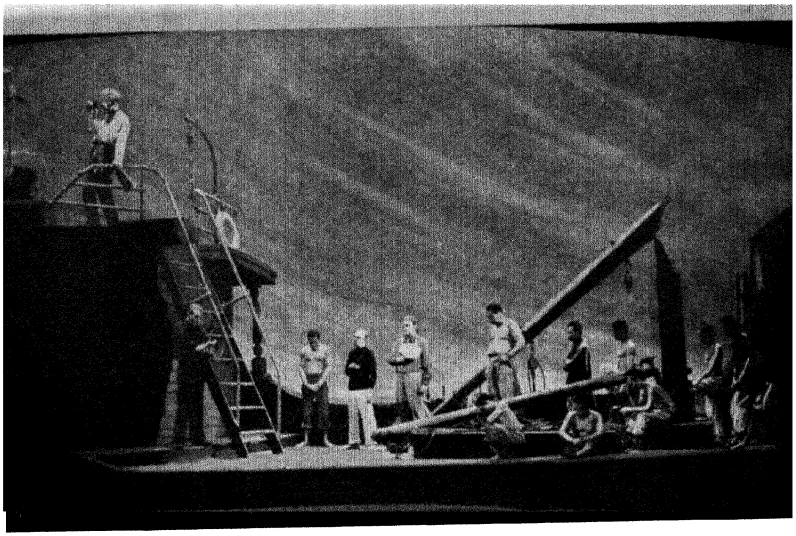


Ghosts, Act II: twilight scene. See pp. 367, 368. (*Photo: Vandamm Studio*)

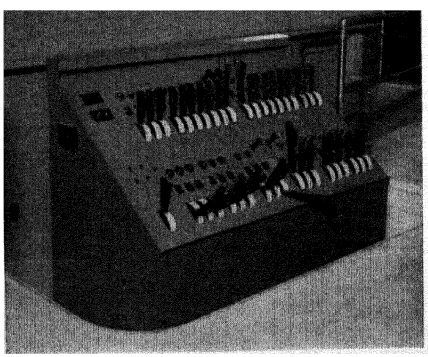
Johnny Belinda, Act I: opening scene. Illustration of lighting for a comedy. Note the back-lighting brilliancy. This is achieved by a bank of powerful spotlight bulbs hung upstage above the tree, plus specially placed tormentor lamps in the boxes of the theatre. (*Photo: Vandamm Studio*)

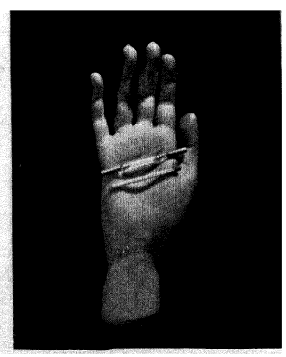


Johnny Belinda, Act III: last scene. Illustration of lighting for melodrama. The scene is lit in a sombre key except for an intense wash of light coming through the window, streaking across the stage from right to left. (*Photo: Vandamm Studio*)



Passenger to Bali, Act III: after the hurricane. Illustration of lighting for a tragedy. Note the use of fog created by smoking the atmosphere and projecting a light pattern on the background. (*Photo: Vandamm Studio*)





Left: Control board located in orchestra pit and concealed by a hood; an example of an installation which enables the electrician to see the entire stage. Kirby Memorial Theatre, Amherst College. Designed by Stanley McCandless. *Right:* A new vapor lamp, the size of a match, equivalent to a 5,000-watt spotlight. It throws sufficient light for a person at a distance of 500 feet from the lamp to read an ordinary newspaper.

Here was the most difficult part of the lighting, because the action of the play calls for a sunrise and the big window upstage left has to become visible and bring the morning grayness into the room. To accomplish this, the hookup around the table lamp had to be dimmed, so as to reduce the intensity of that section of the stage and to let the window light come in. This is what I call counterpoint dimming, and it must be so timed as to be imperceptible to the audience. The second this was done, the entire room changed character and the gray light of the bay window predominated the stage, making the hook-up around the couch look dim by comparison.

In the action that followed, Mrs. Alving went back to the lamp, stage left, put that out, and then went to the couch and turned out that lamp. The entire stage was left in a half-light shadowy feeling of darkness, and one heard Oswald's voice asking for the sun. Mrs. Alving rushed to the windows, and pulled open the curtains. The projectors outside the windows, which had been dimming in with the sun projector upstage right, pierced across the couch, etching the side of Oswald's face with all its distortions, and down came the curtain.

The Layout

In the Nazimova production, the set was of the typical box type as sketched below. We hung 22 spotlights with two sections of X-rays on the first pipe. On the front balcony we hung two groups of spotlights of three each. Behind the false portals, on either side of the stage, we stood a vertical pipe, with four lamps on each. To light the two pieces of scenery behind the bay window that simulated the fjords of Norway, we used two sections of X-rays, one above each fjord, and a row of X-rays behind that to light the background. In front of the backdrop, we placed a smaller type of X-ray on the floor to give a pit light effect. The above equipment is what I would consider necessary as a general lighting for this type of production.

In addition to this, we also used the following equipment: There were two types of lighting for the double set of windows downstage right; a powerful projector that had been frosted to give a nondescript north light glow across the room, and a special lamp focused directly across the room to represent the intense glow of the morning sun, which shafted across the couch for the last moment of the play. On downstage left, in back of the double doors leading into the dining-room, a baby spot was placed on a high stand, giving the illusion of a glow coming from the chandelier. Upstage left, behind the windows,

there was a vertical pipe with two powerful projectors shafting diagonally into the room. The purpose of these two lights was to give the feeling of a misty day, like light coming from an open place in the heavens, casting an eerie glow across the room. On the right side of that window, there was another projector about seven feet off the floor to tie in the lamp on stage right for the morning sunlight. The footlights were in three sections. Because the entire set was in shades of gray, the only device to change the character of the room was by means of using different colors in the "foots."

Two other subtle lighting effects were the illusions of the fire and the river. For the fire, there were two units: one, an oval floor which was masked to glow the back of the bay window; the other, a fire effect machine, which glowed into the room itself and hit the stage wall right. Both of these worked in conjunction with each other. The water effect was made by stretching a piece of cellophane between the two fjords and lighting it from behind with a small strip light. The strip light had two color circuits: a blue green, to give the effect of translucent water; and an orange, which, when dimmed into a glow, gave the feeling of the reflection of dawn lighting the surface of the river.

Control

Now we come to the most important part of a plan in lighting, namely control. Broadway producing organizations do not maintain their own theatres. For this reason it is necessary to have complete portability of switchboards and wiring devices, which can be put up and taken down at will. (The non-professional group will also need this equipment if it travels.) The only thing the theatre usually supplies is a switch, controlling the house lights and possibly some work lights back stage, and the power panel to take care of the current for the portable equipment brought into the theatre. This portable controlled equipment looks like piano boxes. Inside these boxes are arrayed series of pockets, direct switch control for each pocket, and a dimmer device to which it is wired. A portable switchboard usually starts from the multiple of six units to twelve or fifteen units, a consideration being the weight of these boxes which should permit easy mobility.[3] For this production, two portable boards were employed;

[3] For this reason, the individual switchboard usually has no more than 12 or 14 dimmer plates grouped together.

the smaller one carried all the equipment except the box set, namely, the sky lighting, the projectors for the windows, up center, up left and down right, and the front lighting in the balcony facure.[4] The larger switchboard carried all the overhead equipment for the first pipe and down the sides. Here is the entire layout for a realistic play.

(2) *The Problem of the Ann Arbor Festival*

The problem in lighting the Ann Arbor Festival was to determine a framework of equipment which was to be used in lighting for four consecutive productions. The time element between productions was a matter of hours and minutes, which made it imperative that a basic board control be kept constant. For example, the first pipe spotlights were grouped in gangs of four and plugged into a certain section of the switchboard; the balcony spotlights were done likewise, the side tormentor lighting the same, etc. The equipment was simplified both in the amount of actual units used and the amount of space the instruments took up, and what is more important, the amount of money needed. Below is a plan of the lighting framework that was evolved for the Festival.

Starting with the false ceiling beams, there were four 1000-watt spotlight hoods with Fresnel lenses on each beam. The balcony front had four 400-watt five-inch Fresnel spots, which were broken up in two circuits, and we used the existing house footlights of the theatre.

The first pipe consisted of twelve 400-watt five-inch Fresnel spotlights and these were wired in gangs of four (see diagram), and crossed each other at an angle of 45°.

The second pipe consisted of twelve open bunch floodlights which were adapted to take a 500-watt spotlight bulb. These twelve lamps were broken up into three circuits, hung upstage eight feet from the curtain line, and were angled downstage toward the footlights. This pipe was called the *haze pipe* because it projected a general wash of light down toward the stage floor, which gave a tonality to the actors.

The third pipe had the same setup as the second. The purpose of this pipe was to light the cyclorama, with one important difference:—the bulbs employed projected a wash of light that was more intense at the center of the backdrop and gave an entirely different feeling to the backdrop lighting than had ever been achieved before.

[4] The container of the lights on the front of the balcony.

The theatre had its own permanent pit lighting[5] with one basic mistake. An attempt was made to mix the three primaries, red, green, and blue, in glass. Unfortunately, colored glass is not successful in letting enough light come through. We resorted to gelatin in the pastel tints as we needed it.

The most important problem that confronted us on a stage with very little side room was the problem of side lighting. We employed four boomerangs[6] with four projectors on each. Two were put down behind the proscenium arch and the other two were placed on either side of the stage; within this framework all the productions were so planned that none of the hanging equipment needed to be changed. The only things that were removed were the side boomerangs.

Steps in Lighting

In closing this chapter, the following outline of procedure, written by students in my class in lighting at the Dramatic Workshop of the New School for Social Research, may serve as a guide. Although this outline is not perfect, it may be helpful to the student in lighting.

A. READ THE SCRIPT.

1. Talk to director and designer. Understand style, purpose and kind of production. Find out length of time of rehearsal, and budget available for lighting equipment.

B. VISIT THEATRE.

1. Study the house: its limitations. Possible board control and changes to be made if necessary. Where can you hang your equipment? Is there any compromise to be made because of the nature of the house and the style of the show?

C. BREAK-DOWN SCRIPT ON PAPER.

1. Now you know your script fairly well: the style of the show, the effects desired. Scene by scene, begin to take notes on the time of day, the sources of motivating light, the mood of the scene, the distribution of the light scenically, in the acting

[5] A pit light effect is a horizontal glow of light that comes from the floor, usually placed in the rear of the stage for cycloramas.

[6] A boomerang is an often misquoted term for a light tormentor. In the literal sense of the term, it is applied to a group of lights mounted together, either vertically or horizontally, whose color effect can be changed by means of a mechanical framing device, containing gelatins, which moves in front of them.

areas, and on the actors. Sketch in the equipment you will need for these purposes.

2. Having done this for the whole play, try to visualize a ground plan of equipment which will be adequate for the whole show, from the point of view of economy of operation, flexibility of use from scene to scene, and subtlety of esthetic effect: think of *color,* and *quality* of lighting.

D. Draw Your Ground-Plan, and Layout of Equipment.

1. Take your ground-plan to the director. Explain it. Change it if necessary. Get it approved.

E. Attend Rehearsals.

1. "Soak up" the show. Watch it for mood, and visualize the effects you will want to create. Begin in your mind to hang your equipment, and plan its operation. Co-ordination of operation is all important: simplicity above all.
2. By the time you are ready to order equipment (or use what is available) the lay-out is fairly clear; the method of running the board is also becoming clearer; if there is anything tricky in the show, you know now where it will be, and have an idea of how you can get the particular effect.

F. Ordering and Installation of Equipment.

1. Questions solved now are source of power and adequate board control.
2. Lamps are hung according to ground-plan.
3. Lamps are focused scene by scene. Color frames are installed. Basically, the show is ready for writing your first cue sheet.
4. Basic light rehearsals for scene movement.

G. First Rehearsals of Light and Actors and Scenery.

1. Without disturbing rehearsals, start feeding in the lights on the scenes. Take your notes for your first cue-sheet. (This will be changed fifty times, but don't worry about it.) The director will start arguing about effects. Keep him happy, and make the necessary changes.
2. Lamps will need refocusing and colors will have to be changed. Possibly different set-up of the ground-plan may be necessary: now is the time to find out and do it.
3. At the end of this period (two days to a week) a fairly smooth

cue-sheet exists, and the show can be run. Refinements and changes creep in, and are added as you go along. Questions of color, mood, effects, and dimmer readings and operations have been almost solved.

H. Dress Rehearsals, Previews.

1. Emphasis is on smoothness of operation. The light must be a co-ordinate part of the show, unobtrusive and subtle, a single efficient part of the whole production. The light will enhance the beauty and meaning of the scenery, increase the esthetic effect of the whole production, and provide enough illumination to see all the actors plainly.
2. By the last preview the board operation is almost smoothly perfect. The most important decisions on effects have been made, so that everybody is happy: director, designer, and yourself. The show is ready for opening night.

MAKE-UP FOR THE PLAY

Kenneth Buckridge

The Functions of Make-Up

IN THE earliest days of the theatre and down through the Elizabethan Age, make-up of the sort we have today was practically unknown. Playing as they did in the light hours of the day, actors had no need for more than an occasional wig or false moustache. But when the theatre moved indoors and performances were illuminated by the sickly light of candles, it became a necessity. Players found that the yellow candle light robbed their skins of natural color, leaving the flesh wan and sallow, made their eyes seem small and lacking in definition, and gave their faces a pallid flatness. To combat this light and to project their features to their audiences, they began to use paint and powder.[1]

Today these are still the fundamental reasons for theatrical make-up. For although our modern stage is brightly illuminated with thousands of watts of light, that light is colored by means of gelatin media and the actor must apply make-up to his face in order to give it a life-like aspect. Moreover, the modern actor has learned that make-up can serve other purposes. It can be used to produce simple illusions which will make him seem more attractive to his public by correcting minor faults, and it can be used to change his outward appearance to fit the physical requirements of any character he may be creating.

[1] In order to achieve suggestiveness and impressiveness, the theatre has, of course, used make-up from the beginning; witness the painting of the face and body and the importance of masks in primitive ritual.

Types of Make-Up

Essentially, there are only two types of make-up, straight and character. By straight we mean the simplest type applied to correct the actor's own skin tone and to make him or her more attractive. Character make-up refers to all other types in which the object is to change completely the actor's appearance. For the straight, comparatively simple make-up materials are needed; but for character he may use not only all materials manufactured specifically for the purpose, but anything else that his imagination can put to use. Rubber washers, for instance, may be inserted in the nostrils to make them flair. Countless tricks of this sort may be used, depending only on the actor's ingenuity.

Materials of Make-Up

Let us first consider the materials necessary for straight make-up and then those additional ones that are employed for character work.

Cold cream, or any other oily substance such as mineral oil, olive oil, vaseline, lard. These are used to cleanse the skin before the make-up is put on, to protect it, and to aid in the removal of the make-up. Any quality of grease or oil may be used as long as it is capable of doing the job.

Cleansing tissues, such as are sold in every drug store, are used as towels for absorbing the excess cream in the first application and in removing the make-up at the finish.

Grease paints are used to give the ground coat or basic complexion to the skin. They are of two types: in the form of a firm stick, and as a soft paste in tubes. There are forty or fifty shades ranging from a very pale pink to very dark reds and browns, and generally are designated by both a name and number, as No. 10—Flesh Middle Age in M. Stein's listing.

Lining colors are grease paints in strong solid colors such as red, maroon, yellow, black, and white. Their principal uses are for highlight and shadow, for wrinkles, and for blending with the foundation paints in the creation of new tones. They are put up in stick form and in a paste form.

Rouge comes in two forms, moist and dry. Of the two, the moist is the more useful and gives the more natural effect. However, the dry is useful for retouching once the make-up has been powdered.

The lining colors mentioned above are just as good for rouging purposes as the special pastes that most manufacturers sell.

Brushes, stomps, etc.: These are used for lining, shadowing, and all work too delicate to be done with the finger tips only. The brushes now being sold in chain stores for applying lipstick are very good for this work.

Eyebrow pencils, sometimes called dermatographs, come in red, brown, black, and blue. They are medium-hard grease paints in pencil form and are used on the eyes and eyebrows.

Face powders come in a range of shades designed to match the colors of the foundation paints. They differ from ordinary face powders in that they are based on rice-powder, which is more absorbent and clings better.

Powder puffs are used for applying the powder. The larger sizes, three inches or more in diameter, are the most useful.

Baby brush or complexion brush: This is used for removing the excess powder when the make-up is completed.

These are the basic materials needed for any stage make-up. In addition, the following items are used for special effects.

Crepe Hair: twisted wool that comes woven in a plait; it is used for making false beards, moustaches, etc.

Spirit gum: an adhesive liquid composed mainly of gum arabic and alcohol; it is used for fastening the false hair to the face. A brush for applying it is usually contained in the cap of the bottle.

Nose putty: a flesh-colored putty used for changing the shape of the nose and making other plastic changes.

Liquid make-up: is used in coloring the arms, shoulders, legs, etc. in cases where those parts are exposed and there is a noticeable difference in tone. It is essentially powder, glycerine, and water.

There are, of course, certain things not classified as make-up that are also essential. One must have plenty of light, a good mirror, combs, soap, etc.

The Application of Make-Up

In the actual application of a make-up, the actor or director is faced, first of all, with the problem of knowing exactly what he has to achieve. Ideally he should be mentally developing his make-up as the play develops. He should remember that a make-up has much to tell. Each people or nationality has certain types of facial structure and

coloring. Each character reflects something of the sort of life he leads —the tan of the outdoor worker, the redness of the confirmed drinker, the paleness of the tubercular. Adjustments must be made for period —the sideburns of the nineteenth century dandy, the over-painting of a Molière court lady. All these questions must be answered before the make-up is ready to be presented to an audience.

The Make-Up Process

1. *Covering the skin with cold cream:* The cream or oil should be applied generously, rubbed in well, and the excess removed with tissues until the face is not noticeably oily.

2. *Covering the skin with the basic coat:* For straight make-up it is a generally safe rule to use a color which is one shade darker than the normal skin coloring. In the case of character make-up, it is best to rely on the manufacturer's recommendation. Frequently the color will not be quite what is expected. For example, the actor or director may visualize dark sunburn as a deep tan-brown having very little red in it and find that most manufacturers supply it in a medium red. Whatever the manufacturer suggests will be useable, however, and experience will teach the actor what to expect and how to alter it himself to the desired shade.

With either stick or tube make-up, spots of color should be applied to the face and these blended until there is an even coating, neither too heavy nor too light. It should cover the skin whenever it is exposed, including the ears and neck.

3. *Modeling the face:* The term "modeling" is used to cover all painted efforts to change the face. It includes the use of rouge on cheeks and lips, the use of highlight and shadow, and the lining of the face.

In straight make-up, rouge is applied on the cheeks in the form of a small crescent with the points going towards the temples and the nose, and blending into the foundation in all directions. It should be started from a strong point of color placed approximately halfway between the end of the eyebrow and the nostril. In character make-up, rouge may be used in a variety of ways. For example, it can be applied rather splotchily to indicate the cheek coloring in a middle-aged man with apoplectic tendencies. The lips should be colored slightly darker than in life for simple straight make-up. They can, however, be painted

larger or smaller to obtain any character effect. In extreme old age, a good effect can be obtained by leaving them completely colorless.

Make-up deals with light and shadow in much the same way that sketching does. Sections that are painted lighter than the surrounding general tone (highlighted) are projected and made more prominent. Sections that are darkened or shadowed appear sunken and smaller. Therefore, in applying a make-up, the actor places the lighter shades where he wants portions of his face to be more prominent, and he shadows those that he wants to appear darkened or sunken. Thus, by skillful use of broad areas of highlight and shadow, the actor can make his face seem larger and plumper or smaller and thinner.

The simplest use of highlight and shadow in the painting of wrinkles, etc. is referred to as *lining* the face. The easiest way to do this is to follow the natural lines. By wrinkling the forehead, frowning, smiling, etc., the lines that will develop as the face grows older and sags can easily be seen. These lines may be projected by painting them with a dark lining color and then highlighting them on the upper side with a lighter paint. The most suitable color for shadowing is a brown-red mixture or a deep maroon. In certain cases light brown alone may be used but it is strongly recommended that black, blue or gray *never* be used unless for some very specific reason. Light flesh, white or light yellow may be used for highlighting. When both have been applied, they should be blended with the tips of the fingers. Do not dull them too much since the final coat of powder will soften and blend a good deal too.

4. *The make-up for the eyes:* First, the eyes should be shadowed on the lid with a dark color. These shadows should blend up until they reach the eyebrows. If, however, the actor's eyes are deep-sunk, only the lids should be shadowed slightly and the sockets should be highlighted. These operations can be performed with the tips of the fingers or with a brush. Next, the eye should be outlined with a thin fine line above and below the lashes, and close to and following them. The lines should meet at the outer corner and extend for a short distance beyond. The eyebrow pencil in a dark shade, black or dark brown, is used for this work. Now the eyebrows should be strengthened by lightly brushing the hairs with the tip of the pencil held flat. If they are thin or if they are to be enlarged for character purposes, they should be drawn to the desired size with short fine pencil lines. Any very large increase, however, should be done with crepe hair,

since the painting becomes apparent when done over too large an area. If an effect of large eyes is desired, the lower line may be drawn slightly below the lower lash curving downward. For an even greater effect, fill in the space between the lash and the line with white grease paint *after* the make-up is powdered. In this way, the paint will glisten moistly like the cornea of the eye.

5. *Doing the hair:* Many actors forget entirely the importance of the hair in creating a make-up except when they find it necessary to age it for an older character. Look at anyone from the distance of fifty feet and you can readily see how much the hair contributes to your recognizing him. It can be worn sleekly combed, parted eccentrically, awry, partially blocked out with make-up to create a high forehead, and in any other number of ways to create character even in straight roles. (If the hair is very thick, it may be necessary to coat it with soap, spirit gum, or a mixture of putty and foundation first and then cover it with make-up when dry.)

There are many ways to age the hair. For graying, the hair should be oiled slightly with cold cream or some similar oil to insure the powder's clinging and then covered with white theatrical powder, corn starch, or orris root. For a silvery white, aluminum powder may be used. It should be carefully combed through to make sure that it is evenly distributed and to avoid any solid bands of the powder which look under lights like a metal finish. The metallic powder can also be mixed with olive oil and applied with a toothbrush and then combed through. White mascara and white greasepaint can be used to whiten the hair. When only partly graying the hair, care should be taken that it is done realistically and that it blends off into the natural hair. The eyebrows, of course, should be in agreement with the hair. They can be treated in the same ways. For the scraggly eyebrows of the very old, the simplest trick is to rub them the wrong way with a white liner.

The color of the hair can be changed slightly by powdering with metallic powders such as Roman gold, red bronze, etc. or by mixing the powders with olive oil and applying with an old toothbrush.

6. *Powdering the face:* This is almost always the last operation in putting on a make-up. Its purpose is to set the grease paints and to kill their shine. It should be applied profusely with a clean puff and pressed into the grease paint. The excess may be removed by dusting with a soft powder brush or by splashing it off. The latter method is

more difficult but very satisfactory since it leaves the actor cool and refreshed. Cold water is splashed on the face until the excess powder is washed off. Then the make-up is dried by patting, *not rubbing,* the face with cleansing tissues.

A number of make-up techniques have been omitted from the above listing since they comprise the more difficult ones. The use of plastic changes on the face, such as putty and cotton-collodion, and the use of crepe hair and spirit gum are techniques that the inexperienced actor should not attempt until he has mastered them in practice sessions. All of them should be applied before the cold cream has been used in the first step, since they adhere best to the dry skin.

Crepe hair comes woven in tight braids. It can be completely uncurled, wet, stretched, dried and then cut and attached in very small quantities with spirit gum to build up a beard or moustache or it can be combed out into a fluffy but compact mass, roughly shaped to the correct form and glued on. In both methods it should be put on in excess and then trimmed with scissors to the correct shape. In the latter method, a moustache should always be put on in two pieces, a small beard in four (on the chin, under the chin, and a piece on each side) and a full beard in at least six. This will insure normal movement and maximum reality. Fresh spirit gum will sometimes be too thin to work properly because of an excess of alcohol. If so, a small amount may be put in a metal container, lighted, and allowed to burn until it has thickened to a gummier consistency.

Wigmakers, of course, rent and sell false beards and moustaches made of human hair sewn on gauze. These are excellent, and in cases where time is short or where a certain very definite form must be had for a long run they will save time and trouble. Wigs, incidentally, offer by far the best way to solve the problem of a complete hair change, especially in cases where it is necessary to adhere strictly to period as in a Restoration or a Molière play.

Putty is used plastically to change the shape of the nose, chin, etc. If it is hard, it may be softened by allowing hot water to run over it; if too soft, it can be heated until some of the moisture is dissipated and then chilled, although it is usually sufficient just to chill it. It should be kneaded with the fingers into a rough approximation of the shape desired and then pressed on the face until it adheres. (The fingers should be cold creamed slightly to prevent the putty from sticking to them.) When the shape desired has been molded

on the face, it should be rubbed with cream until the surface is smooth and it joins the skin imperceptibly. Then it should be painted to match the general skin tone. It may be necessary in some cases, especially if the putty has become soft, to melt some grease paint and paint it on with a brush. Other sections of the face can be built up in similar manner.

Make-Up and Stage Lighting

Every actor and director should know how make-up is affected by different colors of stage lighting. Actually there is very little to know. Since the basic skin tone is usually some pink and tan tone with rouge, colors such as light amber, light straw, pink, and daylight blue are generally flattering and will usually cause no difficulty. The following list will give some idea of what to expect and what may be done.

Amber light tends to eat up the reds in a make-up and lend a sallow tone to the skin. Under strong amber light the flesh tone must be made quite pink and rouge must be applied heavily.

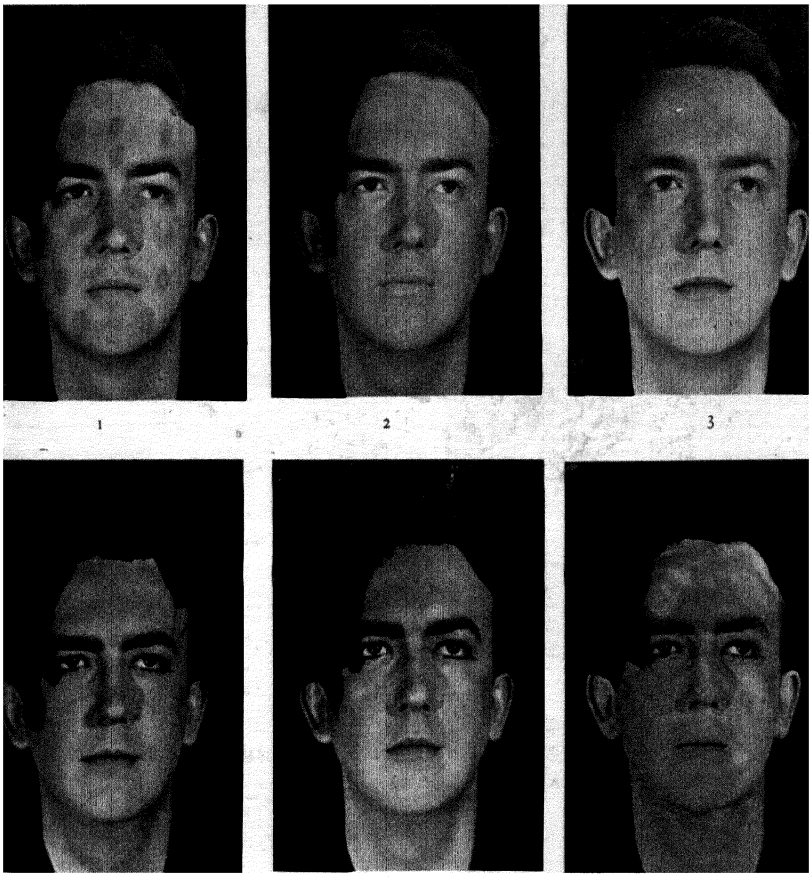
Blue light changes red to dull purples and black. Since this color is frequently met in scenes having low illumination—night, evening, and moonlight scenes—it is important to remember that a light foundation with very little rouge is the best solution. If there is a blue lighted scene between scenes of normal illumination, a quick coat of neutral powder will sometimes dull the reds enough to prevent any deep purples from appearing.

Red light is reflected more or less equally by the pinks and reds of make-up and requires a heavily pink base and a rouging with a red containing some blue.

Green light gives the face a ghostly macabre appearance and is rarely used except where that effect is desirable. There is little that can be done except to avoid reds and browns as much as possible.

The direction from which the main source of light flows also influences make-up. If the lights come from overhead, strong shadows will be cast in the eye sockets, below the nose, below the lips, and below the chin. Very strong footlights will have the opposite effect. In either case application of highlights in the shadowed areas will help to restore a more normal look.

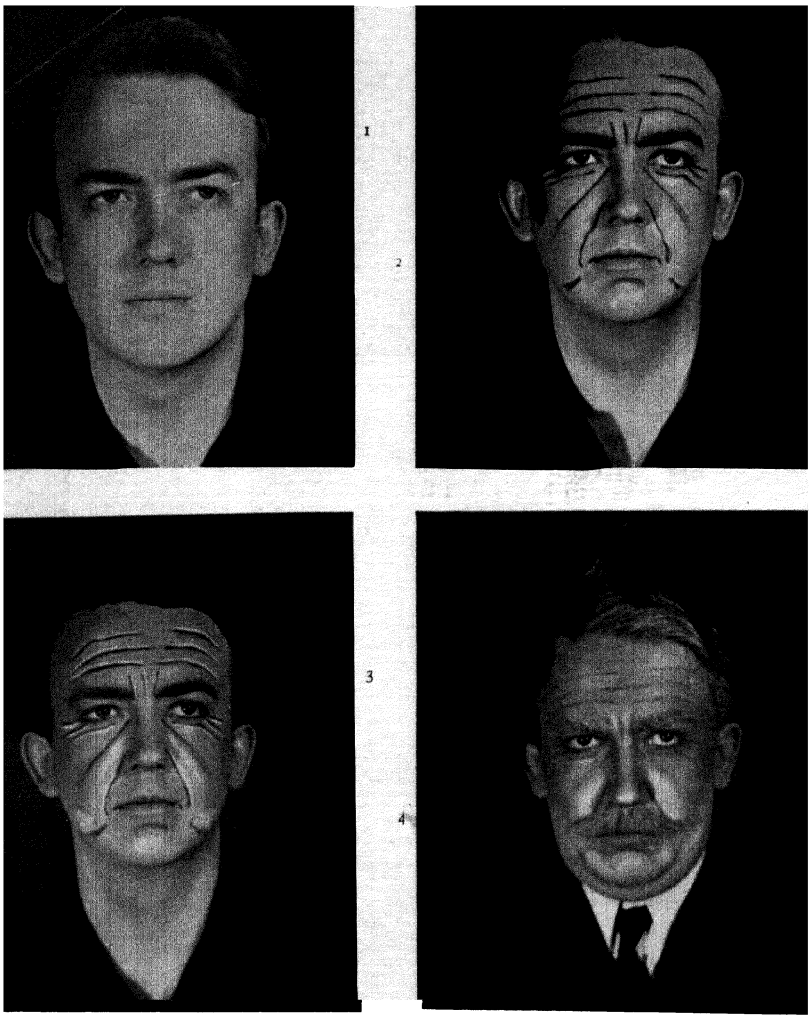
The size of the theatre should be taken into consideration. Obviously, make-up must be used in a much bolder manner in a large



SIMPLE STRAIGHT MAKE-UP

This is the minimum make-up for anyone appearing on the stage. In the case of women, it is usually sufficient to apply the basic coat and intensify the normal street make-up for lips, cheeks, and eyes.

1. Grease paint, either from stick or tube, is applied in dots to insure an even coating. 2. The paint is spread evenly to cover the entire face, ears, neck, and the back of the neck. 3. Rouge or any red grease paint, a shade darker than the normal coloring, is applied to the lips and cheeks. The cheeks should have a natural flush slightly more intense than in life. 4. To give the eyes definition, a shadow is placed rather heavily on the lids and blended in the eye sockets. Dark lines are run along the lashes and extend slightly beyond the outside corner of the eye. 5 and 6. Powder is applied generously and the excess carefully removed with a powder brush.



MAKE-UP FOR MIDDLE-AGE

1. Without make-up. 2. The natural lines are blocked in roughly with red-brown lining color. Eyes have been shadowed and lined as for straight make-up. Shadow line for double chin has been placed (not visible on photo). 3. Highlights are placed along the lines and broad highlights on jowls, chin, and above the character lines. 4. The finished make-up. Lines, shadows, highlights, have been blended; the face powdered. White lining color and powder have been placed on the hair and eyebrows. Prepared mustache has been attached. To make double chin more prominent and to avoid building one plastically, a high tight collar is worn and the fleshy part of the neck pulled over the edge and highlighted. By using fewer lines or by applying them less strongly, a younger effect can be achieved. By whitening hair completely or by not making up the eyes, an older one can be achieved.

theatre than in one seating three or four hundred. Great care must be taken in blending and finishing the make-up intended for a small theatre.

As a closing note, two points should be emphasized. It is not always the most complicated make-up which is the most successful. One of the best ways, for example, to suggest the weak tired eyes of an old man is to apply no make-up to them at all. In this way they appear dull and lifeless to an audience. The writer is reminded of a story told to him by a well-known actress. For the first time in her theatrical career she was faced with the problem of playing a beautiful Japanese. Her main task was to achieve the narrow slit eyes of the oriental. At that time a Chinese play was running successfully on Broadway and the young actress decided to find out what her fellow actors were doing. She went to see the play and decided that one old actor had done the most successful job. When she went backstage, he was dressing and while she waited she asked the others in the cast what methods they had used. One had relied on painting alone, on the clever use of highlight and shadow. Another had used fishskin and spirit gum, pasting a strip of the skin at the corner of his eye and then pulling a slant into the eye and fastening the other end on his temple. Still another had used putty and built himself a new set of eye sockets and lids. Finally the old actor was able to see her and she asked him what he had done. "Well, my dear," he said. "I tried some of the ideas the others are using but I find the most successful effect is much simpler. I play the show with my eyes *half-closed!*"

The second point is even more important. No one has ever learned how to do theatrical make-up merely by reading a few books or articles or by doing it only when faced by the grim realization that the show goes on tomorrow. Any knowledge or proficiency can only come by practice, by using the paints and seeing what happens. Sit down, alone or with someone else (either as fellow worker or as victim), with all the make-up materials available and actually *do* it. Try to make-up as specific characters in the play you're going to do, want to do, or have done. Two or three hours a week over an extended period spent as suggested will produce results that will be amazing.

NOTE: Most manufacturers of theatrical make-up publish some sort of literature on their products. The Max Factor Co. of Hollywood, Calif.

have a very helpful series of booklets called "Max Factor's Hints on the Art of Make-up" which they will send free on request. They are very good and the writer suggests that they be sent for. The M. Stein Cosmetic Co., New York, N. Y., also publishes several pamphlets that may come in handy.

Every company offers a trial kit containing samples of its products. They are a fair value but the amounts given are so small that a few make-up sessions will exhaust the most essential materials. The M. Stein Co., however, has a kit of grease paints in stick form called "Assorted Grease Paints" which includes three bases and six lining colors. At one dollar, it is a bargain.

Make-up supplies are usually stocked by at least one drug store in every major city, generally in the theatrical section of town. However, if there is any difficulty encountered or if the local drug store does not carry any, write directly to the manufacturers. Most professionals use the products of M. Stein, Max Factor, and Elizabeth Arden. All of them are pure and safe and offer complete ranges in colors and materials.

Alfred Barris, 156 W. 44th St., New York, and Oscar Bernner, 107 W. 46th St., New York, are two very reliable wig makers. Some costume houses carry wigs and if you are in doubt, they can either supply you or tell you where to go.

COSTUMING THE PLAY

THE actual procedure of costuming the play calls for considerable detail. It is treated here in two parts: (1) a brief résumé of what the costume designer should regard as his work and study, for which purpose Miss Aline Bernstein's statement is included; (2) the problems encountered and the general procedure to be followed in costume designing.

I

The Costume Designer's Work by Aline Bernstein

The clothing that an actor wears when he comes upon the stage to play his part is his costume. It is not his own dress; it is the dress of the character he is representing, just as the words he speaks are not the words of his own thought, his own life, but the words that the author has written for the character to speak.

The costume of the actor is the heightening, the translation into theatrical terms, of the dress of everyday life. It is the selection, from the vast store of actual material, of what is suitable, beautiful, and helpful to the portrayal of character. When this selection is skilfully made, the artist is not merely a copyist of a period, even if it is the style of our own time, but he is a real creator; and this principle applies to all costumes designed for the stage, whether for straight drama, comedy, tragedy, or the more fantastic forms of ballet, vaudeville, and musical extravaganza.

The designing of theatrical costumes is a fascinating art, both in practice and in preparation. There are two fields of study necessary to it. The first is the study of life and character, for people look the way they look because they are the way they are. Each personal variation of dress springs from some variation of character or of mood, differences that may be slight but are none the less important. A gay person and a tragic person would not be dressed exactly alike, no matter if their circumstances of position in life were identical. Had Hamlet been a well adjusted and happy young prince, he would not have clung so tenaciously to his inky cloak. It is almost impossible not to be expressive of one's self in dress, even if self is manifested only in the tilt of a hat, the length of a sleeve, or the way a collar sets about the neck. All these

signs are around us, available for study; but to make use of them, the eye of the designer must be clever, must be trained, and above all must be interested.

The research into period and national costume is another and fascinating part of the designer's work, for he has the pageant of the arts of the entire world as material to his hand. It is not only the costumes that repay study, not only costume books, but all the painting and the applied arts, and some of the writings of the period of his search. Much available information about wearing apparel and the social customs relating to apparel is to be found in the writings of practically any time in recorded history—in hieroglyphics, in diaries, in letters, in poetry, and in fiction. Sometimes from a description in words one may get a special flavor that is lacking in pictorial presentation. For example, in the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, written from Turkey in the early eighteenth century when her husband was ambassador from England, there are the most graphic descriptions of the dress and undress of the women of the Turkish harems, of which there could be nothing in any pictured art. Her descriptions, too, of the clothes of court life in Vienna are priceless for certain details of hair-dress, jewelry, laces, and so forth. Fidelity to such detail is worthy of the designer's closest study. It adds enormously to the illusion of the stage picture.

When you are designing a costume, remember that an actor's body is his instrument; he has no piano or violin, no paints or brushes, no pen or pencil or typewriter, nothing with which to give his message but his skin and flesh and bone. He is placed on the stage in public view. He must be happy and comfortable in his costume, for the most important part of any costume is the actor within, and it is our duty to see that he can do his best so far as we are concerned.

It is well for the designer to study and know the cut of period clothes. You cannot know too much about this; in detail of cut often lies the salient feeling of a period. You must also know the quality and pattern of the textiles, although you will find that certain cuts require material of weight and thickness in order to be fully expressive; you will find that you will have to understand what materials will do when they are made up and worn. You could hardly use the same fabric for the crusted elegance of the Elizabethan dress that you would use for the classic Greek folds.

There can be no rule for designing; each of us goes about our work in our own way—that is where talent lies. But in all designing for the theatre, whether scenery or costume, the importance is fine characterization. I do not mean that the aim of beauty should be absent from your scheme; it must always be with you; but from rightness, from the truth you have to say about the clothes or the place, will grow your lasting beauty. (A. B.)

* * * *

2

Let us now proceed to the practical work in costume designing, which will be supplemented by still more detailed work in "The Scene Technician's Handbook."

The Costume and the Actor

The costumes in a production are an extension of the set in that they must, in their emotional use of color and line, not only contribute to the mood established by the setting, but serve the actor in the projection of his role. They do this in three ways.

First, a well designed costume compels attention. Consider how small the figure of the actor is compared with the usual vastness of the set. We must build him up to focus audience attention upon him. The stage lights help because the actor is usually spotlighted as he speaks his lines but it is important that the color and line of the costumes make him appear in bold relief against the set. He must not be lost in the shadows or blend so well with his background that he is indistinguishable from it. Principal characters should wear costume colors that contrast with the set colors and with the costume colors of the other actors. A well designed costume is capable of making an actor seem taller or broader than he really is; it will build him up physically. Dramatic line in costume, the swirl of a cape in movement, for instance, arrests audience attention.

If one purpose of the costume is to lend the actor visual prominence, a *second* purpose is to identify the actor to the audience. Before he moves or utters a syllable, his costume and make-up state if he is young or old, rich or poor, taxi driver or corporation president. This is perhaps

the most important function of the costume. In the theatre we have accepted certain conventions as an aid to quick identification. Not all earnest young professors wear horn-rimmed glasses, but most stage professors do. The dark shell rims on the light face carry well from a distance and "get the idea across" quickly. Before ladies took it up, gobs of junk jewelry proclaimed the harlot and whoever saw Sadie Thompson in *Rain* without her feather boa? The eighteenth-century dandy flourishes his lace handkerchief and his snuffbox. The Southern girl at a dance lisps and wears pink net. The stage designer must steer a middle course between accepting a stereotype and creating a character which may be true to life but one which the audience will fail to recognize.

Third, the costume and make-up have a tonic effect upon the actor. An actor who is properly costumed *feels* the part, is himself convinced that he is the character he is representing, and is, therefore, immeasurably aided in the portrayal.

A convincing costume is of no avail, however, if the actor does not exploit it, if he does not wear it well. It is therefore essential that the actor have time to practice wearing his costume, that he feel at home in it. Men should practice handling capes, swords, plumed hats, snuffboxes, and lace handkerchiefs. Women should learn to flutter a fan, walk with a train, handle a hoop skirt so that when they sit down or when they make an entrance it will not tip up embarrassingly.

The actress must learn to walk in a manner that befits a costume. One should not take long strides or hurry in a hoop skirt, steps should be short and carefully spaced. It takes a great deal of practice to feel at ease wearing a train. It is the duty of the costumer, if the director does not undertake it, to supervise this practice. It is the duty of a costumer to see that the costume fits comfortably, that the actor knows how to drape his toga, that he does not wear his wig askew. A wardrobe mistress should be assigned to see that no one goes on stage with hooks undone or unsightly gaps between vest and trousers. Where costume changes must be very quick, some one must be on hand to help the actor dress. Only in this way can the costume be used to full advantage.

General Procedure

1. Read the play selected for production and consult with the director so as to learn his particular conception. Everything you do with costume

and make-up must serve the director in producing his version of the play.

2. Bring your preliminary plans for costuming the play to the director and discuss them with him. Only after he has finally approved your plans are you ready to proceed; not a moment earlier.

3. Confer with the designer of the set and with the man in charge of the lighting.

4. Only now are you ready to launch into the problem of preparing the costume and make-up—for you have a plan that harmonizes with the conception of the production as a whole, and you have consulted with two other factors whose active co-operation is essential to the embodiment of your own ideas.

We may now discuss the procedure in some detail.

1. *Familiarize yourself with the play* before attempting to estimate what costumes will be needed. It is not enough to know if the play is in period or in modern dress. You must know the age and temper of the characters. As the action progresses, these very likely will change from scene to scene. You will have to know the dominant mood of each scene, for your costumes must help express and reflect all these things. It is even possible for a costume to reveal the subconscious thoughts of a character, for who will deny that when we choose one dress over another in our wardrobe, or a blue tie rather than a red, we are giving expression to some inner prompting of which we ourselves are not consciously aware? A good costume gives a clue to the personality of a character, for on the stage as in life we judge people by their appearance. *Appearance is determined by dress and carriage.* "What," says the costumer, "have I to do with the actor's carriage? Let the dramatic director take care of that." Not so. You have everything to do with it, as we shall see.

Costumes lend poise. If you do not fit the actor properly, if his clothes are uncomfortably tight, his sleeves too short, he will be ill at ease. If his shoes are too big he will stumble or shuffle. This is especially important in amateur productions. Here a correctly fitted costume, one which is a convincing visual interpretation of a characterization, aids immeasurably in bolstering the poise and confidence of the amateur actor. If the costume is expressive the player more readily assumes the part. Costumes affect bearing. You cannot expect an actress to assume the assured and undulating walk of a born siren unless you supply her with a superbly fitting gown and high heels. On the other hand,

the healthy ingenue will not be able to make her entrance with a free unfettered walk if you hamper her with a narrow skirt and spike heels. If you want a slip of a girl to walk like a queen, give her long vertical draperies. If you want the miserable old woman to look even more miserable, give her a shawl to huddle in.

Suppose your character must give the impression of being "strait-laced." In this term we imply more than the literal costuming in a tightly laced bodice. We imply a sense of moral judgment, a state of mind. The actor would be severely handicapped who had to portray severity of manner, an unyielding mind, in a loose, flowing, pastel-colored costume. In *The Old Maid* the change to gray hair from brown in Charlotte betrays only the passage of time from Act I to Act III. It is the inelastic jerky walk, the ram-rod spine, emphasized by the tight-fitting somber dress that betrays the change from a carefree, fun-loving, ardent girl into a bitter old maid.

Familiarize yourself with the history of the times, if you must costume a period play. In order to choose salient characteristics of a costume one must understand why the fashion developed as it did. Fashions reflect the thought and manners of the times. A study of fashions in relation to period demonstrates that ornament and trimming are secondary. A style reveals itself in its *silhouette*, its shape. Silhouette refers to the *outline*, the outside *shape* of things. A black-paper scissors portrait of a profile, while minus eyes, eyebrows, color, is nevertheless a recognizable picture. It will carry effectively from a distance as all the wrinkles, warts, and color of a carefully detailed drawing would not. It is the silhouette, the outside shape of a costume, that distinguishes its period. The contemporary silhouette is tall, narrow, figure-conforming, free from artificial boning. Our women, rich or poor, lead an active life. Present-day costume is designed to be free and unhampering, to emphasize broad shoulders, long legs, and slim hips—the ideal of physical beauty in this period. The Civil War costume, for instance, is distinguished by a tiny waist achieved by tight stays, a bell-shaped skirt sustained by whalebone, and many petticoats. The tight stays made normal breathing impossible; the voluminous skirts hampered action, but that did not matter, for ladies of the period did not work. And since it was fashionable to be delicate, to faint, and to move decorously, the costumes did their share in maintaining the ideal. Victorian ideas of pulchritude were centered on a long graceful neck and demurely sloping shoulders. The dropped shoulders of the costumes, especially for evening wear, did their best to reveal what was then a lady's chief charm.

It is true that the upper classes set the fashion. Where we find the greatest differences in the silhouette of the costumes of the rich and poor, we find evidence of the greatest differences in the mode of economic production of each class. It is said that corsets were introduced when it was no longer an economic necessity in society for all women to work. The wearing of a corset was the badge of the leisure class. In early Greek society, the families of kings worked side by side with their slaves. Odysseus tell us that Nausicaä, a king's daughter, washed clothes with her maid. And we have evidence in the *Odyssey* of Laertes, Odysseus' father, tilling the soil with his own hands. With this background it becomes clear why there are no real differences in the silhouette of slave and upper-class costumes among the Greeks. There are differences, of course, in quality of fabric and elaboration of trimming. In addition to performing household tasks, Greek girls, as well as their brothers, played games. Their clothes, therefore, were loose, uncorseted, unhampering. There was no artificial sex consciousness. Frequently, girls ran naked in the games. So we find no coy modesty cloths[1] here as we do in eighteenth-century costumes. The Greek lady and her slave wore relatively the same costume.

In our day, there is very little difference in silhouette in the costume of the colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady. Good copies in line of the Duchess of Windsor's wedding gown traveled from Fifth Avenue to Fourteenth Street within a few weeks of the event. Of course, there were differences in fabric, in fit, but the basic silhouette was the same.

Not so in other ages. The sixteenth-century French courtier's spreading coat and hand-covering lace cuffs made quite a different silhouette from the figure-conforming smock of his kitchen man. Milady's stiffly boned bodice, enormously wide skirts, and elaborate powdered wigs reflected an age of undisciplined luxury and pomp. In that age the upper classes were unhampered by their unwieldy dress for they did no work. They lived at court where they had ample room to move through broad corridors, spacious audience chambers, and the like. Can you imagine Marie Antoinette in a subway rush, or even in the New York Central train coming down from Hyde Park?

2. *Confer with director of production and set designer.* After you have become familiar with the play and the period, before you attempt to

[1] A fichu or scarf of lawn or thin linen used to bridge the gap between the low-cut bodice and the natural neck line.

design a single costume, arrange a conference with the director and the set designer. Here you will have an opportunity to learn how the director plans to mount the play, what style he expects the scenic designer to employ, and you will have a chance to discuss your own tentative ideas. This conference is of paramount importance. Since the costuming is only one part of the production, since the costumes must not only harmonize with the rest of the production but help express and support the underlying theme, to plunge into design alone would probably be a waste of time. The inevitable discussion later would only mean a scrapping of much of the work.

3. *Consult the lighting director.* The colored lights used to create the desired atmosphere on the set will also light your costumes. *Colored lights drastically affect the color of costumes.* In choosing colors for various scenes, the designer must be guided by the lighting plot used for the set. For instance, moonlight scenes are usually lit with green and blue lights and the illumination is very low. If your principal character wears a dark red dress for this scene, she will be completely lost in the shadows. Costumes for moonlight and night scenes should be designed in pale tints of colors because pale colors reflect more light than intense saturated colors.[2] If amber lighting is to dominate a gay, sunny scene you will do well to avoid blue and purple costumes, for under this lighting your blues would turn blackish and purples brownish. But there are ways to clear the colors you insist on using (see p. 403) and this among other things is what your conference with the lighting director means to accomplish.

The lighting affects not only the color of costumes but their plasticity as well. *Good stage lighting gives depth, three-dimensional quality,* to the actors and costumes. Poor stage lighting flattens them out, makes them mere two-dimensional cardboard figures. It would be of no avail to prepare a superbly draped gown whose every fold were a poem of fluid movement, if the lighting were not skillful enough to bring out the fabric in glowing highlights and deepen the rich depths of the folds.

Lighting highlights textures, picks up the glittering gold threads in metal cloth, reveals the gleam of satin, emphasizes the rich pile of velvet. This tendency of light to magnify glittery surfaces is sometimes

[2] Pure spectrum colors without the admixture of white light are said to be *saturated.* As we use the term here, it means a color at its greatest strength undiluted with white. In other words, not a tint.

also a danger. Avoid spangles or large jewels in brilliantly lit scenes. They catch the light and distract the eye. Even in scenes with low illumination they may prove distracting.

The costumer may arrange with the lighting director for special spots to light individual costumes as she wishes. In the last analysis, however, the lighting director is not responsible for the effect of the costumes. The costume director is. The costumer must learn some of the light man's craft. A clever costumer designs with light as well as fabric. The effect of colored lights can make the same costumes look entirely different in two different scenes. This may frequently be turned to advantage, especially for choruses and other ensemble groups who serve principally as emotional background.

Visual Projection in Costume

Designing for the theatre as compared with designing for life is analogous to the problem of designing a roadside billboard compared with the problem of designing a magazine advertisement. The billboard must project a complete message to the observer as he speeds by in his car. Its message is short, its outlines bold, its colors simple. The magazine advertisement allows time for contemplation and a close view. It may employ as many colors as expense will permit, it may be subtle or sly or humorous, the message may be short or as detailed as the writer's power to retain attention allows.

Design for the theatre must have the power of visual projection. Costumes for the theatre, like the road-side poster, must be grasped on the run. Only here it is the actor who is moving about, and the costumes must be as simple in detail as the distance from the farthest spectator demands, less so for small intimate theatres, but emphatically so for large halls, outdoor pageants, and the like. Since stage costumes, like billboard posters, must be stripped to essentials for quick visual projection, it is wise to stop and examine the elements of a costume design. As in any other art form, the elements of design in costume are (1) line, (2) dark and light, (3) color. Let us examine these in detail.

1. By line in costume we refer, first, to the outline of the garment, its outside shape, its silhouette. Silhouette, the basic shape of a costume, projects more readily across the footlights than any other costume element. When the illumination is low on the stage, color and trimming are lost, only silhouette remains. For stage costumes we must select what is essential in the silhouette and exaggerate it. Scarlett O'Hara's slim

waist must be made to look even slimmer, if you have to build out the shoulders to create the illusion. The Gibson Girl's "leg of mutton" sleeve must be even larger than in life. Bows and bustles must be exaggerated in size. Current or recent fashions must be exaggerated too. The plus-fours of the *nouveau riche* golfer of 1928 must be plus-eights. The drape of the shoulders of the Czar of the Harlem numbers racket must be super-super wide and padded. The English country gentleman's lounge suit must be more rough and shapeless than in life if the fact is to have any significance to the audience.

Line refers not only to the outside shape of a costume but also to the *lines within a garment* caused by intricacies of drape, like pleats and folds, which may result in vertical or horizontal lines; or intricacies of cut like gores and circles which when draped result in diagonal lines. It is draping that gives a plastic, three-dimensional quality to stage costume.

There is *applied line,* too, like a row of buttons or braid, bands of embroidery, the stripes and checks in materials, woven, dyed, or painted on. It must be remembered that to carry visually from the stage, stripes or checks must be extra bold. Hairline stripes do not show at all. Thin stripes run together and only make the costume look a different color from a distance. Thin red stripes on blue, for instance, look like plain purple cloth from a distance. The two colors simply unite to form a new color. The bold, brashy checked jacket of the racing tout looks refined from a great distance. These things must be greatly exaggerated to be telling on the stage.

From this we see that slavish copying of historical costumes will not result in an effective stage costume. *The designer must select and eliminate,* choosing only what is essential and significant. Sometimes the key to a characterization may be caught in the accessories, a fan to flutter, some knitting for the old lady to carry, a tambour frame for the demure maid, a large garden hat with ribbons.

Line has emotional significance. Line in costume evokes emotion just as in any other art form. *Verticals* suggest dignity, strength, the shape of trees and columns. *Horizontals* suggest placidity, repose, like the stretching horizon and calm seas. *Diagonals* are dramatic and dynamic, like the peaks of mountains, the jagged lines in lightning, the darting of airplanes.

The peasant girl is pleasantly earthy with the horizontals on her apron, the horizontals across her full sleeves, and the rows of horizontal

banding on the hem of her short skirt. The queen in her straight floor length garment, the long vertical folds of her train hanging from her shoulders, is the epitome of dignity. The fairy in her diaphanous gown cut in loose circles, which float away from her figure in flying diagonal lines, is the very picture of soaring movement, never still, never earthbound.

Fabrics influence line in costume. We must touch here upon the part fabrics play in drape, which is the essence of line. Heavy fabrics like velvet and jersey (rayon or wool) will drape in long heavy vertical folds. Light fabrics like chiffon and organdy will float away from the body in *diagonal* lines with the slightest current of air. It must be borne in mind that air currents will move material whether the actor is still or moving about. On stage the queen walks with measured pace. Her heavy costume retains its vertical folds. The heroine enters, the atmosphere is calm, then comes the storm. The actress is agitated. Her once vertical garment is blown about, it follows the lines of her figure, it swings in crazy diagonals. Theatre costumes must be made of material which responds to such action. Not all materials have this quality. Slipper satin, stiff brocades, and other fabrics like tarlatan and oil cloth or costumes with whalebone foundations, do not have this adaptability. The figure moves inside them like the clapper inside a bell. At best, the whole bell of the skirt will swing from the waist. Stiff materials make excellent costumes for musicals and dancing choruses where the line of the garment must remain constant and the emotions are not involved.

2. *Dark and Light* is that quality which makes a row of white buttons on a black dress readily discernible; light gray on black, still so; dark gray on black less so; and black buttons on a black dress impossible to discern from a distance (unless the black buttons are of such material and shape that they reflect light—and then they would only wink at us). The greatest extreme, black against white, has the most carrying power visually. There are as many grays in the world as it is possible to achieve by mixing black and white pigment in varying proportions. Artists refer to these grays as *values*. Value is an integral part of color too. All colors have value. A light value of a color is called a tint. For instance, a light value of red is pink. There are light blues, medium blues, and dark blues, even light yellows and dark yellows. We speak of *light* values as high in key and *dark* values of colors as low in key. When we speak of dark and light, then, we do not mean black, white, and grays, necessarily, but dark and light values of color also. A light

green and a dark blue make a dark and light pattern of two values, for instance.

A picture of flat blocks of black and white may be striking, but it is not as interesting as one which also has intermediary values. For instance, a dark blue dress may effectively be trimmed with one band of light green but will be even more effective if trimmed with three shades of green, ranging from very light to medium dark. The farther apart the values are, the more contrast we achieve; the closer the values are, the subtler the effect. For clowns, peasants, children, value contrasts should be extreme. To express sophisticates, values should be close. Always remember, however, that extreme contrasts of value have excellent carrying power visually; close values have poor carrying power. The illumination must be exceptionally good to bring out subtle effects of dark and light on the stage.

Lace fabric is charming because of its intricate pattern of dark and light. That is why lace is best displayed over a foundation color that gives value contrast. Even plain fabrics are capable of showing dark and light values, some more than others. Draped black satin, when the light hits it, runs the gamut from almost white in the highlights, through the various grays around the folds, to deepest black in the heart of the shadows. On the other hand, tweed does not readily reflect light. A draped tweed would probably result in but two or three close values in the folds. This, plus the fact that the material is not pliable, makes the use of tweed in a draped costume unlikely. Just as we would not see an apple in a dark closet, so the dark and light in drapery would not be discernible without effective lighting.

Trimming is dark and light. All trimming is nothing but a broken dark-and-light pattern against an unbroken surface. You would not think of putting a lot of embroidery braid and buttons on a beautiful satin or velvet dress. The range of values in the draped satin or velvet itself is enough variety of dark and light to please the eye. To trim it would be gilding the lily. That is why a cheap dress betrays its cheapness in its overload of trimming. The texture of its material is so poor that the manufacturer has sought to distract the eye from it by gewgaws. Trimming may be used to accent the neck line or belt line on a smooth undraped bodice, the hems and sleeves of dresses. Trimming (i.e., a broken surface) after a long unbroken space is a joy to the eye. Trimming gives an opportunity to vary the dark and light in costume, adding interest.

Trimming helps to emphasize the motions of the actor. Trimming on the hem of the dancer's full skirt emphasizes its every swirl and sweep. Bands of trimming across the shoulders and down the sleeves of a costume serve to emphasize every gesture of the arms where these movements need to be dramatized.

Patterns for trimming a stage costume must be bold and extreme in value contrast. Small patterns blur together. Delicate paisley designs with small blobs of color do not project at all. Simple, forceful designs like the Greek key carry best. Designs must be clean-edged, not fuzzy. They must be clear and not too close together. Leave plenty of breathing space around the design. Intricate embroideries are useless. Specially painted designs serve best for good visual projection.

3. Of the three elements of design—line, dark and light, and color—*color serves best to give visual prominence to the actor.* It is color that spotlights the principal actor from the supporting cast. In life, at a social gathering, it is pure accident that makes one woman's costume stand out from all the rest. In the theatre, it is no accident, it is the result of careful planning, the crowning achievement of all the skill a clever designer can bring to bear. It is color that pulls the actor out of the background.

Costumes for the theatre must harmonize with the set. On the stage, the principal character is the center of interest in a canvas of which the set is the background. But unlike a painting, on the stage this center of interest is constantly shifting. The actor is moving about, yet he must not only make a dominant note wherever he happens to be but he must compose well with the background in all his major positions. He must be apparent against the shadows. He must harmonize with the hangings. If the set is very broken in line and color, his costume must be a large simple mass of color to be seen against it. Not only must he, in principal positions, harmonize with the set but his costume must be in harmony with the garments of the actors with whom he plays most of his scenes.

Costumes for the principals in the cast must dominate. Dominance is achieved by differentiation. A costume may be dominant by virtue of its being the brightest color spot on the set. On the other hand, a character in stark black will stand out against the bright colors of a brilliantly clad supporting cast. Here dominance is achieved by contrast. However, in the theatre *mood* is a prime consideration. If the mood of a scene is a gay one and *all* colors must be relatively high in key, the

principal costumes may achieve dominance as large masses of unbroken color against the kaleidoscope of broken color of the supporting cast. If the mood is tragic and demands that costumes of all principals be relatively low in key, the supporting characters should be costumed in neutral tones so that the principals will remain dominant. For example, a dark bottle green, or deep garnet red and certainly black, although low in key, will still be dominant over grays and beiges and browns. If all costumes must be drained of color, the costumes of principals may be made dominant by a *contrast in value*, lighter values against the dark of the ensemble, or by dark grays and browns against lighter values of the costumes of the supporting cast. *Dominance is achieved by difference.*

Color Harmony in Stage Costume

Color harmony for stage costume is a specific problem that bears little relation to the problem of color for costumes to be used in life. For one thing, on the stage, the becomingness of colors is not of paramount importance, for the make-up can be altered to suit the costume. Even hair may be covered with a wig. The most important difference, however, is this: to intensify dramatic action, colors on the stage must often assail the nerves and wring the emotions. We must sometimes depict the costumes of primitive peoples in colors that in life we might find unbearable. We therefore cannot speak of color harmony in the accepted sense. What makes satisfactory harmony in some cultures and climates is anathema to the sensibilities in others. The relative amount of strong color employed is important too. Colors that are enchanting in the plumage of a small bird are frequently intolerable over a large area. Fortunately, colors on the stage are with us for only a short duration. For that reason, we tolerate, without too much nerve shock, much more violent schemes on the stage than we could in life. With the foregoing in mind, it will be understood that what follows is not a lesson in color harmony but a few general rules that will be helpful in choosing colors for stage costumes.

1. *Neutrals* when used together are always safe but they are also likely to be dull. A very few intense colors will be enough to perk up a mass of neutrals on the stage, and in this way there is no danger of disharmony because the neutrals will separate the intense colors sufficiently to avoid their clashing if they should not happen to be har-

monious in juxtaposition. A mere touch of bright trimming is often enough to relieve the dullness of a costume in a neutral color.

Costumes in neutral colors *need* not be dull in themselves. Pale neutral colors reflect the stage lights better than strong saturated colors and take on a charming opalescent quality. There is nothing dull, for instance, about a scheme of pinkish-beige, pearly gray, and red-brown. It is important, however, to get *value contrast* in the scheme. In this case, the red-brown would be the dark contrasting value.

2. Various *values of the same color* give interest of dark and light with no danger of disharmony. Black may always be used safely as value contrast with any color because it is not a real color so much as a value and therefore cannot clash with colors. White is dramatic with any color and a safe scheme but it is very attention-commanding. Never use it for minor characters.

3. *Analogous colors.*[3] Colors next to each other on the color chart go well together. Here too you must aim at value contrast. *It is the variation of dark and light that makes any scheme dynamic.* Yellow, yellow-orange, and orange, all in the same value are boring, but pale yellow, yellow-orange, and an orange whose intensity has been lowered to the color we know as burnt-orange, is interesting. The orange of low intensity[4] forms the darkest value and the punch-note in the scheme.

When one wishes to achieve a floating, evanescent quality, it is better to keep the values high, using tints of colors and values that are close together without too much contrast. A butterfly or a fairy, for instance, might be dressed in a scheme of pale yellow-green, pale blue-green and pale blue, a scheme showing a complete absence of dark values or contrast.

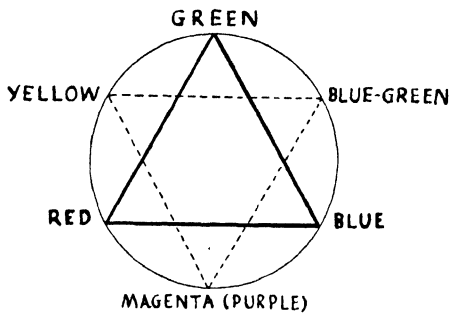
4. *Complementary colors* are harmonious. However, they make for maximum brilliance and contrast, and therefore are extremely attention-compelling. They must be used carefully. They are suitable for scenes in bright, crisp moods. To soften the effect of two complementaries, use one at full intensity and one at dulled intensity. A bright purple dress trimmed with an intense green may be very hard, but a bright purple trimmed with a dulled, grayed green or playing next to a costume in grayed green is more interesting and easier to tolerate.

5. Do not use too much *broken color* in dramatic scenes. It distracts

[3] Analogous colors are related colors, such as red and orange; blue and blue green. They contain in their make-up a common color.

[4] Intensity refers to the dullness or brightness of a color.

COLOR CHART IN LIGHT



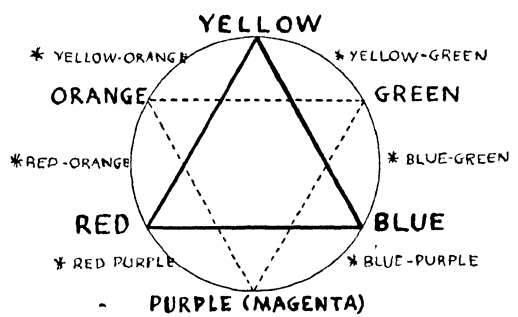
PRIMARY COLORS (solid triangle): Green, Blue, Red.

SECONDARY COLORS (dotted triangle): Yellow, Blue-Green, Magenta (Purple).

COMPLEMENTARY PAIRS:

{Green / Magenta} {Blue / Yellow} {Red / Blue-Green}

COLOR CHART IN PIGMENT



PRIMARY COLORS (solid triangle): Yellow, Blue, Red.

SECONDARY COLORS (dotted triangle): Orange, Green, Purple (Magenta), are formed by mixing two primaries: Yellow + Red = Orange; Yellow + Blue = Green; Red + Blue = Purple.

TERTIARY COLORS (starred): Yellow-Green, Blue-Green, Blue-Purple, Red-Purple, Red-Orange, Yellow-Orange, are formed by mixing a primary and a secondary: Yellow + Green = Yellow-Green; Green + Blue = Blue-Green, etc.

the attention from the action. Use plain masses of suitable color for the desired emotional effect. In scenes that lack dramatic action, however, it is valuable to emphasize ornament and detail in costume to stimulate interest.

6. Colors used for *contrasting trim* should be carefully distributed. A bit of bright color used on hem or sleeves should be repeated in the hat or in the handkerchief. Always repeat the accenting color at least once.

7. Never divide the colors used in a costume exactly half and half, except for clowns and other fanciful figures. Such obvious balance is boring, unsophisticated, and what is more, unbecoming to the figure.

8. *Dark values* have more weight than light values. Never place the weighty colors in a scheme of more than one value where the dark value throws the figure out of balance. Dark colors should, generally speaking, be kept low on the figure, where they tend to give support. In a scheme of many values, the darkest values should be toward the hem of the skirt except for small accents of trimming.

Costume Color and Stage Lighting

Present-day stage lighting attempts to provide more than illumination. The colored light that illuminates the stage may drastically affect the costume colors. White light contains red, blue, and green rays. A green object looks green because it has the power to reflect the green of which a white ray is composed, and because it absorbs the red and blue. When green is seen under a purple light, it becomes blackish. It loses its color because the purple gelatin has blocked the green rays in the white light, and since there is no green to reflect, green fabric under purple light becomes blackish. On the other hand, green fabric appears at its purest and most intense when lighted by its own color, green, for no dye color is really pure and green fabric will reflect a little of the red or blue in sunlight or white light.

While it is true that color in light affects costume colors because the colored gelatin blocks off specific rays in white light, it is perhaps easier, for our purposes, to think of the *color* in the set illumination as mixing with the color in the costume fabric, to form a new color. *It is this tendency of costumes to change color under stage lights that constitutes our great difficulty.* The problem is complicated by the fact that the lighting plan for a production cannot really be complete until the stage is set, and we must usually begin work on the costumes before

that. Fortunately a general lighting plan may be decided before the play goes into rehearsal. By this the costume designer must be guided, leaving difficult color problems to be determined on the stage when the light plan is more or less fixed.

When the general illumination on the set approaches sunlight (that is, when the lighting is an even mixture of red, green, and blue or when the spotlight pairs are in complementary tints) the costumer will have nothing to worry about, for costumes of any color under this lighting will remain relatively unchanged. But when the general illumination or spotlighting has a predominantly blue or green or red cast, care must be exercised to employ only those colors which will be effective under the dominant color of the lighting plot.

Colored lights affect color in fabrics in approximately the following ways: *Complementaries.* A color lighted by its complement turns blackish with a slight leaning toward the original color. (See pp. 400, 404, 405.) Green under a purple light becomes blackish. Green under a red light becomes blackish too. Blue under a yellow light, its complement in light, becomes blackish. Blue under a green or orange light, both of which contain yellow, will turn blackish too. *Analogous Colors.* Generally speaking, a mixed color lighted by its relative will not be "killed" (that is, turn blackish) but will change to the color of the light shining on it. Purple, a mixture of blue and red, will under a red light become so reddish as to exclude practically all the blue. When seen under a blue light, purple will change almost to pure blue.

A primary lighted by its relative, a secondary, will not be so drastically affected for it is seen under a mixture of two colors and partakes a little of both. Red, for instance, under a purple light becomes enriched and tinged with blue. The red in the purple light intensifies the color in the fabric and the blue in the light tends to make the red fabric appear somewhat bluish.

One primary lighted by another primary usually changes to form a secondary. For example, red under a blue light becomes purplish. Green under a yellow light becomes yellow-green; the exception is blue. Blue seen under a red, yellow, or green light becomes blackish.

The tendency of fabrics to change color under stage lights may be more embarrassing than their tendency to turn blackish. Imagine how upsetting it can be to see an actor who was costumed in red one moment suddenly appear in blue because of a change of lights on the set.

One way to protect a color scheme from sudden change is to use colors that will not be greatly affected by the change in lighting. Suppose the change is from a day scene to a night scene. The day scene probably will employ lighting under which any color will be effective. The only problem, then, will be to choose colors that will not be drastically affected by the stage lights used to simulate night illumination. These same colors will do well in the day scene for the even proportion of red, blue, and green used in the light to suggest daylight will guarantee clarity of any color. In a case of this type, use the lighting plot for the night scene as a guide in choosing the costume colors.

Another way to preserve the original color of the costumes is to see that footlights and borders employ color mediums alternating red, green, blue, and white. Then even if the set itself were picked up by spots of either amber or purple or blue, the footlights and borders probably would carry enough illumination in daylight proportions to keep the costume colors clear. *It is only when a spot of one specific color is used directly on a costume*—as is frequently the practice to highlight the actor as he speaks his lines—*that the designer must be concerned with the color of that light.* An eerie green light, for instance, would be difficult to cope with, for it would turn all make-up and fabric that had much red in it blackish. It would also turn blues and purples heavy and dark. The best choice under such a light would be a tint of a color, for a tint reflects all light rays with a little more reflection of its dominant color. A pink fabric under green light would not turn black but gray-green. If the costume is for a man (and a tint is out of the question), it would be best to choose a color with yellow or green dominant in it. These colors would show least change under a green light. Brown, for instance, would turn almost black under a green light.

If, despite the lighting plot, you must employ troublesome colors, arrange for special spotlights on these costumes to reinforce their colors. Use spots the color of the fabrics themselves or arrange for spotlight pairs in complementary colors, for these will approximate daylight and keep the costume colors clear. This can be done without disturbing the dominant lighting of the set.

A few things to remember are

1. Examine the effect of footlights and borders on the costumes.
2. Examine the effect of spotlights.

3. Color in fabric is enriched by the same color in light and is dulled by its complementary.

4. A tint of any color in light will do less damage to a costume color than a saturated hue. Conversely, a pale tint in costume will react less violently to a colored light than will a saturated hue, for a tint reflects other light rays besides its dominant tone and therefore will not go completely black when lighted by a complement. It will turn grayish with a leaning toward the color of the light that illuminates it.

5. Because a tint reflects more light than a saturated color, costumes for night scenes, where blue or green is dominant and the illumination is low, must be planned in pale tints of colors. Saturated colors under such lighting would be lost in the shadows.

6. Saturated colors always need high illumination for full effectiveness.

7. Pale tints of colors in fabrics will pick up the colors of the stage lights and take on a rich opalescent quality. They are valuable to use for this quality even when the illumination is high.

8. The quantity of illumination alters the *value* of a color. Poor illumination darkens values. Powerful illumination, however, does not raise values. Royal purple will look black in a dim light. It will not, however, become pale lavender in a bright light.

9. Dyeing in daylight, costumes to be used under colored lights may prove disastrous. Think of the effect of the lights.

10. Save questionable color problems until the light plot is set.

The following chart shows approximately how fabric colors change under colored lights.

Under Red Light

Red becomes Enriched
Green becomes Blackish
Blue becomes Blackish
Yellow becomes Orangish
Purple becomes Reddish

Under Blue Light

Red becomes Purplish
Green becomes Blackish
Blue becomes Enriched
Yellow becomes Brownish
Purple becomes Bluish

Under Green Light

Red becomes Brownish
Green becomes Enriched
Blue becomes Blackish
Yellow becomes Greenish, Yellow-Green
Purple becomes Brownish

Under Amber Light

Red is imperceptibly dulled
Green is tinged with Yellow
Blue is Blackish
Yellow is Enriched
Purple is Reddish

Under Purple Light

Red becomes Enriched but Bluish
Green becomes Blackish
Blue becomes Enriched but Reddish
Yellow becomes Grayed-pink
Purple becomes Enriched

Green fabrics are grayed by pinks and reds.

Blue fabrics are deadened by pinks and reds.

Blue and green fabrics and to a lesser degree reds are spoiled by amber light.

Greens and reds are brought out by straw.

Reds and blues are brought out by light lavender.

Yellows and greens are brought out by amber and light straw.

(Madeline Goodfriend)

Special Procedures in Production

Means of Progressive Staging
Directing Social Drama
The Technique of Comedy Direction
On Directing Shakespeare
Interpreting Shakespeare
Revivals
Music in the Theatre
Dance in Plays
Directing Musical Entertainment
The Radio Play
Directing the Radio Play

THERE are numerous special problems in production. To meet them successfully the director and his collaborating artists must first master basic procedures. In the last analysis, producing one kind of play (comedy, farce, tragedy, etc.) is like producing any other kind of play. Each artist—director, designer, actor, etc.—must know the fundamentals of his art and craft.

After this, however, it is necessary for him to acquire special understanding and experience. There are no absolute rules for his approach to special problems, and the manner in which he should treat each separate assignment must remain highly individual. But he has to think about the possibilities of certain procedures, consider what has been done before, and discover what he can contribute.

In this section, the chapters consider the use of music and dance in the theatre, progressive techniques and approaches in staging comedy, social drama, poetic plays, Shakespearian drama, revivals in general, musical comedies and revues, and radio scripts. Included, too, is a survey of non-professional production in universities and little theatres, along with some reference to rural groups and schools.

MEANS OF PROGRESSIVE STAGING

ALTHOUGH both preceding and succeeding chapters treat many approaches to what is often described as "advanced" or "experimental" production, it may be helpful to take a formal inventory of them. But first it must be understood that they are, by themselves, neither good nor bad. Everything depends upon how and when they are employed, and upon the manner in which they are combined with the other aspects of a production in order to ensure relevance to the play, dynamic interpretation, and design.

Meaning of Progressive Staging

In the days immediately preceding the triumph of realism in Europe and America, progressive production meant a realistic or naturalistic (illusionistic) mode of presentation such as Antoine gave at the *Théâtre Libre*, Brahm at the *Freie Buehne*, and Stanislavsky at the Moscow Art Theatre. In our own realistically oriented theatre, conversely, progressivism frequently refers to non-illusionistic, presentational staging. Progressive staging is relative to a particular age. In our own, it means departing from a literal reproduction of reality in order to achieve greater dramatic illumination and force. It involves the application of creative imagination, illusionistic or non-illusionistic.

Coleridge's distinction between fancy and imagination should be borne in mind. Except for purposes of travesty or extravaganza (for instance, in a revue skit), any departure from realism must be *appropriate to the play*, and this can be determined by a study of the content, purpose, structure, mood, and style of the text.[1] Moreover, one

[1] For purely experimental and instructional purposes, it may of course be expedient to produce plays in different styles without always considering the absolute *a priori* suitability of the style. This was tried by Professor Hallie Flanagan at Vassar College, when a play was given in three styles. There is something to be learned from such experimentation with different production styles for the same play.

should be certain that the style of production is the *most* appropriate and efficacious one possible under the circumstances. Any other procedure is sheer dilettantism or sensational exhibitionism by the director.

Practical considerations may, of course, enter into one's determination to use a particular "progressive" approach. One of these considerations is *the stage itself.* A particular presentational style may recommend itself as potentially the most effective method under certain circumstances, when one has to use a small stage which will not accommodate several realistic sets or will make shifting too difficult or slow. For a shallow stage one may resort to formal drapes, painted drops, and screens. There is a danger only in setting up an expedient as an ideal way of staging and then employing it even when ampler means make possible a different and more effective mode of production. Orson Welles faced this problem of space on the small stage of his Mercury Theatre. He solved it successfully with "space-staging," picking out acting areas with spots of light, in *Julius Caesar*; adequately with a conventionalized unit setting for *The Shoemaker's Holiday*; and ingeniously but unsuccessfully in *Danton's Death.*

His staging of the last-mentioned play is an instructive example of the possibilities and dangers of taking liberties in production. His use of the curtain of masks was a brilliant device; for the stage width required for the production of a mass drama, he substituted height. The curtain soaring up several stories high, created a spatial effect and a terrifying sense of mass. But the device of bringing small platforms upon the stage through traps in the floor for several scenes had a toy-like quality, reducing the struggle and pathos of the actors. Ramps and steps can create a sense of depth, but they too have their practical difficulties. Steep steps can imperil the actor or force him to be conscious of them while acting or to step so warily that the audience is kept wondering how well he will keep his balance. Ramps and steps may also seem too artificial and arbitrary when used too arbitrarily.

A List of Progressive Devices

However, there are many details and approaches of progressive techniques that can be employed successfully when appropriate and when they enhance the meaning and quality of the play. The following elementary partial list, alphabetically arranged for convenience, may remind the director of staging possibilities when faced with a particular

problem in interpretation, reproduction of suitable older styles of production, or adaptation to the exigencies of a particular theatre or stage:

1. *Apron.* A part of the stage in front of the proscenium, although not jutting out far into the auditorium and not surrounded by the audience on three sides as in the Elizabethan theatre. The apron is useful for period plays given presentationally. It is sufficient also for creating the effect of Elizabethan staging, without going to the trouble of duplicating the complete Elizabethan convention. (See the Orson Welles production of *Dr. Faustus.*) An apron can be erected by taking out the front rows of seats and substituting a platform.

2. *Audience Participation.* The standard method is presentational staging, with the actors addressing their soliloquies and asides to the spectators. Difficult to maintain where the stage is directly behind the proscenium arch, the presentational method is generally employed with restraint—without marked address to the audience. The asides and soliloquies may also be given as interior monologs or streams of consciousness.

A suitable variant is that of converting the audience into a mass meeting and addressing it from the stage in a modern social play. In the last scene of Elmer Rice's *We, the People,* the audience was treated as the public at a civil liberties meeting and the actors used the stage as a podium for their speeches in behalf of a victim of injustice. In *Waiting for Lefty*, the auditorium was conceived as a strikers' meeting hall. Actors were planted in the audience to harangue the speakers on the stage, to oppose or support them. Actors in the audience can be annoying, disturbing the illusion and certainly making the people sitting near them self-conscious.

Movement can be maintained by making the actors in the audience get up and climb up on the stage, as they did in the aforementioned production. This can create surprise and tension, as well as occasional annoyance. Processions can come through the aisles, as in the Federal Theatre production of John Howard Lawson's *Processional*, in which the miners' jazz band came in from the back of the auditorium, climbed up to the stage, and continued its march there. Unfortunately the marchers, unless carefully rehearsed, can make a nuisance of themselves by elbowing and kicking the audience, and they may also block its vision of the stage; it is wise therefore to have no important business on stage during the procession.

Hilariously contrived was the planting of actors in the auditorium

and the invasion of the orchestra in the revue *Hellzapoppin!* The auditorium was converted into a crowded night club and the revelry was plumped into the midst of the spectators, who were showered with confetti, twitted, frightened, shot at, and otherwise made part of the production. The audience seemed to love this after recovering from its surprise. The poor notices that most of my fellow-critics gave the show may well have been induced in part by our annoyance at being rattled out of our critical shells . . . Christopher Sly haranguing latecomers from a box in the Lunts' *Taming of the Shrew* also provided audience involvement for comic effect.

3. *Automatism.* Giving the actor's physical appearance and behavior a mechanical effect. Useful in plays like *R.U.R.* and *The Adding Machine,* in which characters are completely or partially depersonalized. Effective in establishing dream sequences, as in the staging of the opening portion of the second act of *Liberty Jones* when Miss Liberty's delirium begins.

4. *Blackout.* Sudden putting out of the lights on the stage and plunging it into darkness. An effective substitute for a curtain after short, closely related scenes, as in staging *Waiting for Lefty.* This device cannot be used when the settings have to be changed by shifting. But changing a few props or shifting their position is possible, and the different lighting of the next scene, including the selection of a different acting zone, can create a suggestive transformation of the next scenic picture. The blackout can also serve as a flashback from present to past tense. It can, besides, indicate a short lapse of time. In the Theatre Guild production of *The Good Earth,* the heroine was in labor in one scene; after her travail had been briefly projected to the audience, the scene was blacked out, and when the lights went on after a minute she was already delivered of the child. Obviously there would have been no sense in prolonging the childbirth scene, and to have dropped the curtain would have left the audience dissatisfied with a meager and inconclusive scene which needed completion in terms of the characters' reactions to a particular event.

5. *Camera Angle.* Using oblique angles—not right angles to the audience's line of vision—in the placement of the set and the actors, in order to create a weird or suggestive quality. All the actors may stand obliquely, creating an odd or half-real effect; all the furniture may be obliquely placed, etc. A striking example is the table used for the psychiatrist's scene in the Group Theatre's production of

Johnny Johnson, directed by Lee Strasberg. The enormous raked table suggested that the psychiatrist was more insane than his patient Johnny Johnson; this accorded with the spine of both that particular scene and of the entire play, which maintained that Johnny Johnson was the only sane man in a war-mad world.

6. *Cartoons.* Cartoons can take the place of characters for satirical or comic purposes. The cartoons by the anti-militarist German artist Georg Grosz for *The Good Soldier Schweik* and other Piscator productions were effective. One of the cartoons was an enormous caricature of a medical officer (not impersonated by an actor but placed on a screen) who examined Schweik and other Austrian conscripts. Use may also be found for animated cartoons by an ingenious director when staging a play that can be so treated.

7. *Chorus.* Besides the conventional employment of the singing chorus in musical comedies and revues (see p. 482, 486 ff.), fine use can be made of the speaking chorus, as in T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral.* For liturgical or very formal purposes, the director may require its members to stand together formally, and speak in unison, with their Leader speaking separately at times. To achieve greater dramatic effect, the lines can be distributed among the actors who comprise the chorus. Care should be taken to synchronize the speeches, creating a symphony of voices. But this does not imply tame and pretty delivery any more than it does in a symphonic masterpiece; for dramatic purposes, one speaker may top the other, his line may lap over into someone else's line, run counter to it, and so on. This treatment of choral matter, which can involve considerable movement by the chorus, may also be used for revivals of Greek tragedies and such classically patterned plays as Racine's *Athaliah*, Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, and Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon.* Some singing can be employed, provided it comes as a response to the intensification of the choral content, and provided the transition from speaking to singing is managed without abrupt or formal interruption. To stop speaking and suddenly burst into music is less effective than rising gradually from speaking voice to chant-like intensity or to song.

A modern variant is the so-called *mass-chant* in epic drama, as in Brecht's *Mother* where the chorus reinforced and commented on the play's action. It may also be used independently in a program of one-acters and mass chants. Dramatic delivery can make the latter extremely forceful.

8. *Constructivism.* Staging plays on non-representational platforms generally resembling the skeletons of buildings and using abstract equivalents for illusionistic scenery. In the first flush of constructivist enthusiasm even forests and country scenes were presented on ramps, scaffolds, and ladders. This style of presentation was popularized by Meyerhold and Tairov. Acrobatics and athletic movement rather than introspective understanding of the role by the actor (i.e., identification with it through feeling, sense, and affective memory) were required of the actor, for whom Meyerhold developed gymnastic exercises which he called bio-mechanics. One justification advanced for this style was its reflection of the modern industrial and mechanistic age.

Constructivism had a small vogue in America (an example was the Neighborhood Playhouse production of Francis Faragoh's *Pinwheel*), and quickly lost favor in Russia too. It was more sensational than gratifying. However, in modified form it can be applied to stage settings where streamlined, modernist effects are feasible (*Modified Constructivism,* as in Lee Simonson's set for *Idiot's Delight*). Moreover, the technique may well prove efficacious for special satirical purposes (imagine setting staid and stuffy or over-refined characters on the scaffolds!), and for spoofing old melodramas and sentimental pieces if one were so inclined (a juvenile inclination unless it serves a larger, "ideological" purpose!).

9. *Cubism.* Presentation of nature in geometric forms (see Cubism in painting), with the design carried out in the settings, lighting, costumes, and the angular movement of the actors. Outmoded as a movement, it can be applied in extreme or in preferably modified form to special interpretative approaches.

10. *Curtains and Drapes.* These can be used instead of built settings, or to supplement and hold partially constructed sets together visually. They can ensure fluidity of stage movement, reducing intervals between scenes or acts by obviating the necessity of elaborate scene changes.

Curtains can be treated expressively by being handled as in the Mercury Theatre's *Native Son* (p. 431) and in the Group Theatre's *Night Music* (with musical notations projected on them), or studded with sculptured forms as in the Mercury's *Danton's Death* (p. 430).

They can be transparent (*scrim drops* made of gauze), creating the illusion of depth on the stage; they can produce misty effects and discoveries (generally, though not solely, for musical comedies and

revues)—for instance, an inner scene, set further upstage, is suddenly revealed when lighting from the back makes the scrim transparent. The lighting specialist A. Feder has experimented successfully with curtains of light from which highly imaginative and poetic effects can be expected.

11. *Dadaism.* An affected, decadent conglomeration of nonsensical details (chiefly in painting) that could be resorted to, however, for special effects where an impression of chaos, nonsense, and incoherence is needed, provided, of course, one is prepared to risk the danger of "artiness."

12. *Deus ex machina.* The classic "god from the machine" device, the "god" or supernatural creature being brought on stage from the heavens or taken off the stage by means of a crane-like machine. Its crudity can still be used for comic purposes in revivals of Greek comedy. Contrived neatly by means of invisible wires, this device is still employed in forms of musical entertainment (in the musical comedy *I Married an Angel*, for example), and can be striking for fantastic effect in non-musical drama, as in the Theatre Guild production of Bernard Shaw's *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* when the angel brings news of the Last Judgment.

Related is the use of the "glory," a tableau of gods descending on flies, amid clouds and sunlight, in the Renaissance theatre. For fantasies, pageants, and musical comedy, the "glory" may still be usable.

13. *Eccyclema and Exostra.* The platform that was rolled out or thrust out of the scene building in the Greek theatres. Here the platform represented an interior scene. Someone has been murdered offstage; the platform is brought out, revealing a tableau. The platform in modern staging may be brought on stage by a treadmill, as in the production of *The Good Soldier Schweik*. This device ensures continuity for short scenes that could not stand alone as full dramatic scenes and should be tied together. The platform can also be drawn in on wheels. In the Theatre Guild's social revue *Parade*, platforms were drawn in by the marchers who staged a demonstration, the various floats and choruses constituting the entire revue.

14. *Entr'acte.* During intermissions the spirit of a play can be carried on by appropriate music or by sound effects, provided these do not continue in full force, jarring the public's nervous system. This can be over-done, as when the management employed fog-horns (reminiscent of the waterfront) in *Dead End* to warn the audience in the

lobby and the rest rooms that the intermission was coming to an end. For light-hearted plays, the intermissions can be filled, as in the Elizabethan public theatres, with songs, jigs, and acrobatics. (Elizabethan jigs, consisting of music, dance and dialog, are delightful. Modern versions have been composed by the actor Fred Steward of the Actors Repertory Company.)

15. *Epic Style.* (See pp. 65, 89, 352, 358.)

16. *Expressionism.* (See pp. 64, 85, 350.)

17. *Fade-out.* A movie technique of the gradual darkening and disappearance of scenes. It may be used on the stage in connection with a blackout or as a substitute for it. The fade-out is gradual; the blackout, sudden.

18. *Films.* Films can be used in conjunction with stage plays, as in "epic drama." Such films may provide documentary sequences or supplement stage scenery, continuing the scene on stage into a scene on a screen, which may be a cyclorama or skydrop.

19. *Flower Path.* A narrow platform, ramp or "runway" in the Japanese theatre, introduced by Reinhardt in his production of *Sumurun.* The ramp that projects into the audience is now used, as a rule, only in the cheapest forms of entertainment. A ramp running around the walls of the auditorium might be used for special effects. For instance, actors could be placed and kept moving there to constitute an audience or a chorus for a special play. Perhaps, when faced with the problem of a small stage one could accommodate masses on the ramp to represent the visitors' gallery of a legislative hall, and so on. A novel use appeared at the American Music Hall, where old-fashioned melodramas were staged hilariously, in a spirit of good fellowship, with the audience drinking at tables in the orchestra. For scenes showing the cowboys chasing the Indians, or the villain being pursued over the prairies, animated cartoons raced furiously around the runway along the walls of the auditorium.

20. *Formalism.* The use of a formal stage, neither wholly illusionistic (realistic) nor stylistically distorted, but arranged to create a formal appearance of simply balanced planes. A famous example was Copeau's *Théâtre du Vieux Colombier* stage. It had a formally arranged frontage and architectural frame which were permanent features of every production; the inner stage was changed for different plays but its settings were simple, suggestive, and also fairly formal. Its formality bore a resemblance to the Renaissance stage and Inigo

Jones's settings during the early 17th century in England. Since setting a production in this manner can provide coolness and decorum for certain kinds of plays, it might be applied successfully to the staging of some modern poetic plays (*Murder in the Cathedral* and Dorothy Sayers' *Zeal of Thy House*), to Restoration tragedies, and to some of the work of Corneille and Racine (*Cinna, Horace, Brittanicus,* and *Phaedra*).

21. *Grotesque.* The grotesque style—reminiscent of medieval bestiaries, gargoyles, Dance of Death pictures, and demonology, such as will be found in Bosch's paintings—may prove effective for the revival of medieval moralities and Elizabethan or romantic plays like *Macbeth,* Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* and Goethe's *Faust.* In modern style, the grotesque may also find a place in satire, as in the Georg Grosz cartoons for Piscator's stage.

22. *Harlequinades. Commedia dell' arte* style and later modifications; a fanciful, light, and rather clowning style (see the numerous pictures of Harlequin, Pierrot, Columbine, etc.), using masks—some of them grotesque. Suitable not only for *commedia dell' arte* revivals, based on Scala's synopses (since complete scripts were not kept by the actors who improvised the plays), but also for Pierrot plays and for such a modern harlequinade as Benavente's *Bonds of Interest.*

23. *Irising.* A film method of achieving a transition from one scene to another by means of an iris shutter which forms a circular area on the screen. The size of the area can be increased or decreased. The use of this device in the theatre appears in spotlighting stage areas and enlarging or diminishing them. This method was used on Broadway to frame a romantic love scene in the production of the British play *Love on the Dole,*—not very appropriately, however, in this writer's opinion. It could be put to better use for comic purposes, such as treating a romantic love scene playfully, satirizing a pompous family scene (as though it were an old-fashioned photograph), spotting a flamboyant orator, and so on. An actual example of irising for comic purposes is the staging of W. S. Gilbert's *Engaged* against and through a pair of eyeglasses by the Mummers of St. Louis.

24. *"Machine for Theatre."* (See page 351.) A setting that changes in front of an audience, with certain parts swinging around or moving into position (with or without a revolving stage) may be very appropriate to fantasy or dream sequences, as in Moss Hart's *Lady in the Dark*; and sometimes for a play that treats industrialism and in-

dustrial processes of the machine age. Used simply as a toy, it may have comic utility, especially in some settings for musical comedies and revues.

25. *Mansions.* (See p. 77.) A simultaneous stage setting consisting of separate little buildings or rather booths, as in the staging of French medieval plays, can be used for medieval revivals. In modified form, the mansion type of staging may serve for a city or square, especially on a small stage; Orson Welles used this setting successfully in staging *The Shoemaker's Holiday* for the Mercury Theatre, conveying the sense of crowded Elizabethan London. Adaptation for musical entertainment is also possible.

26. *Montage.* In films the combination of different scenes succeeding each other not in chronological sequence but by overlapping, turning from present to past, and mingling the scenes freely. This can be used in a "space stage" production, and was so used in staging the "agit-prop"[2] play *Newsboy.* Driving home an idea by mixing and arranging brief scenes in order to create strong feeling is possible, provided this treatment is not continued long enough to be tiring and confusing. *Montage* is possible also for fantasy and dream sequences.

27. *Multiple setting.* A unit set divided into several sections. One of them can be opened for the playing of a particular scene while the other sections are covered or closed. The most famous utilization of this type of setting appeared in the Broadway production of O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms.* The rooms and the porch of the farmhouse in which the different scenes were placed were closed up with boards when not in use. A variant of this method was employed in the successful New School for Social Research Studio Theatre production of *The Circle of Chalk,* directed by James Light. The shallow set for this Chinese play consisted of three sections in a straight line. Whenever one of these was to be used, the stage-hands drew up the large oriental-looking Venetian blind that concealed that part of the stage from the audience. When the scene ended, the blinds were drawn, and the next area was revealed. (Also known as *Simultaneous setting.*)

28. *Oratorio Staging.* In presenting an oratorio, the singers remain seated or standing without acting out their parts, and the stage is devoid of settings. This type of staging, with the merest suggestion of acting, was originally used only *faute de mieux* for the music-drama

[2] Propagandist (agit-prop) one-acters about unemployment and other social problems. *Newsboy* was the most popular of these during the depression.

The Cradle Will Rock at the Mercury Theatre. But it proved more than adequate for this type of play; it was actually exciting and stimulating. A piano was placed at the audience's right. The actors sat on several rows of benches, and moved to a downstage area (center or left) when needed. Mass chants, dramatic poetry consisting of long speeches with little action (Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, for example), and some good radio plays might be presented in this manner on the stage. A public reading of any type of play can be given in this style; this was tried effectively by the Theatre Guild for a special occasion.

29. *Painted Settings.* Sets made of painted drops, a few flats, and some set pieces, instead of three-dimensional scenery, can be used pictorially and charmingly (as well as economically!), for appropriate period plays, preferably comedies, whenever the fragility of such settings would harmonize with the spirit of the text.

30. *Panoramas.* Scenery painted on canvas and unrolled on a roller can create the effect of a moving landscape, suggesting the movement of a train or any other vehicle. This is not by itself a progressive device, but it can make scenes of motion possible on the stage. The *treadmill* is another device for this purpose. *Screens,* with painted landscape pictures, carried by supers or stage hands can also be used, preferably for comic or farcical effect, in the spirit of extravaganza. This was the procedure in the Lunts' *Taming of the Shrew* when Petruchio and Katherine traveled across the stage.

31. *Permanent Setting.* The use of a setting that is unchanged and unshifted may serve the purposes of economy (financial or spatial), or formalism, and of securing flowing action for plays written in many scenes. It is to be noted, however, that a production can employ the permanent setting flexibly (*semi-permanent setting*). There is no esthetic reason why the setting cannot be partially altered by changes during intermissions or blackouts, or radically changed by different lighting of the set or some portion of it. *Arches* can be impressively used in such a setting.

32. *Perspective Settings.* Renaissance settings consisting of street scenes with buildings, or of landscapes and gardens for pastoral drama, painted in perspective. They can be duplicated for period plays—for Renaissance and Roman comedies—or reproduced with flats. Lee Simonson's setting for The Theatre Guild's revival of Molière's *The School for Husbands* is an interesting modification of such a setting.

33. *Plasticism.* The use of a stage consisting of non-representational architectonic (three-dimensional) structures, providing planes for the actor, and being played upon by directional lighting which creates suggestive effects. Norman Bel Geddes' designs for a dramatic version of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and for *King Lear* and *The Eternal Road* (see illustration facing p. 450) are good examples.

It would seem that in its fullest application, this stark, impressive type of staging is most appropriate to imaginative works of epic dimensions like *The Eternal Road* and Hardy's *The Dynasts.*

34. *Platform Stage.* The platform, as opposed to the picture-frame stage, used in the Elizabethan public theatres, in the corrals of Lope de Vega's Spain, in *commedia dell' arte,* and in the Chinese and Japanese theatres. It is excellent for presentational staging and for continuous action, although actors in our time have to adjust themselves to the conditions of this stage. Their acting style will depend upon the degree of presentationalism required by the director's conception of the particular production. A platform stage can be erected in any hall, street, or square. It can also be fitted into a conventional theatre building, as at the Yale University Theatre. (See p. 557.)

35. *Props (Properties) as Scenery.* Props such as furniture and ladders can be used on a bare stage and can create the impression of scenery, as in the Jed Harris production of *Our Town.* The problem is to avoid seeming precious.

Here it may be noted that even costumes and the arrangement of the actors could conceivably be used for scenic effect. The simplest example is that of a group of actors in gala dress on an almost bare stage who succeed in giving the impression of a festive hall. A German playwright, Hans Rothe, conceived such a production for some of Shakespeare's comedies, for plays like *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Love's Labor's Lost.* A pictorial arrangement of the costumed actors was expected to create the scenic effect.

36. *Projected Scenery.* The projection of images by a projecting instrument can often be effective for special scenic effects and will obviate the necessity of special settings and painted drops.

37. *Puppets and Marionettes.* These can be employed for fantastic, grotesque, and comic effects. Orson Welles used them strikingly for the Seven Deadly Sins episode in staging *Dr. Faustus*; the Vices were leering, petty, mean, and altogether repellant.

38. *Raked Stage.* The stage that slopes up from the proscenium can

be used not only to increase the sense of depth on a shallow stage, but for special emphases: significant elevation for climactic scenes played upstage; precipitous inclines that threaten to drop the set into the audience's lap, etc., where that effect or any other bizarre one can enhance the staging.

39. *Relief Stage.* A shallow setting with the actor standing out in relief against the set. Molière's comedies and neo-classic tragedies by Corneille and Racine where declamation, formal movement, and rhetorical emotionalism characterize the actors' roles can be played effectively "in relief."

40. *Revolving Stage.* One or more stages revolving on a pivot can ensure continuity in a multi-set play. However, they are not only expensive to build if they are to be motorized and noiseless (as they should be), but they may be inappropriate. They should not be used when they will give the impression of a mountain laboring to bring forth a mouse; when they will give a toylike or sensational quality to a play of quiet seriousness or simple depth, as was the case in the Broadway production of Irwin Shaw's essentially simple drama of the Spanish Civil War, *Siege.*

Small turntables can be easily erected on even a small stage (as at the New School for Social Research), and can be rotated by hand. The danger is creakiness during rotation. It should also be noted that it is inadvisable to make them gyrate too frequently; they should be turned only when they will reveal a scenically distinct *new* locale; otherwise the acting area has been shifted and the audience will have been watching the motion of the turntable to no great purpose. The best use of revolving stages in recent years was in *Lady in the Dark,* in which the heroine's fantasies, wishful thinking, and memories are dramatized.

41. *Screens.* Partitions made of light flats that can be folded may be used instead of sets or as a means of supplementing them. This may save money, time, and labor, and reduce the shifting problem. Screens are, of course, especially appropriate in staging old comedies like *The School for Scandal.*

42. *"Searchlight" Technique.* The use of spotlights for picking out different actors on a generally darkened stage, as in the Mercury Theatre's *Julius Caesar.* Various modifications are possible.

43. *Space Stage.* The space stage principle is related to *plasticism* by its great reliance on specially directed lighting, which gives dimension

to pieces of the set, the acting space, and the actor. It also resembles *constructivism,* in the sense that it frankly makes use of acting planes rather than representational settings. Essentially, however, it treats the acting area as a void which becomes a temporary location for acting when it is picked out by shafts of light. But, as Professor Lee Mitchell has pointed out,[3] the actor is not "suspended in nothingness," which would be a precious or pretentious procedure except for a very expressionistic fantasy. Also, as Professor Mitchell maintains, the space stage is not a well-defined mode of production but a concept for production procedure. Consequently, it is susceptible to variation. There may be no settings except a few inconspicuous platforms as in the *Mercury Julius Caesar,* or the stage may consist of conspicuous levels with steps, pedestals, etc., supplemented by a little landscaping (constructed or projected); and a turntable revealing different facets may be employed.

Especially where levels are used conspicuously, but in all instances, the treatment can present the action in terms of fluid *character relationships.* For instance, a triumphant or jubilant character will be placed on a high level in his moment of triumph, while his defeated or losing antagonist will stand on a lower level, or the protagonist may move to a lower level when his fortunes wane; where the forces are more or less equal, their representatives may cross each other on nearly equal levels, and so on. If these basic relationships are conceived in advance, "figuratively, one has only to shove under their feet the platforms, steps or ramps which will make the positions and motions possible."[4] The positions of the actors, as determined by what activities or states of mind are assigned to them by the play and the director's conception, are the prime consideration in using the space stage. (Considerable economy can be effected, and the demands on the nonprofessional carpenter and mechanic can be reduced by adopting the space stage,—although naturally this should not, by itself, be a deciding consideration.)

Intermissions can be (although they do not, of course, have to be) eliminated in space staging, creating uninterrupted theatre magic. In fact, the creative director may well consider the whole question of intermissions. They may be omitted advantageously in many productions in which continuous and mounting theatricality should be a

[3] Mitchell, Lee: *The Space Stage Defined.* Theatre Arts, July 1936, p. 531.
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 532.

prime objective, as it was in the New York staging of *Emperor Jones, Hotel Universe, Yellow Jack, The Shoemaker's Holiday, Native Son,* etc.

44. *Theatricalism.* (See pp. 88, 350.)

45. *Treadmill.*—A conveyor belt device in Piscator productions and in the staging of *The Green Pastures,* useful for carrying scenery past the actor, and for effects of marching, riding, driving, and so on. Good for mass effects and for continuous movement.

In conclusion, it is well to realize that technical advances are being made constantly. The application of films and of the close-up technique to the stage may enlarge the director's resources. Radio technique has already exerted an influence, in musical comedies and revues, and in "living newspapers" whenever the *loudspeaker* is used as an actor, narrator, or "master of ceremonies." Dramatic use may likewise be made of the *fading in* and *fading out* of voices from a void. Television may also contribute suggestions to stage production. The modern dance can not only be used in conjunction with some productions, but can affect the form of the drama and the style of the entire production. The actor's art will—and is already—affected by the dance. (See p. 477.)

Especially important at present is the research in *sound,* much of it conducted by Professor Harold Burris-Meyer at the Stevens Institute Little Theatre. *Sound control* of the entire production is being developed, and suitable apparatus constructed. Also special problems are being solved. For Sidney Howard's *Madam Will You Walk,* the Stevens Institute undertook the task of providing "a celestial orchestra whose music should fill the stage from no apparent source and can fill the stage with a peak intensity of 90 db.," to "supply background music and other sounds from apparently a considerable distance," and to "give voice to an invisible character."[5]

The transference of one character's voice into another actor's body is effective for scenes in which a character is hypnotized or possessed, as in some Noh plays, in *The Dybbuk,* and in John Gassner's dramatization of Robinson Jeffers' *The Tower Beyond Tragedy.* The audience can also be conditioned by unheard sound until the dramatic moment when it actually hears the sound, as in a special demonstra-

[5] Burris-Meyer, Harold: *Research in Sound in the Theatre,* Report, No. 3. Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, New Jersey, 1940. p. 3.

tion of tom-tom effects in *Emperor Jones* at Carnegie Hall. Sound technique can, moreover, lend a sense of depth—physical or psychological depth—to the stage. The actor's voice can be made to travel around the audience, coming from the back and the sides, thus producing a spatial extension for the actor, as well as audience involvement. Sound can be made to emanate from any part of the stage and auditorium, involving the audience, or creating an impression of thoughts arising haphazardly or coming seemingly from sources outside the speaker.

It is now also possible to "create the illusion of sound intensity greater than that actually existing in the theatre; to reproduce a song in a manner arbitrarily chosen in conformity with the style of the visual component of the production,"[6] and to enable a singer to dominate an orchestra no matter how loudly it plays. The techniques are special, and require consultation with an expert like Dr. Burris-Meyer for the time being.

The resources of directorial ingenuity and insight are also far from completely tapped. When courage and opportunity combine with good taste and a sense of proportion, the results can be gratifying. And, of course, much depends upon what demands the playwrights of the future make upon the art of production by the manner in which they write their plays.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

DIRECTING SOCIAL DRAMA

MUCH of modern drama is "social"—that is, it deals with social problems or treats the individual in direct relation to the problems of his environment. The director's approach must vary with the type of play (whether it is tragedy, "serious drama," comedy, etc.); with its style (presentational or illusionistic, realistic, symbolic, expressionist, etc.); with its content and background (objective, partisan, reformist, or revolutionary; upper-, middle-, or working-class background); and with respect to the audience to which it is presented at a particular time and in a particular place—that is, with some regard to the question whether it will respond most sympathetically to a reasoning, an impassioned, or an inflammatory presentation. Naturally, too, the character of the direction will reflect the degree of social understanding and social sympathy that the director brings—consciously or unconsciously—to the play. It is manifestly difficult to generalize about directing the social drama. There are, nevertheless, some points worth noting concerning this extremely important field.

1. *The Actor.* The actor's sympathies or antipathies and his understanding can seriously affect the production. Wherever possible, casting should consider the actor's orientation. The director's or casting director's knowledge of the actor's interests and point of view, and a preliminary conversation with him concerning the play's meaning and orientation (as conceived by the director) will aid in determining the choice of the players. However, one must guard against two mistakes: (a) allowing oneself to be deceived by the applicant's intellectual or emotional response apart from the all-important question whether or not he is a good actor, since neither understanding nor sympathy can substitute for acting sensibility and creative imagination; (b) allowing political prejudices to affect artistic interests.

More important is the director's work with his cast. He may, at the

beginning or at critical stages of the rehearsal period, raise the question of meaning and purpose. This may lead to a clarifying discussion. But this approach will be fruitful only when the director allows the meaning and purpose to come out of the actor's personality or inner self. He must not (except in a special kind of theatre) impose his philosophy or politics on the performers, but must guide the discussion, express his own attitude as one man's fallible opinion and feeling, and stimulate the actors' imagination and empathy by evoking their past experiences, observations, and mental or emotional associations. In addition to such a forum or symposium, which he should not allow to degenerate into a brawl, he can work with members of the cast privately. Of course, his task is simplified, as it was at the Group Theatre, when the actors constitute a group that is bound together by common interests instead of being hastily assembled for each new production.

2. *Dramatic Metaphor.* The director can most successfully meet his cast on common ground when he expresses his conception of the social play and its production by means of a metaphor. For example, if he wants progressive excitement and a sense of growing comprehension or anger, he may describe *The Weavers* as a spreading forest fire. He may want each individual actor to catch fire successively, like one bush or tree catching a spark, flaring up, and setting another one on fire, thus producing a general conflagration. For the actor who plays Old Baumert, the humble weaver who joins the revolt after the provocation of hunger and humiliation (he has killed his little dog for meat and cannot even retain the food. . . .), the director may employ the metaphor of a log slowly taking fire and suddenly blazing intensely. For the actor who plays the returned soldier and agitator Moritz Jaeger, he may create the metaphor of a torch suddenly carried into a forest after a drought; he enters blazing and sending sparks flying in all directions—and suddenly the conflagration begins. For the weaver Old Hilse, who clings to his pietism and refuses to join the revolt, there may be the metaphor of one wet log lying apart in a ditch; the flames reach out to it, lick it, causing it to sputter a little, but they cannot consume it. (For other examples, see pp. 313, 314, and 315.)

The advantage of the metaphoric approach is that it refers the actor to that which he is most capable of grasping as an artist *per se;* to his creativeness, imagination, emotion, and understanding of the play as

a structural entity. Politics are susceptible of infinite argument. The metaphor is "universal" and its roots are in human nature; the experience it epitomizes is not confined to a single and immediate issue.

3. *Motivation.* The director must discover for the actor—or better still, help him to discover—(a) what he wants as an individual or private person, and (b) *why* he wants it. Then it is necessary for him to discover—successively or simultaneously—(c) to what extent he wants something that others also want, and (d) what unites him with these other people (do they belong to the same economic, social, racial, or religious group, etc.?).

For instance, in *The Weavers* Old Baumert wants better wages, and he wants this because he cannot feed himself and his family on what Dreissiger gives him. What he wants is precisely what the other common people in the Silesian villages want, because they are also weavers working under the same conditions. In *The Lower Depths* the derelicts want a better and happier life, and they share this want precisely because they are all unfortunates, misfits, and outcasts. In *Awake and Sing!* the different members of the family want to lead intenser and richer lives. The mother Bessie wants it on the plane of physical comfort and material security, respectability, and family unity. Myron, her husband, dreams of success. Her son, Ralph, wants to be able to marry the girl he loves, to afford emotional gratification, and, vaguely, to understand what the world is about. Jacob, the grandfather, wants justice and human dignity. In *Of Mice and Men* the itinerant workers desire a home and some stability or security.

Related to the characters' wishes are, of course, the things they don't want, what they wish to avoid or to overcome. Finally, their desires stem out of their socially produced or conditioned circumstances. The characters must not be acted so individualistically that they will be too special or unrepresentative; otherwise the social point will be presented unconvincingly.

4. *The Antagonist.* The antagonist, to be dramatically concrete, must be revealed as a person rather than as a caricature or automaton, even though he must be representative of the social conditions or forces against which the others are struggling. (Fantastic satires, skits, certain expressionist plays, and "living newspapers" are possible exceptions to this rule.) The director's problem, especially in a realistic play, is to create a person, and then to make certain that the antagonist is not so individualistically characterized that he becomes unrepresenta

tive or "special." The tendency to make him a melodramatic villain—the big, bad wolf capitalist, or the unconscionable reactionary—is certain to reduce the social play's argument or persuasiveness. It is precisely because the Nazi consul in Elmer Rice's *Flight to the West* is not acted as a shifty spy and as a sadist but as a presentable, intelligent, and integrated person that he represents a dangerous system.

The opposite tendency—which is, however, less frequent or disadvantageous than that of depersonalization—is that of trying to create such a rounded personality that its function as a representative of a social factor will be lost.

5. *Environment as Protagonist and Antagonist.* Since environment is an active factor in social drama, it requires particular attention in production. It may be, in a sense, the protagonist; the spacious, dignified living room of *The Watch on the Rhine* is America—peaceful and rich America which is suddenly invaded by the violence and conflict of the European continent. The background can even be both a protagonist and antagonist.

In *The Weavers,* for instance, the homes of the weavers represent them but also what is assailing them or the conditions against which they are struggling. The employer Dreissiger's luxurious home is another antagonist, since it presents visually the fruits of exploitation. Consequently, great care has to be taken to realize the essence of each background, this being more important than mere reproduction. And where the style of production is suitably presentational for plays like *The Ascent of F6, Dance of Death* (Auden), *The Life and Death of an American* (George Sklar), and *An American Tragedy* (Piscator version) the stylized or abstract setting must be a metaphor of the social idea instead of an arbitrary esthetic arrangement. Here, too, the environment must stand out definitely, even though it is suggestive rather than actual: e. g., the silhouette of a factory in the background, a set showing "the ship of state," or skeletonic sets on upper and lower levels, denoting upper-class and lower-class environments.

Although a high degree of realism is frequently appropriate for the social play, it must not exist for its own sake. The drabness of a poor white's home in the South or of a worker's slum dwelling is significant only in so far as it promotes understanding of his social condition and relates to his crises and conflicts. It should not be cluttered up or bleak in a merely pictorial sense, but as an actor in the play. Sometimes a simplified and not too depressing setting will prove more

feasible, because it will not draw attention away from the characters. An exploiter's, corrupt politician's, or tyrant's home may express ostentation or pride; it should not be luxurious merely for esthetic effect, merely to make the audience admire the setting. Moreover, dynamic significance should pertain to one or more important scenic details, which may serve as a social metaphor of the character's desires or struggles: an enormous office desk, a wood-burning old stove, a chipped and blackened sink, a sewing machine in a slum apartment, etc. The terrifyingly ugly laundry in Sidney Kingsley's staging of *The World We Make* was not so much a naturalistic set as the dragon of reality that the girl who escaped from life into a neurosis must overcome very much as the courageous poor overcome it. (If, however, the set stands out too strongly [as John Mason Brown complained in this case], detracting attention from more important things, it imperils the effect.)

6. *Atmosphere and Unifying Factors.* Since the social play strives to be as concrete as possible, the director who strives to create artistic design must not succumb to his penchant for atmosphere and mood; that is, he should not favor extreme Gordon Craig and Adolphe Appia effects at the expence of meaning or environmental reality. These are most appropriate to plays in which inner conflicts or crises and spiritual travail are predominant. The director should not lose the urgency of the dramatic exposition and conflict in an esthetic mist; not if he wishes to remain faithful to the play's intent. The production should be unified in mood and tone wherever possible, but not by a beautiful fog which blurs the outlines.

It should even be noted that there are social plays which owe some of their excitement, meaning, and scope to their dissonances and to their shifting from one mood or atmosphere into another. In *There Shall Be No Night,* for example, there are two different atmospheres —the one that conveys the loveliness or the pathos of civilization (the Nobel Prize winner's tastefully decorated home and the abandoned schoolhouse, with its charming decorations reminiscent of progressive school methods), and the one that represents the bleak tensions of war and disaster (the journalist's dark and cluttered-up hotel room in Helsinki). In *The Weavers* there are also at least two distinct moods —that in the weavers' hovels, and that in the employer's home. This diversity is particularly to be observed in "living newspapers," and in such epic plays as *The Good Soldier Schweik, Rasputin,* and *Johnny*

Johnson. Where there are many short episodes unification is needed, but not by a nebulous aura.

An important unifying factor can be the acting, which can be geared or pitched in a manner that directs the meaning of all key individual performances toward the same end. In staging *The Three Sisters* it may be the restlessness and eagerness of the sisters and their lovers; in *The Cherry Orchard* the lack of direction of many of the characters, their readiness to be distracted in key situations, an impression of irresponsibility and ineffectuality, and so on; in *Awake and Sing!* the constant explosiveness of the actors.

Another effective method is *unification by a frame* that is a concrete realization or a definite evocation of the environment or the idea. In the simplest form, this will be effected by the single set, when it is possible, or the use of a unit set for the different locales. This may be seen most simply in a single interior, as in *Awake and Sing!* (here the action takes place in two adjoining rooms without any partition between them); more elaborately in the single tenement front of *Street Scene*; more complexly in Gorelik's multi-set designs for *Men in White* and *Golden Boy* (see pp. 318, 319); and in stylized form by the clipper set of *Flight to the West*. In this production the different compartments in which the action takes place were presented simultaneously with all partitions represented only skeletonically, ensuring a continuous flow of what little action there is. (It would have seemed even more meager but for the flowing movement achieved by the actors' moving freely from one compartment to another.)

Constructivist settings, although they had disadvantages for acting, were also found unifying for social plays, without dissolving the environment in a spiritual haze; although abstract, the set suggested modern industrialism, skyscrapers, and machine-like functionalism. Another unifying device that proved effective was the *treadmill* used by Piscator to carry the scenery before the audience and to stage the long march across the battlefront in *The Good Soldier Schweik* and *What Price Glory?*

Still another procedure is the use of an *evocative curtain*. In staging *Danton's Death*, Orson Welles used an enormous cyclorama studded with human masks which were dimmed and flattened or made to stand out in relief by different intensities of lighting. This curtain evoked the hydra-headed mob that comprises the French revolution, that confronts Danton when he tries to stem the blood-bath of the

reign of terror, and that is played upon by Robespierre and other demagogues. (To some it may have, in addition, suggested the guillotine with which the French Revolution is frequently associated in the popular mind.) It was impersonal but real; it could seem to respond to a harangue or a situation (when it was highlighted), but it was omnipresent as a reality, a barrier, a threat, and an enemy to Danton and his followers. In staging *Native Son*, Welles framed Bigger's scenes by a curtain that represented a brick wall; it held the various scenes together, and suggestively it was the wall of social circumstance or racial disadvantage that hems him in. This design appears at the beginning when Bigger's home is thus framed, and is carried out to the very last scene, in which the brickwork of the condemned Negro's death-cell is continued straight through the lofty section of the prison revealed by the set.

Still, it would be hasty to conclude that atmosphere and mood in the symbolist Appia-Craig sense are utterly unsuited to the social drama. For obvious reasons it was suitable for a political dream-allegory like Philip Barry's *Liberty Jones*. It could be used effectively to suggest the twilight of England and the dusk of its gods in *Heartbreak House*. Even the wholly atmospheric "space-stage" treatment of *Julius Caesar* by John Houseman and Orson Welles's Mercury Theatre can be appropriate. It proved singularly felicitous for this modern, anti-fascist version of Shakespeare's play because, on the one hand, it unified a highly episodic play, and, on the other, took it out of its original time and place by avoiding historical settings and making it timeless enough to reflect our own times. This type of atmospheric procedure (concretized, however, by the fascist costumes) might prove equally apt in a production of *Coriolanus*, Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* and *Catiline* (a "Quisling"-drama!), Schiller's *Don Carlos*, Büchner's *Danton's Death*, and Shelley's *The Cenci*.

Moreover, social tensions, like any other, can obviously be enhanced by a proper distribution of light and shadow, by a clash of light and darkness, in the lighting scheme. And there are works, which having lost their immediacy as social documents but retaining their general human interest, can profit from a treatment that is more poetic than factual. Such an approach might prove quite apt in the case of such plays as *Ghosts* and *The Good Hope*.

7. *Music*. To induce a mood with music is normally inappropriate in drama that exposes a situation seriously and presents a significant

social crisis or conflict. Music between scenes or acts is also highly dubious; one cannot present *Awake and Sing!* in the spirit of *Pride and Prejudice.*

However, the director should recognize the potency of music. Music can add an extra dimension to words and situations, and where these may seem stereotyped or arbitrary, music may add lustre to the words and glow or intensity to the worn situation. In the case of Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* and *No for an Answer*, which represented situations and followed patterns that were made too familiar by journalism, the score was indispensable. When the utmost economy had to be exercised in producing this play at the Mercury Theatre, settings were dispensed with, but the music was retained, even though the author himself had to play it at the piano.

Music, moreover, can be used effectively to convey an action, to add impressiveness to a climax or conclusion, and to emphasize a point. In staging Hemingway's Spanish Civil War drama *The Fifth Column* for the Theatre Guild, Lee Strasberg indicated the off-stage marching of the soldiers to the front not so much by the conventional tramp-tramp of feet but by the distant singing of the marchers. In staging *To Quito and Back* for the Guild, Philip Moeller achieved a stirring climax of affirmation by the off-stage singing of the South American revolutionaries. It was more eloquent than any words, actions, or visual effects could have been at that point. In Paul Green's stirring *Hymn to the Rising Sun*, the irony, as well as pathos, of this exposé of chain-gang conditions was immeasurably enhanced when the convicts sang the lines "Sweet land of liberty, etc." on July the fourth.

8. *Visual Aids.* The maxim that it is better to show than to say is particularly applicable to certain types of social drama. This is especially true in the case of documentary or factual drama. A good visual demonstration was always more effective than a lecture or harangue in the living newspapers and in certain European epic plays. The audience grasps the facts more quickly and remembers them longer. Moreover, *showing* something is an active procedure, and therefore more dramatic. Almost invariably in the living newspapers the climactic point of an exposé, argument, or conflict was encompassed by some striking visual means, such as the argument for the TVA before the Supreme Court which was vividly represented by nine masks. Whenever an idea or argument was not addressed to the eye, it lacked clinching power.

Visual aids of this nature have also proved efficacious in social dramas other than documentary pieces. In *Roar China,* Lee Simonson's menacing British battleship established the menace of imperialism far better than a dozen soap-box orations.

9. *Mass Effects; Mob Scenes.* Social plays often use mass action and employ mobs (*The Weavers, Masses and Man, Processional,* etc.). The director must pay special attention to his "supers," tell them individually or in small groups how and *why* they are impelled to move in a certain direction and in a certain way, and must maintain some design in movement. He must not simply order his mobs around arbitrarily, or let design rule out motivation. He must also relate the mob dramatically and visually to the state of mind, function, and stage position of his central actor or actors.

A special problem is his use of stage space. If it is small, he will have to use ramps to create added space for mass movement. He should also find ways of enlarging the mob beyond its actual size. This he can do by using the same actors over and over again, by taking them off and bringing them on the stage quickly, changing their appearance slightly or altering the light under which they appear. Another method is to suggest continuity of the mob by placing it near entrances or upstage against some horizon (or forest, etc.), suggesting that there are more people outside the set or beyond the sight-lines.

10. *Pedestrianism.* The greatest danger in social drama is a pedestrian story, commonplace people, and uninteresting backgrounds. The resulting dullness is the bane of the social play and must be partly responsible for the public's escape to glamorous musical comedy entertainment and films. It also continually whets one's longing for a return to poetic drama and leads critics to dream of the days before Ibsen foisted realism on the theatre. There are probably plays—especially problem plays like Brieux' tedious didactic pieces—which cannot be salvaged. But there is no reason for the director to make them duller, which is apt to be the case when such works are transposed literally on the stage. And there are other social plays that can be intensified and theatricalized by intelligent staging.

Passion is the surest way to achieve dramatic intensification. The director should strive to involve his actors emotionally by appealing to their memories and associations.

Relief is a sure means of increasing interest. Gloom that bogs down the audience dulls its sensibilities and weakens its responses. Comic

business, contrasts of characters and costume, and folk color (like the folk dance in the first scene of Albert Bein's drama of the Southern textile workers and former mountaineers, *Let Freedom Ring*) can prove effective. After such relief, the audience will return to the serious business of the drama with greater alertness and sympathy.

The director should also look for those moments in a problem play which touch upon or evoke some *universal feeling*, like self-sacrifice, kindness, comradeship, family feeling, parental or filial love, young love, quiet tenderness between married people, solicitude, the longing for a home, the desire to prettify it or make it comfortable, and passion for justice and truth. These are moments to hold and cherish in directing the performance. Finally, the director should look for moments of exaltation in the script; he should give due emphasis to occasions when the character develops vision, understanding, and new strength. This is what Stanislavsky, for example, looked for, found, and projected even in Chekhov's quiet plays. The great loveliness and pathos in their evocations of frustration, muddlement, and quiet despair were reinforced by eruptions of intense longing, passionate outcries, and affirmations. On the stage, there is no reason why any drama, no matter how truthful and serious, should savor of a mortician's parlor. There are sound reasons why it should not. And no matter how commonplace the life that is to be presented in the theatre, the manner in which it is presented must not be commonplace.

THE TECHNIQUE OF COMEDY DIRECTION

Alfred de Liagre, Jr.

THE staging of legitimate comedy presents a great challenge to the director—more so, perhaps, than any other assignment in the theatre. Because he is free to draw upon his own resources and imagination, the style of a comedy director is often his hall-mark, and his productions reflect his individuality. However, it is helpful to bear in mind five fundamentals which have served as the cornerstone of comedy direction from Aristophanes to Behrman.

1. *Credibility.* This is perhaps the most important fundamental of all. It is essential in a comedy to have the audience at all times believe that real things are happening to real people. The moment a character or a situation is allowed to become incredible, it is no longer comic. Nothing will make a comedy seem so unfunny as exaggeration. An actor who is obviously trying to be funny quickly "loses" the audience. This is because over-emphasis of any kind immediately dispels the illusion of reality.

2. *Mood.* Successful comedy playing depends to a large extent on the *establishment, early in the play, of a comedy mood.* No time should be lost after the opening curtain in tipping-off the audience that they are expected to laugh. This is not always an easy matter to accomplish, but the director has a variety of methods at his disposal. He can communicate the mood to the audience visually, through scenery, lights, and costumes; or he can use a sound effect, a bright line, a bit of pantomime, or an amusing piece of business.

For instance, in *Springtime for Henry* the curtain rises on Henry himself in a fit of rage, throwing books at his pretty secretary, who is scampering across the stage. This is an excellent example of direc-

torial invention, for the mood of the play is immediately established. Then there is the opening scene of *Petticoat Fever.* In this play the audience discovers the principal character, a wireless operator in a lonely Labrador shack, lying on a sofa trying to hit a cowbell, suspended from a mounted moosehead, with pellets from a slingshot. This piece of business left the audience no doubt about the kind of play they were about to witness.

3. *Tempo.* Comedy dialog must be read with a definite sense of rhythm. It must have a *beat.* It must also, of course, have *variety.* The setting of exactly the proper "pace" or tempo is probably one of the most important contributions of the director. If the beat is too fast, lines become blurred and meanings are lost; if the beat is too slow, the audience becomes restless and it is very difficult for the actors to "get their laughs." A perfect tempo, on the other hand, will carry a play along without apparent effort, even through the dull spots which are bound to occur in the most brilliant script. However, it is also important for the director to vary the tempo, or the performance will become monotonous. Like a chocolate soufflé, a comedy must be timed and served "just so."

4. *Inflection.* This is just about the quintessence of playing comedy. It is a combination of instinct and technique, and there is no good comedian alive without it. The technique can be acquired—the instinct, never; just as in everyday life some people have the ability to make us laugh, and others haven't! Because inflection is such a rarefied talent, it is a difficult problem for the director. He may be able to explain the comic possibilities and implications in a certain line, but unless the actor is able to understand and interpret it instinctively, he is likely merely to repeat the pauses and inflections of the director. This invariably results in obvious imitation.

An interesting example of the variety of emotions which an actor can read into a three-word speech, is to be found in the second-act curtain line of *Yes, My Darling Daughter.* The line is "Goddam sex, anyway!" There are probably a dozen different ways of reading this line, yet there is *one* way which is much funnier and more effective than any of the other eleven. The proper inflection of this simple line should include despair, anxiety, self-pity, self-reproach, anger, and boredom.

5. *Spontaneity.* Comedy must always be played with freshness and spontaneity. To the audience the dialog should always appear to

be spoken for the first time. During the rehearsals of a comedy, there is often a tendency toward staleness, as the actors become more familiar with their parts. The best way to avoid this condition is by not attempting to accomplish too much at once. Rehearsals should be conducted gradually. After the play has been read three or four times (informally sitting around a table), the actors can be put through an act at a time in order to settle the movements and business firmly in their minds. Parts should not be memorized until after the first week of rehearsal. (Of course this applies only to plays which are coming to Broadway. In summer theatre productions, the usual four-week rehearsal period must be compressed into one week.) After the actors know their lines, where they are going to move on the stage, and what they are going to do and think and feel in relation to each line, each movement, and each piece of business, the all-important matter of pacing can be taken in hand. But the spontaneity of the whole must constantly be kept in mind. It is a basic fact that every comedy must be played with this quality of *effervescence* in order to inspire laughter in an audience.

DIRECTING OLD AND NEW POETIC DRAMA

Guthrie McClintic

ONE seems rather pompous in putting into writing under the formidable heading of this chapter the difficulties attendant to staging a poetic drama—or, to be more exact, I do. There *are* special problems; but may I say at the outset, that these are the particular pitfalls and hurdles that I encountered and therefore are not necessarily general. In thinking back, the major questions were (a) the attitude of the actor, (b) the attitude of the audience, (c) what part scenic investiture should play, (d) tempo and intermissions, and (e) what part music should have.

Working with the Actor

The great majority of actors in this country have had no training whatsoever for acting in verse. This is not their fault but that of our system. When one is doing a Shakespearian play, English actors are frequently available and many of them have had a season or two at the Old Vic or Stratford, or even the Regent Park Summer Theatre. The ice is at least partly broken as far as they are concerned. But when it comes to a modern verse play, like one of Maxwell Anderson's, where the scene is entirely American and the characters, in many instances, are gangsters, hoboes, sheriffs, policemen, and people off the sidewalk and when their dialog is written, despite its metered line, with something of the tang and flavor of the speech that is peculiarly the United States, then one deals with native actors,—which is as it should be. Somehow the sight of this rhythmic speech in their scripts, in the case of three-quarters of the actors, freezes any initiative or creative faculty they may have and renders them artificial shells. One's effort is to

break down this fright, this reserve that chills them, and to allow them to take on a little fire and have as good a time (if not better) as they do when playing in an exciting prose play.

Now for modern American characters verse is distinctly artificial. All acting is, in a sense, but verse is particularly so. However, the audience must not be aware of this, and it seems to me the major duty of a director is to impress upon the actor, who in many instances is used only to monosyllabic prose, the necessity of a drastic and, at the beginning of his rehearsals, what seems to be to him an unnaturally quick tempo. This is, in my opinion, the only way to sustain the longest speeches that occur in rhythmic speech and to bring out their beauty and excitement. The so-called "realistic attack" in verse defeats itself and leaves the poor play a halting, stumbling, and perplexing anachronism.

Treating the Audience

The audience not used to verse—and most audiences are not, especially to modern verse—has to be taken immediately inside, as it were, this very special world of make-believe. And the audience must be kept there until these modern characters speaking metered lines attune auditors' unfamiliar ears to the rightness of that medium of the author's expression.

There are two ways in which this is achieved: one is the tempo in which these lines are delivered; and the other is the use of only one intermission, so that by the time the break comes the music, so to speak, or the rhythm of the play will have seeped into the audience, will no longer seem strange, and will leave the auditors anxious to resume their places for more at the rise of the second curtain.

Of course with Shakespeare's plays one's task is somewhat easier (granting your actors are good), for playgoers are more familiar with them either from reading, study, or the greater opportunities they have had for seeing them performed. When Katharine Cornell presented her production of *Romeo and Juliet* in the fall of 1934, some twelve years had elapsed since Mr. Barrymore and Miss Cowl had made of Shakespeare what we call in the profession "box-office." Well-wishers advised Miss Cornell to steer clear of it. What is known as one's public, which would have greeted out-of-town performances with sold-out houses, were wary of the departure on her part and notably had to be "shown." It was our belief that Shakespeare was exciting, stimulating

theatre. This was not an overwhelmingly unique conviction, considering it has been such for three hundred years, but the fact remains that at the moment of our venture the opposition of our advisers made us seem something like pioneers to ourselves.

One of our first problems was the planning of a production that, from the point of view of scenery, could have terrific speed. This was important because it would enable us to retain the major part of the play in the three hours' playing time which the theatrical union allows you (otherwise, it is "overtime"), and that we did. As far as I know, it was the first professional American production that retained all the twenty-three scenes of the play. This was possible, first, because of scenic arrangement, and, secondly, because we had the one intermission—also, I believe, an innovation on Broadway. The results were gratifying. For the twelve and one-half weeks it played here during its first season, it was a dramatic leader in New York and was withdrawn only because Miss Cornell had previously contracted to do a new play.

To run hastily through the years to the modern poetic plays of Maxwell Anderson, it should be noted that up to the time of my production of *Winterset* his verse plays had been almost entirely historical in subject and, in a sense, that fact absorbed something of the impact of their verse. However, with the advent of *Winterset* modern characters stood at the Brooklyn end of the bridge of that name and cried against their fates in stirring rhythmic prose and audiences were moved and made actually aware that a fine, modern poetic dramatist was serving them.

Scenery in Poetic Drama

As to the part the scenery plays, if I exact from the actors an unrealistic approach to verse it seems obvious that the scenery must "play ball" too. Realistic settings would destroy our atmosphere or mood as surely as realistic acting. I do not mean that the backgrounds should be arty, any more than the acting should be. No "phoney" symbolism should dominate the scenery, but the settings should not be entirely literal. I try to have the essential furnishings and props only—in other words, just what the actor has to use. No actual set dressing-up of any kind and the backgrounds decorative, but ever so slightly unreal.

Romeo and Juliet, which Jo Mielziner so magnificently projected in his designing, was modeled after Italian primitives. The design had no reality in the ordinary sense of the word, but it did have the inestimable value of exciting, stimulating, and beautiful backgrounds, never ob-

trusive but creating along with actors continuously exhilarating pictures. Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset* and *High Tor*, which Mr. Mielziner also designed for me, had the same essential quality, although their period and kind of décor were completely dissimilar.

The same principle applies to lighting. In *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, there was no visible source of light in any of the scenes. In other words, in all the scenes which occurred at night no lamp or torch was used by an actor or placed on the scene itself to account for the light that encompassed them. I reasoned that if the audience will be concerned with such trivialities as light source then my production will have failed to interest them as it should. It is true that Romeo carried a torch into the Tomb Scene, but that was primarily because Shakespeare had written it into his text and its absence would have made the audience aware of a discrepancy.

Music

A moot point is what part music should play. Out in Seattle, when I was a child, music was used a great deal in the theatre, setting the mood for a sentimental scene or enhancing the suspense of a melodramatic situation. The Shakespearian productions of Louis James and Robert B. Mantell were always generously highlighted with what must have seemed to them appropriate musical accompaniment. Today this same idea is employed to a large extent by motion pictures to establish a feeling or mood.

However, in the professional theatre of today music is in the discard (except, obviously, in musical comedies and revues). This is not entirely owing to its prohibitive costs, as it began to be ruled out by playwrights and producers some twenty-five years ago as detracting from, rather than helping, plays that were being done then. And in the discard it has remained ever since. Today, particularly in New York, it is the exception rather than the rule when one hears an orchestra playing even between the acts.

There is a section of the audience that still feels that music would definitely enhance the verse play. Indeed, they have not been at all backward in writing me their opinion after seeing my productions. I do not agree with them at all. Verse, properly spoken, creates its own music, and not properly spoken would not be helped by a "theme" melody. Again I must point out, in case someone remembers, that the music that occurred in our production of *Romeo and Juliet* was specif-

ically asked for by one of Shakespeare's characters, old Capulet in fact. It was not introduced by me as a stimulant.

The other problems encountered in the production of a play written in verse are those that are found in producing any play. The greatest problem in connection with producing a modern verse play is to find one.

ON DIRECTING SHAKESPEARE

Margaret Webster

THE principal thing about directing Shakespeare, as I understand it, is that it is very much like directing anything else. The scripts, it is true, are usually considerably better than those one generally encounters among the dramatic output of 1941. The author has become a classic, and his work is not, therefore, to be lightly tampered with; he is also dead, and so will not get any wild ideas about writing a completely new last act three days before the dress rehearsal. Criticism of the play will be gently leveled, more in sorrow than in anger, at an accepted and venerated text, and will be devoid of that virulence which sometimes leads one to suppose that authors must write their plays solely to annoy the Critics' Circle. Though these observations may seem flippant to those who are not well acquainted with the protocol of the modern American theatre, they indicate the presence of that blessed element of stability, which enables the director to approach the problem of a Shakespearian production with something like a steady and sure mind.

Stability, however, does not in this case imply limitation. The director's function is interpretative, whether his material is the latest revue at the Music Box or an all-star revival of *King Lear*; and Shakespeare offers a margin of interpretation which is probably unique. There have always been and always will be twenty different ways of producing *Hamlet*, each of them faithful to a different valuation of the text, and to a varying concept of how best to make it vivid to a contemporary audience in terms of the theatre. There is no right or wrong in the choice, other than the answer to one question: which

of them does, in effect, present to the audience to which it is played the best theatre and the most vital illustration of the play Shakespeare wrote? In an assessment such as this the director is probably more important than he would be in any modern play, since the key, the pattern, the mood and design, are in his hands alone.

The Text

Two pitfalls immediately present themselves. One is an over-eager search for novelty at any price; the other a too great reverence for the traditions. To put the same problem in terms of *the text*, there has to be a middle course between the liberty of unlimited textual alterations and the excessive discipline which regards the Shakespearian canon as Holy Writ. It would be idle to deny that some of Shakespeare's jokes have gone stale on us. If anybody now understands what is meant by "Malvolio's nose is no whipstock, my lady has a white hand, and the Mermidons are no bottle ale-houses," he is probably so pleased with his own erudition that he is in no mood for laughter. Nevertheless, much of Shakespeare's comedy, which a director at first sight may be tempted to cut as antiquated and verbally complex, relies finally on a humor of character or of situation. If the actors playing "the comics" have a personal reality, and a quality of being in themselves both funny and endearing, the lines will seem neither dull nor obscure. From which, again, I deduce that a director's primary problem in handling a Shakespearian comedy is to cast great actors, great clowns, in parts which were obviously written for the great clowns of Shakespeare's day. Only after he has failed to do this need he resort to the blue pencil.

Similarly, there are many scenes and speeches in the serious plays which may seem too long, too involved, too heavy for a modern audience; and obviously the playing-time of a modern play is much less than it was in 1600. But Shakespeare was, among other things, a very expert theatre craftsman, and it is generally a good idea to look very carefully for the reason, *the theatre reason,* why he put such and such scenes where he did, or made them the length they are. Any actor who has played both the cut version and the entire version of *Hamlet* will tell you that the latter is far less tiring to play. Shakespeare knew when an actor needed "resting," just as he knew when an audience needed a rest from the actor. His plays are extraordinarily expert in audience psychology, a factor which is too often ignored by

the scholars and the literary commentators. A director will do well to take his imagination backstage with his author, and look from between the curtains of the inner stage of The Globe at the motley crew of Londoners who are flocking (we hope) into the theatre. The "groundlings" on the floor are eager, excited, talkative; students and apprentices and a crowd of lovers of the theatre who have barely been able to scrape together the fifty cents admission. They are shrewd, intolerant, lavish, brutal, and adoring; they are in the gallery today. The fashionable crowd of courtiers and nobility are on the stage itself and in the boxes on the lower tier; they are cynical, critical, bored; they have an all-right-come-on-show-us expression on their faces; they come in late; they do today. After this brief glance backwards, many things in the script the director is handling will become clearer to him. I believe that he should never make a cut or a transposition of text without weighing a possible loss in speed, meaning, impact, or clarity; and that he should never insert a prolonged and extraneous piece of business without taking the same factors into consideration.

The Physical Production

The same problem will apply to *the physical production.* It is a temptation to "stunt" Shakespeare—to play him in settings a few hundred years before or after the period of the play, to play him in modern dress, or in no dress at all. There seems to me to be a wide margin of legitimate interpretation on this point. Shakespeare himself was entirely careless of place and time. He airily put Cleopatra into a laced bodice, and allotted clocks to the almost primeval Scotland of the eleventh century. That consideration alone leaves the modern designer with a pretty clear field. But the director must make sure that the costumes convey and assist the character and the actor, instead of being hung, decoratively but confusingly, upon him.

As for *the stage setting* itself, there seems to me to be little more reason to adhere to the Elizabethan method of staging than there is to cling to the Elizabethan style of dress. I have myself worked with a miniature replica of the Elizabethan stage, and I must frankly admit to having found it most inflexible, difficult, and dull. The grouping of characters and their spatial valuation was, for me, an almost insoluble problem. At the same time, a director should never for a moment forget that the whole structure of the plays is based on *the speed and ease with which one scene could, by this method, melt*

into another without break or visual change. It also abolished entirely the modern two- or three-act division. There is hardly a legitimate act-curtain, in the modern sense or by modern standards of act division, to be found in all of Shakespeare's works. Even *the act divisions* as they stand in the texts are quite obviously the product of arbitrary editing. They are false to every proved theatre rule. The act curtains imposed by a modern production have to be tricked and contrived and built up with every battery of resource at the director's command. It is a necessary evil. But there is no reason why a director should sacrifice, between these breaks, the speed and fluency of the Shakespearian text, and every reason why he should strenuously avoid doing so.

I believe that Shakespeare would have used, and welcomed, the visual resources which the theatre of today has at its command. I believe that a Shakespearian production should bring to the stage that quality of visual beauty which it is part of the theatre's business to provide. But, again, the setting should interpret and illuminate the spirit of the play, and not obscure it, nor triumph over it. It should preserve that imaginative flexibility of the text. Also the director should remember the extreme *intimacy* which the Elizabethan stage established between the actors and the audience. For every one speech which may be delivered in sonorous periods from fifteen feet back of the proscenium, there are twenty delicate and elusive lines which can only be distorted by such a separation. Either the character is thinking aloud, an operation which is seldom conducted at the full pitch of the lungs, or the lines contain some light and swift joke which is dependent on immediate contact with its audience. A *fore-stage* was an essential part of the Elizabethan playwriting design; and it is still essential that a Shakespearian setting should enable the actors to play with their audience and not simply at them.

And so we come to the actors. Miss Theresa Helburn of the Theatre Guild relates that she once asked Bernard Shaw whether he had any particular directorial injunctions to give her about the production of his plays. He replied yes: that the actors should stand up and say the words so that everyone could hear them. Lilian Baylis, whose courage and perseverance were responsible for the establishment of one of the greatest Shakespearian theatres of modern times, the Old

Vic in London, held a very similar view. She was negotiating the engagement of an internationally famous stage and screen star for her leading man in the coming season. But she viewed his widely publicized attainments with mistrust. "Well, dear boy," she said at last, "are you *good* in Shakespeare?" He replied that he had adored Shakespeare from a child, and practically slept with a copy of *Hamlet* under his pillow. "That's not the point, dear boy," she replied bluntly. "Can you say his lovely words?" The saying of "his lovely words" is not so terribly difficult a task as many actors think, but there are certain necessities of speech which a modern actor is unlikely to have acquired in speaking 1941 Broadway dialogue—unless, by chance, he has encountered the works of Mr. Maxwell Anderson.

The actor needs *better enunciation, more breath* and a *greater sense of the rhythm and musical value of the English language.* Audiences nowadays hear lazily. The theatre is almost the only place where the human voice undistorted by amplification has to make itself heard to a large number of people. In addition, the Shakespearian vocabulary contains many words which have grown strange to us since we have progressively diminished and impoverished the resources of our speech. The director has to pay the most careful attention to the *phrasing and punctuation* of a line or series of lines, *so that the key words are clear and the parenthetical groups of words fall into their proper and subordinate place.* When the speech is in verse, he must make sure that the swing of the verse is neither so stressed as to become doggerel, nor so broken as to destroy its musical value. He may do worse than insist that his cast do breathing exercises until they are able to speak six or eight lines of verse at a stretch if it is necessary. The problem of verse speaking varies considerably with the different plays. In the early ones, such as *Richard II* and *Romeo and Juliet,* Shakespeare was still writing with metrical exactness and a wealth of rhymed endings. Here the actor will have deliberately to *stress the lines for their sense value, against the even pull of the rhythm.* In *Coriolanus, A Winter's Tale,* and the late plays, he is writing in a very complex verse form, with many involutions and parentheses, and the actor must guard against delivering the verse as if it were actually prose, by *preserving a definite rhythmic beat.*

The *exact and proper blend of melody and meaning* in the lyric and epic passages of Shakespeare's plays is a subject on which it is hard to theorize. The balance is a delicate one, and easily destroyed.

An actor who falls in love with the beautiful sound he himself is making will unconsciously fall into a set melody which soon becomes devoid of freshness or spontaneous thought, and is consequently extremely hard to understand. I once heard John Gielgud deliver the Mercutio "Queen Mab" speech in such a way that you would have thought that this particular set of words had never been spoken in the world before, and that every fresh simile sprang to his brain for the first time the instant before he uttered it. Yet he never for a moment held up the rhythm of the speech nor gave it a fraction less than its fullest musical value. Some actors seem easy to hear and perfectly easy to understand when they speak Shakespeare, others seem confused and obscure. It is not a matter of speaking loudly, but of a clarity of mind and speech.

The director's problem lies both with the individual actor and with *the orchestration of voices.* The great scenes of the tragedies, and many of the comedies too, are like a symphonic score in which the individual voices serve as instruments, conflicting, modulating, and combining both in tempo and in melodic line. The director must try to hear the full score, steadily and whole. He will be able to do much by the use of *tempo.* It seems certain that the actors of Shakespeare's day played very fast. No modern company could get through *Romeo and Juliet* in "two hours traffic," nor *Henry VIII* in "two short hours," as Shakespeare's prologues promised his own company would do. But most of the plays gain by a general swiftness of attack, so that the "slow movements" gain in efficacy and the line of the play is preserved unbroken.

The problem of *interpretation* is too wide to discuss in this brief space. It varies, of course, with every play, and must depend upon the director's personal approach to the script, the economic and physical conditions under which he is working, and the kind of audience to whom he expects—or hopes—to present the play. In any and every case he will find a wealth of research, textual commentary, and critical appraisal at his disposal. There will be, also, traditions with which he is familiar, previous productions of the play which he has seen or heard of, theories and fantasies galore from which to choose. In all this material there will certainly be much that is valuable and illuminating, and I think he should not fear to use any of it which suits his purpose. But the author himself is still the best guide

to his own works, and a fresh imagination and an inquiring mind will draw almost all that the director needs from a simple copy of the play. The characters are people whose minds and hearts are as real now as they were three hundred years ago, even though their vocabulary has changed and the situations in which they find themselves are often hard to parallel today. They are not handsomely garbed lay figures, standing about and reciting in a vacuum. Their characteristics may be re-created in a hundred different ways, but the validity of any Shakespearian performance will depend on the imaginative perception with which their humanity is realized.

There is nothing solemn about doing Shakespeare; there is no secret or obscure ritual. On the contrary, he is the best possible fun. You can go wrong a good deal of the time, but it is almost impossible to go wrong all of the time, because the author is just too good for you. You can do anything and everything, and still find you haven't caught up with him. Many modern plays present the director with very little straw out of which to contrive a playful of bricks. But here the straw is unlimited and you can make as many bricks as your imagination and energy allow you, and still have straw to spare. It will be fun to do, and enormously worth while, and Shakespeare will stand up to almost anything except pomposity and boredom.

INTERPRETING SHAKESPEARE

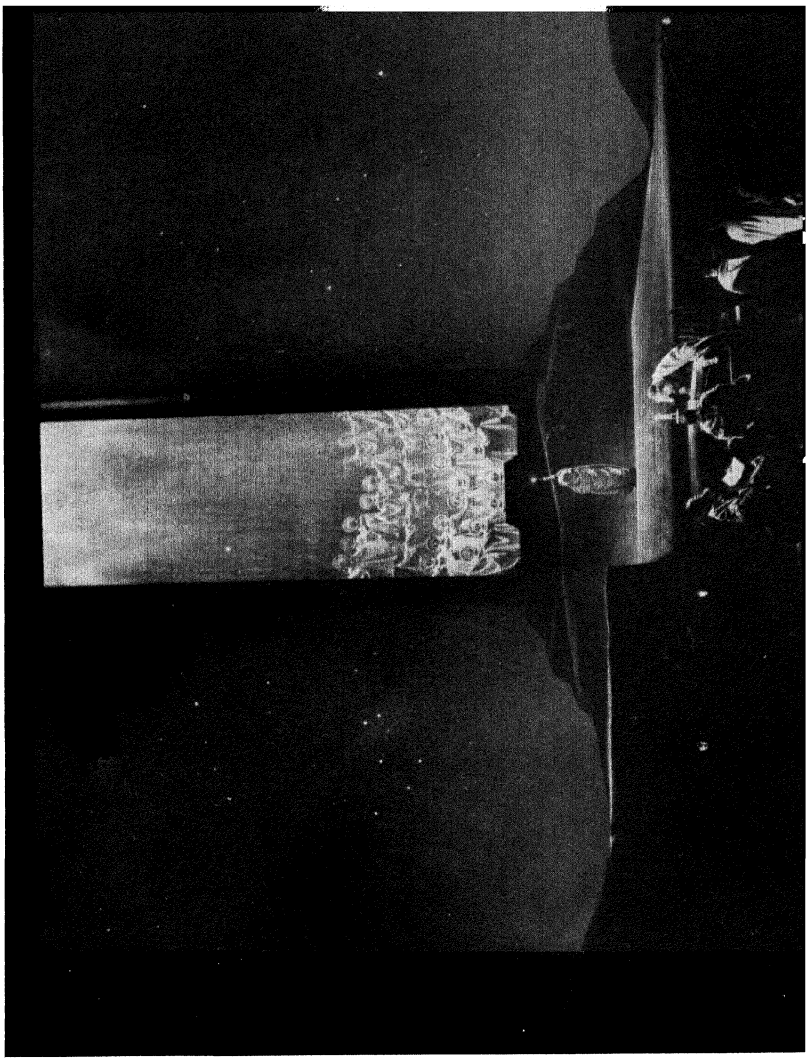
THE interpretation of any of Shakespeare's plays is subject to infinite variations. No two intelligent directors are probably in absolute agreement on all points in any play, and if they should be in agreement on any single point the stage effect will still be different since there will be differences in setting, lighting, and acting, and in the interpretation of the other related points. Even a book entirely devoted to Shakespeare is bound to be merely one director's approach.

It can only be maintained in a brief survey that the individual director should make an earnest attempt to study the play in question with every endowment he possesses, and that he should consult the vast literature of interpretation on all matters concerning which he has no clear understanding or conviction. The variorum editions of the plays, H. Granville-Barker's *Prefaces to Shakespeare,* and J. Dover Wilson's *The Essential Shakespeare* are valuable contemporary references; and much can also be learned from the standard comments of Coleridge and Hazlitt, especially in the latter's *Characters of Shakespeare.* These and numerous other references can be helpful, provided the director exercises judgment in accepting or rejecting the suggestions he will find there; and provided they can be made to harmonize with his conception of the play.

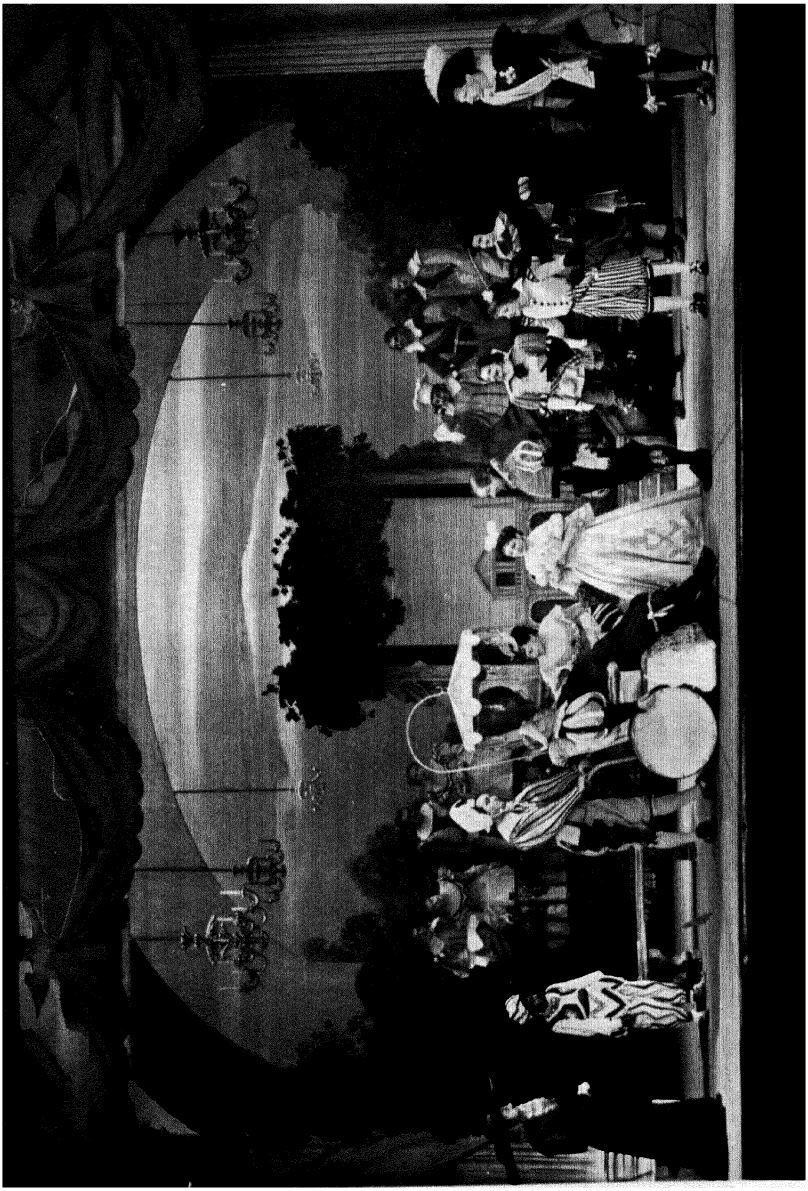
Basic Interpretations

What the individual play means to him or what he thinks it will or should mean to his audience will be *the basic interpretation* in the production; it will be the key to the production, provided the director and his actors are capable of fulfilling his intention. In the program book to the Theatre Guild-Gilbert Miller production of *Twelfth Night,* Miss Margaret Webster, wrote the following:

> Believe it or not, our modern audiences know nothing of the



Set by Norman Bel Geddes for Werfel's *The Eternal Road.* See pp. 349 and 420. A permanent setting consisting of a graded floor rising from the wall of the orchestra and broken into five levels, reaching its pinnacle in the stairs of the Heavenly Hosts. At the foot of the road and seemingly part of the audience is the synagogue. Along the road the various episodes from the Old Testament are acted. By the use of lights and props, the locale is changed. Here the Heavenly Hosts appear before Abraham and choose him father of his people. (*Photo: Edward Steichen, courtesy of Norman Bel Geddes*)



Scene from the Helen Hayes-Maurice Evans *Twelfth Night*, directed by Margaret Webster. Set designed by Stewart Chaney. (*Photo: Vandamm Studio*)

> festivities of *Twelfth Night.* January 6th it is, by the modern calendar, twelve days after Christmas. But we exhaust ourselves at Christmas, and New Year's Eve has taken over much the same spirit of carnival which used, in your (Shakespeare's) day, to distinguish "Twelfth Night." But we have tried to keep something of that spirit in your play. . . .

In the spirit of this interpretation, the production kept the diverse humors of the play bubbling without attempting to integrate them more fastidiously than the author did, or to give them some factitious depth. Hence, if we may draw conclusions from what the audience saw, no attempt was made to use a unit set, a revolving stage, or any stylization that would hold the various scenes together more tightly than the text did; curtains rose and fell quickly, each inaugurating a new scene, like the separate tableaux of a pageant. No attempt was made to hew to some line of social meaning; to meet such momentous requirements as the question that "a young gentleman from Harvard" was asked in an examination "What is the social significance of the cross-gartering episode," which Miss Webster quotes with pardonable relish; to treat Malvolio as the incarnation of early Puritanism or of Comstockism in a more recent period. The convention of identical twins was accepted in the spirit of fun, and no one was troubled by the fact that the difference between them was not unnoticeable. The pictorial effect was colorful and playful; and when the bandaged Sir Toby was wheeled in, the effect was very much like that of a "float" in a Mardi Gras—it was a fitting climax to the pageant. The story may be somewhat silly; if so, it is appropriate to a carnival play, and anyone who seriously complains about the story in this production is impervious to its spirit of reckless and diverse jollity.

An earlier production conceived the play as a fable in a book with the huge pages opening for the successive scenes. That, too, was a legitimate approach to the interpretative treatment, except that in this case the effect was more romantic and less robust—very much as a fable is when compared to a carnival.

Concerning *Richard II* in the program book for her notable production, Miss Webster wrote:

> The progression of Richard from the gay, cruel flippancy of his profligate early days to the rude awakening and disillusionment that followed Bolingbroke's successful rebellion, the tragic

> realization that he lacked the kingly qualities that could keep him king—"O that I were as great as is my grief, or lesser than my name"—the exalted despair with which he made his renunciation of crown and scepter, investing the royal weakling with heroic pathos in the hour of his travail, combine to reveal the young Plantagenet as a personage of singular fascination and appeal. . . . From the effulgent coxcomb to the weeping ruin of a boyish monarch, the character is fully expressed.

Here the matter of interpretation concerns not a mood or spirit, but the meaning of a play in terms of its central role.

No one who saw Maurice Evans in this widely toured production can fail to identify this conception in the progressive interpretation of Richard. Had the same play been directed by Meyerhold in Soviet Russia, the interpretation would have probably been substantially different. It is not difficult to conceive what kind of production Moscow would have seen if Meyerhold had started with a "class-conscious," distinctly anti-monarchical bias. Richard might then have been interpreted as a common tyrant, his poetic speeches as pretentiousness, his behavior in the abdication scene as a mixture of a tyrant's reluctance to cede his throne, a plea for sympathy born of his fear of a just retribution, and persiflage to cover his dread. In that case Richard's physical presence, facial play, movement, gesture, and speech would have been radically different in the Soviet performance, not to mention the possibility that all his sympathetic lines would have been cut. Here are two extremes of interpretation, and the difference in effect can easily be seen. Which will be chosen in practice is often a matter of directorial intention, conditioned by environment and prevalent attitudes. The reception will be likewise conditioned; in 1937 the Evans production might have failed in the land of the Soviets, and the hypothetical Meyerhold production would surely have been disapproved in the United States by all except ultra-radical audiences. Which interpretation would have been richer, more human, and closer to Shakespeare's point of view is of course another matter; undoubtedly, the Evans production!

Characterization

However, it is a mistake to reduce the subject of interpretation in Shakespearian drama to political or ideological considerations. It is one

of the basic distinctions of Shakespeare's art that it focusses on human nature; one of his chief accomplishments is *characterization*. Here the range of interpretation is as infinite as human nature itself, though there is much comfortable agreement on many characterizations in principle, the variations arising largely from differences of actors' personalities and endowments. No Shakespearian director, however brilliant his ideational conception (as, for instance, Orson Welles's abbreviated anti-fascist and, in the case of Brutus, tragedy-of-the-liberal treatment of *Julius Caesar*), can be said to have done justice to his author unless he has achieved an understanding interpretation of the characters. *All* the persons are important (no two clowns or servants are really alike), and of course the main ones are the very keys with which to unlock the heart of Shakespeare's plays.

A perception of character like Coleridge's note on Polonius makes a vast difference, not only in certain scenes but in the entire pathos of the Ophelia-Laertes-Hamlet situations, to Hamlet's personal tragedy, and in some measure to the dénouement of the play.[1]

> And so it is in Polonius, who is the personified memory of wisdom no longer actually possessed. This admirable character is always misrepresented on the stage. Shakespeare never intended to exhibit him as a buffoon; for although it was natural that Hamlet—a young man of fire and genius, detesting formality, and detesting Polonius on political grounds, as imagining that he had assisted his uncle in his usurpation—should express himself satirically, yet this must not be taken as exactly the poet's conception of him. In Polonius a certain induration of character had arisen from long habits of business; but take his advice to Laertes, and Ophelia's reverence for his memory, and we shall see that he was meant to be represented as a statesman somewhat past his faculties—his recollections of life all full of wisdom, and showing a knowledge of human nature, whilst what immediately takes place before him, and escapes from him, is indicative of weakness.

If Polonius is interpreted as a plain fool, pedant, and meddler, as has been often the case, it is not only this role that suffers. Ophelia's grief then becomes extravagant and not very convincing, Laertes' conduct is then merely dutiful in the most wooden and primitive fashion, and the revolt that he is leading is certainly unconvincing. (Why should

[1] Coleridge, Samuel Taylor: *Lectures.*

Danish gentlemen of spirit band together to avenge such a Polonius?) It will be seen that Coleridge's interpretation meets many questions.

Even more crucial, of course, is the interpretation of Hamlet, a subject that has been widely debated for centuries. If the following differences in interpretation are noted in some detail, it is not because the problem can be exhausted by these references; it is because they illustrate some striking differences in the general effect of the play, and the amount of close consideration that enters into any genuine interpretation of an important role.

We begin with the Maurice Evans' unabridged production, directed by Miss Webster. Of this, the critic John Mason Brown wrote:

> Unlike most recent Hamlets, Mr. Evans is not a neurotic princeling with a pale visage who strikes despairing poses under spotlights. He is the first entirely masculine Hamlet of our time. He has wit, gaiety, vitality, and charm. Watching him, one understands what the King means when he describes Hamlet's spirit as being "free and generous"; why dueling should be something at which he excels; and why Fortinbras insists after his death that "the rites of war speak loudly for him."[2]

A unique production resulted from the concept of an extroverted Hamlet—of a character who is "normal, though distressed," who "in addition to his gifts as a thinker and poet, is a Prince in the executive sense," whose spirit has been touched by Machiavelli's, who dies thinking about the state and the succession.[3] The small minority that did not care for Evans' interpretation of the role, and consequently for the production, can indulge in much qualification and rebuttal. But it is undeniable that here was a fresh revelation to audiences, and that it was possible only because a characterization had been carefully thought out in relation to his conduct and his repute in the play.

Example: The Gielgud "Hamlet"

Another notable interpretation, John Gielgud's, was a predominantly psychological and somewhat pathological treatment. By consultation with the actor and reference to his notes and text, Miss Rosamond Gilder performed the astonishing feat of capturing that production in words. The following passages demonstrate, in some respects,

[2] New York Post, October 13, 1938.

[3] Brown, John Mason: *Broadway in Review*, p. 52.

what attentive examination of character was involved in this interpretation which relied heavily upon the psychological outlook of a period influenced by Freud and his school. So careful an approach may well serve as a lesson for the Shakespearian director and actor, regardless of one's opinion on the relative merits of the two productions. It is necessary only to remember that each of them ran some risk. Evans' interpretation courted the danger of superficiality, Gielgud's that of over-complication, instability, or pathological effect. Any approach must be carefully scrutinized for its particular limitations and difficulties, which have to be reduced to a minimum. Absolutely perfect interpretation or production is of course a naïve expectation even under the best circumstances.

Gielgud has been accused of not giving a unified impersonation. It is easy to see that the comment stems from a conception of the part based on versions delicately pruned to create the image of a princely youth of heroic mould who does, of course, exist in the text, but who is also doubled by a sardonic, virulent, and cruel young man, a young man who talks bawdry to Ophelia, baits her father, sends his ex-friends to death without a scruple, and kills without compunction once his blood is up. Hamlet, so Shakespeare wrote him, was a Renaissance youth to whom philosophy, poetry, and violence were familiar. He lacked a decent sense of modern stage conventions, of climax and dénouement, of time-relationships and the proper conduct of a plot. He has a way of not remaining consistent that is disconcerting to the theorist.

To unify and simplify the role, Booth, for instance, omitted the most unappetizing of Hamlet's comments on his mother's behavior, such as the "incestuous sheets" of the first soliloquy, the "most pernicious woman" of the speech that follows immediately on the ghostly interview. He left out all the coarse banter with Ophelia and large sections of the closet scene which were apparently not considered fit talk for a prince and certainly inconceivable for a son. Shakespeare, however, did write these things, if we are to trust the quartos and folios, and Gielgud plays them as integral to the role, and with shattering effect on those who cherish an image of Hamlet as all "sweet Prince" in the modern and not in the Renaissance sense.

Shakespeare also provided Burbage with the Fortinbras soliloquy

as well as the preceding soliloquies and the numberless elaborate set-pieces such as the speech to the players, and the graveyard passages. The Fortinbras soliloquy has usually been omitted, thereby depriving Hamlet of one of the telling facets of his multi-sided character. Another simplification has been to end the closet scene with the mood of reconciliation reached after storm and stress, in the rhymed couplet beginning "I must be cruel only to be kind." Actually, the scene at this point veers back again to the opening mood of violence and invective. By the elimination of this anticlimax a far smoother and more heroic Prince emerges from the text, but a Prince of less profoundly human proportions. Gielgud plays the scene through to the end, bringing it to a fresh and poignant climax with the one word "mother" thrown after the retreating figure of the woman who carries away his last anchorage, his last security.

Gielgud has chosen to play Hamlet whole because he can accept and understand him whole. The generation he has grown up in is one which knew in its childhood that nobility and brutality were not legends but common facts recorded for four years in daily torrents of blood and printers' ink. Modern psychology must be as much a part of his thinking as the Darwinian theory was of our fathers'. The Freudian aspects of Hamlet's character are not startling for those to whom the revelations of the psycho-analytical technique are an accepted part of thought and experience. He can see and understand as perfectly sound and accurate portraiture Hamlet's split personality, his mother-fixation, his sense of guilt, his battles that will not stay won, his desperate efforts to reconcile the conflicting elements in his psychic make-up, his tendency to unpack his heart in words, his heroism and cowardice, his final integration. . . .

He gives us at once, on our first sight of him, a picture of frustrated energy, of force held in check; force of grief curbed by lack of sympathy, force of filial love curbed by his mother's betrayal, force of ambition curbed by his uncle's usurpation, force of intellect curbed by surrounding stupidity. Hamlet sits frozen in grief, rage and futility. He has not been able to move forward from his father's death. His very natural grief, emphasized in Gielgud's performance, is denied its release in responsible action. He cannot take up the burden of his manhood, comfort himself

by comforting his mother, heal the shock of his first severance from dependent childhood, by assuming a role of leadership in family and state. His uncle has done more than pop in between the election and his hopes. Claudius has deprived him of the normal activities which would have permitted him to grow out of his state of shocked adolescence into maturity. In addition he has struck at his deepest physiological and psychological tie—his relation to his mother. Hamlet's profound trauma is disclosed in no uncertain terms in the virulent disgust of his first soliloquy.

To grief, frustration, and psychic shock is added the burden of the ghostly visitation with its treble load of walking death, murder, and revenge. Gielgud's performance gives a sense of an almost intolerable tension. Starting at the level of a sorrow which "passeth show" in the opening of the first act, waves of emotion mount in a continuous progression. In the following scenes they gather momentum, rise to a climax, break and subside only to start again with accumulated force toward another intensity, until finally in the closet scene the last crest is reached, the last crash carries all before it.

These successive climaxes, so characteristic of Gielgud's interpretation, are the outward sign of Hamlet's basic difficulty. The driving force of his emotion, his power to imagine, suffer, act, runs head on against the other motivating element of his nature, his contemplative, questioning, rational mind. The onrush of emotion is suddenly stopped, with the inevitable drop to profound despair and a sense of nullity, exhaustion. On the upward sweep Hamlet may be hysterical, on the downward drop morbidly depressed, but these are the alternations of mood resulting from a psychological conflict, not the manifestations of a diseased mind. Gielgud's Hamlet is not mad. His antic disposition is always a deliberate mask. Excitable and highstrung, occasionally dominated by a force within himself that he cannot master and does not know how to canalize, Hamlet erupts now and again into speech and action which startle even himself—but if that should be taken as an indication of insanity, who among us would escape the straitjacket?

Hamlet's problem as Gielgud presents it is not a matter of lack of will, courage, or determination—"Sith I have cause and will and strength and means"—but of an unresolved discord within

himself. The resolution of such a discord does not come about by taking thought, since thought itself is a causative factor. Rather it comes by a releasing emotional experience, either actual or relieved in words. In Hamlet we see this release take place in the closet scene. Here, suddenly, the deadlock is broken by an action so instinctive that there is no time for thought, followed immediately by an outpouring in words of the very dregs of Hamlet's mind. This is the climax, the turning point of the play. From then on Hamlet is changed, though the transformation is not instantly evident. The Hamlet which Gielgud gives us by including the Fortinbras soliloquy is already on the way to becoming captain of his soul. By the time he has returned from the abortive trip to England, he is an integrated personality. Quiet, courteous, occasionally almost gay, with the tender lightness of those who, loving life, have accepted death, the Hamlet of the last scenes has discovered the springs of his own being.

Gielgud shows, however, that though Hamlet's conflict has been resolved and his way to action discovered, his personality is untouched. He flares into a rage at Laertes, throws an enigmatic taunt at the King, indulges in fantastic quibbles with Osric, talks philosophy with Horatio as of old. But through all this he walks forward, his eyes open on a foreseen and calamitous end. In every gesture, every intonation, every quiet word and relaxed pose, this Hamlet is a contrast to the tense, tormented creature of the first scenes. Emotion and will are at last fused. When this happens to any of us, such inner power as exists is released. In Hamlet that power is great, for it is intellectual and spiritual as well as physical and emotional. He is sure of his strength, because he is healed within: "I do not fear it, I shall win at the odds." But—there is also the prescience of disaster. As Gielgud turns to Horatio and speaks the two words "Let be" with complete, quiet acceptance, the human race seems for a moment redeemed from its hopelessness. The theatre, which is poet-actor-artist in one, has made manifest before our eyes that noble particle which leavens the lump and makes hope possible.

Hamlet's psychological graph is but one element in the rich texture of his theatrical being. It must inevitably be the warp upon which any characterization is woven, since action, tone, tempo, mood and every detail of reading, every item of business,

costume, and make-up are based upon it, but it is only a part of the living whole, a largely unconscious part of the actor's apprehension of the role. It is Gielgud's ability to grasp this basic structure and express it in terms of a convincing theatricality that makes his performance illuminating. He combines the power to convey subtle movements of the spirit, delicate shades of thought, the inner workings of mind and heart, with a knowledge of theatrical technique and an ability to go "to 't like French falconers" and tear off "a passionate speech" with the best of them as occasion requires. He is not in the least afraid of the words he must handle, neither the poetry that pours in such beauty from his lips nor the invectives with which he attacks the foulness of the world and of those nearest him. He can fence with words as lightly and humorously as he can bludgeon with them. . . .

He brings to the part a continuous flow of life. Thoughtful, philosophic and unhappy as this Prince may be, he is also keenly, almost painfully, alive. Though absorbed by his inner conflict he reacts to every impact from the unsympathetic world around him. This aliveness is expressed in every fibre of Gielgud's performance and is part of its dominant quality of young sensitiveness. For his Hamlet is the revolt of youth at the destruction of its faith in truth and decency and love. His Hamlet is also youth itself, with its intolerance, ruthlessness, arrogance, and self-absorption. Gielgud is willing to play him both nobly and angrily, extenuating nothing of his harshnesses but painting so clearly the picture of his outraged purity, his sorrow, and his spiritual isolation, that Hamlet becomes in his hands the prototype of all lost and lonely souls, as well as a prince most royal, the "unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth."[4]

With this brilliant summary of a characterization (elements of which have undoubtedly appeared in other treatments of the role), we can rest our case. This is simply that in interpreting Shakespeare in production one must arrive at a conception of each individual play which will bind together all the dramatized situations, and that such a conception can attain effectiveness only when it arises from an

[4] Reprinted from *John Gielgud's Hamlet.* A record of Performance by Rosamond Gilder. *With Notes on Costume, Scenery and Stage Business* by John Gielgud, by permission of Miss Rosamond Gilder and the publishers, the Oxford University Press, New York.

understanding of character. There is nothing more modern than such an approach, regardless of political or social interpretations, precisely because Shakespeare's characterization at its best is not bounded in the nutshell of what his age readily understood; it unfolds new wonders, and no theory of character, however advanced, is alien to Shakespeare. It was Freud himself who maintained that all his clinical deductions were long ago anticipated by intuitive artists.

REVIVALS

John Houseman

A PUBLISHER, bringing out a new edition of the works of John Donne, does not announce that he is "reviving" the Sermons or "The Ecstasy;" nor has Mr. Stokowski ever publicly claimed that he and his Philadelphia men were "reviving" Bach when they play a new orchestral arrangement of the D Minor Toccata and Fugue. But let someone present a play that has been off Broadway for more than six months and it is immediately announced that the play is being given a "revival." The use of such a word is not, however, entirely presumptuous. It is profoundly true that a play in print is theatrically dead. Not until it is presented on a stage by a number of theatrical craftsmen to a number of contemporary spectators with the same patterns of language and thought, and with the same habits of behavior and emotional response as themselves, can a play be said to be alive. It can be appreciated in print, for its literary qualities and for its deep human insight. In its social and historical aspects it can profoundly affect the lives of many millions who read it. Yet as a play it does not live until that moment when the curtain rises; a play comes to life with the rise of the curtain and dies with the fall of the curtain. In a very real sense every evening's performance is a "revival."

For our present purposes, let us define as a "revival" any performance of a play which, as a result of social changes, no longer conforms exactly to the theatrical, social, or verbal fashions of the audience before which it is to be played. This, in America in 1941, applies equally, though to a constantly varying degree, to *The Trojan Women*, the plays of Galsworthy, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *A Doll's House*, and Philip Barry's drawing-room comedy of the year before last.

Since it is the aim of this brief article to consider some of the practical aspects involved in the choice and treatment of such "revivals," it becomes necessary to divide them clearly into two classes: (a) Professional Revivals: destined for the paying customers of the commercial theatre; (b) Other Revivals: in which class belong all plays produced for academic, religious, social, or communal reasons—plays, that is, put on with no primary thought of profit. Since different considerations affect and determine the production of these two different kinds of "revivals" it is well to consider them separately.

Professional Revivals

There are, or rather there used to be, some countries in which (through state subsidy or cultural habit) a successful presentation of the great plays of the past was a thing expected of and guaranteed to the theatre. In America today a revival enjoys no such favors. It cannot even expect special consideration from the public or the critics. It must vie for audiences with the newest musical comedy and the most controversial social drama. Being set in period and probably in the multi-scene convention of an earlier and freer day, its production cost is likely to be well above the average. Finally, there is no chance whatever of its recouping its losses by means of a Hollywood sale.

Against these odds how does a revival get produced at all on Broadway today? I can think of three reasons, although in practice they may overlap: (a) The producer is in love with a certain play which he wishes to see on the stage. (b) He is an actor seeking in a revival a suitable part in which to appear before his public (or a manager with such an actor under contract). (c) He is an artist in the theatre (director, designer, impresario) who cannot find, within the confines of contemporary playwriting, sufficient scope for his imaginative or creative energy.

1. *The actor-producer.* By far the most successful producer of revivals is the actor-manager. His problem is the selection of a part which he considers particularly suited to his individual talents: a part sufficiently different from what he has done before to gain him fresh audiences, but one which will not overtax his equipment as an actor. He must surround himself with actors who will conform to or complement his particular style of playing, and he needs a director (if he is not his own director) who will point the whole production so as

to make the most of his virtues and the least of his faults. The physical production must also conform to the general style of his performance. By adhering carefully to these rules, the actor-manager may go from one successful revival to another and give considerable pleasure to vast audiences.

The outstanding exponent of this procedure is Maurice Evans, assisted by his extremely able director, Margaret Webster; their productions have been almost consistently successful. Adhering always to a high standard of competence, they make use of the following carefully controlled elements: a full and well edited text; a company with clear, cultured speech modeled on that of their star; practical, illustrative scenery; careful and unpretentious direction, full of attention to the little commonplaces of the play and of illustrative stage business. The result is a classic revival of great interest and of consistent, if somewhat facile, comprehensibility. As a permanent contribution to the art of the theatre it offers, in my opinion, nothing particularly new or experimentally significant; as a contribution to the economic health of the contemporary theatre it is of inestimable value.[1]

2. *The director-producer.* There are many periods in the history of the theatre (in fact, most of the golden eras of the drama) when the function of the director, as we know him today on Broadway, is virtually non-existent. An organically sound theatre with a robust acting convention functioning in the service of a prolific and vital dramatic output, has no need of an intermediary creative talent. It is in periods of change and uncertainty that the need for the director appears. In such a period as the present, the director emerges as the one free and vital agent in the theatre today, and the field in which he finds himself able to do his most valuable and effective work is the revival. (By direction we do not mean, of course, the mere mechanical moving around of actors and scenery from one act to the other, but that very real creative talent which enables a director to color and integrate a dramatic work with his own imaginative and interpretative vitality.)

The director-producer is a man who works in theatrical ideas. For better or for worse, he cannot content himself with presenting to the public the tried, familiar successes of the past. It is not enough for him to stand by and let the well-known speeches and dramatic situations convey their time-worn message. He has appointed himself an

[1] The Evans unabridged *Hamlet* may be designated an experiment in presenting the complete text, but not in stagecraft.

interpreter between the audience of his day and the dramatist of the past. As such, it is his function to underline, color, and emphasize the play; and to *change*, if need be, its entire *outward shape*, until it assumes the form in which it will be the most immediately comprehensible and effective to a contemporary audience.

Ideally, this is a process requiring enormous work, keen sensitivity and judgment, a clear mind, and great courage. It involves a double process. The director must separate and analyze the essential elements of the old play. He must have sufficient sense of period and of historical development to enable him to gauge the true and lasting values. At the same time, however, he must know his modern audience well enough to estimate with sureness *the contemporary equivalents of those values*. He must have the deep knowledge of acting tradition that will enable him to cut through layers of intervening conventions to the real acting values of the drama. He must be bold and ingenious in *adapting the play to the necessities of the most modern theatrical and technical methods*, without sacrificing to these effects the essential truth contained in the original play.

On the contemporary American scene the director-producer who comes the most immediately to mind is Orson Welles. His approach to a production, for all that he is himself an actor, is primarily, in the sense that we have described it, that of a director-producer. At his best, he has given to contemporary American audiences some of their most exciting moments; from century-old plays he has fashioned productions that may profoundly influence the course of the modern theatre.

Of these, the Mercury *Julius Caesar* is the most celebrated; yet in the sense already discussed, his most remarkable revival was perhaps the *Dr. Faustus* he put on for the Federal Theatre. From one of the great, professionally never-performed plays in America, from a composite of superb archaic poetry and empty Elizabethan morality-play and stock-buffoonery, he produced an outstanding Broadway success. He achieved this by translating the play into its modern equivalent, by giving it the benefit of much magical electrical lighting, and by filling it with tricks and devices from the current repertory of the burlesque and vaudeville stages. For six months, nightly, in the year 1938, packed audiences heard and were moved by the vision of an Elizabethan poet, and were able to recognize in the state of man's world today, a true reflection of the tragedy of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*.

At other times, the very nature of Welles's method has defeated

him. The violence that transports an audience and forces it into an understanding of old values and into an intimate emotional participation in the great works of the past may also (when, for one reason or another, it is not successfully integrated with the play) fill an audience with a most infuriating and exhausting sense of discord. The spectators may have a justified feeling that they are witnessing, not one of the great plays of the past, but a personal conflict between the director and his material.

3. *Non-Commercial Revivals.* I have left to the last the consideration of that vaguely definable category, the plays that are revived because somebody loves them. They lie almost entirely outside the broad, rushing stream of the "commercial" theatre. They occupy no prominent place in the records of the contemporary stagecraft. Yet they have supplied pleasure, excitement, and theatrical education to a very large number of people.

Into this class fall the productions of the Provincial Repertory theatres of England and of the more permanent semi-amateur "Little Theatres" in this country. To this class also belongs an institution which deserves a grateful memory that it has not received lately: a theatre which, for six years, performed at modest prices a wide selection of the world's greatest plays—Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre. With rare exceptions no memorable performances emerged, no brilliant production ideas that influenced the modern theatre. Sometimes the cast and the direction left something to be desired. Yet many hundreds of thousands of literate New Yorkers were enabled to enjoy conscientious productions of great plays which otherwise they could only have read in the cold printed pages of books. And that, as we stated in the opening of this article, is precisely the meaning and the justification of the term "revival" in the theatre.

Academic Theatre Revivals

During the past fifteen years I do not believe that one single professional legitimate theatre has been constructed in the United States. During that same time many millions have been spent building several hundred magnificent theatres of varying sizes in American schools, universities, and community centers. Is it conceivable that the theatre, commercially eclipsed by other forms of fashionable entertainment, may (as it often has before) find survival and fresh life in the academic and cultural centers of the country?

It *is* conceivable, although so far many of these theatres still lack an initiative and depth commensurate with their facilities. Given time they may, however, develop into an extremely valuable theatrical element. For the sake of the theatre as a whole, it is important that hey should, for they represent an enormous investment of money and hope. Their repertory includes a high proportion of revivals, and it is essential that these be produced creatively if they are to possess both modern educational and theatrical value.

Since the element of profit is largely eliminated from the academic revival, the purpose of these productions is, generally speaking, threefold: (a) to produce works that will give pleasure to audiences, even if these audiences are made up only of friends and students: (b) to illustrate and complement curricular interests; (c) to provide opportunities for creative work to students and instructors.

Since the field of such revivals is unlimited and individual production-conditions infinitely varied, there are no set rules that may be safely followed. Here, however, are a few ideas for the consideration of those engaged in such revivals:

Never forget that the field of revivals is the entire realm of the theatre. Only a minute fraction of the world's theatrical output has been dominated by realistic, fourth-wall conventions. Since you may produce *any* play in *any* convention that you wish regardless of its commercial possibilities, take advantage of this freedom, both in the choice of material and in the methods of production.

Roughly speaking, there are two ways to produce the great plays of the past: (a) in the style of their own period; (b) in your own style. Both are equally valuable, and experience of both is necessary to an understanding and successful practice of the techniques of the theatre.

(a) The director should acquire the resources that come from detailed, determined research into the production-methods of any great theatrical era. Then he should try, in terms of his own resources, to reproduce it. He may produce Greek plays upon a shallow, architectural stage, with a circular chorus ring; or the plays of Ford, Dekker, Webster, or Shakespeare on his own approximation of an Elizabethan stage. He will thereby acquire valuable theatrical knowledge. He will learn, for instance, if he has any humility or theatrical sense, that the Elizabethan stage, with its apparent simplicity, was one of the most complicated, elaborate, elastic acting instruments in the world. He will discover that the Commedia dell' Arte, which looks so quaint and easy

in the illustrations of textbooks, is an infinitely complicated acting convention, born of the experience of generations of actors working under the most arduous market-place conditions. He will find out for himself that the heightened realism of Chekhov can be played only by the most accomplished and experienced actors; or, while floundering through the mannered wit and obscenities of a Restoration comedy, he will discover for himself how completely alien such theatre is, with a few notable exceptions, to our own day. In approaching French literature of the *grand siècle*, he may try once playing Racine's *Athaliah* in Louis XIV court costumes and wigs. It will give him a sharper understanding of the limitations and the greatness of French classic tragedy than can be acquired from textbooks. These are only a very few examples of what one can do in this endless field.

Then (and not until then), armed with this knowledge, the director can turn around and do exactly the opposite. He may disregard entirely all period considerations and produce the great plays of the past in whichever way he believes may prove the most effective and comprehensible today. Whatever you do, be true to your own imagination and your own feelings, instead of adhering to facsimile reproduction of older styles. However, there is no sense in simply forcing the play into some fashionable mold that may seem original or sensational. The problem in revivals is to capture and revitalize the meaning and effect of the script. Use any of the recent experimental methods you wish, but don't be eccentric simply for the fun of it. And, above all, try to find modern equivalents for what was genuine and forceful in the older style, wherever it seems probable that the best values of the script will no longer come to life when presented in the original theatrical convention. The results may prove to be startlingly fresh.

* * * *

POSTSCRIPT

Though a popular success is not of itself a guarantee of virtue in the theatre, it may be of some interest to consider the record of seven consecutive New York revivals of the world's most successful play—*Hamlet*. It may be that some instructive conclusions can be drawn from the success or failure of these productions.

1. *The Barrymore Hamlet.* (Opened November 16, 1922—101 perform-

ances.) This is probably the most famous and best remembered revival. It benefited from the following elements: (a) A great surprise performance by a brilliant personality—John Barrymore; (b) a violent and direct illumination of the drama in terms of currently fashionable psychological thought—i.e., Hamlet's scenes with his mother; (c) the first important work of a man who has affected the whole nature of American theatrical design—Robert Edmond Jones; (d) a warm, sympathetic director—Arthur Hopkins.

2. Walter Hampden's *Hamlet.* (Opened October 10, 1925—68 performances.) This is the only one of the recent *Hamlets* that I did not personally see. I have always understood that during his original New York run, Walter Hampden was a very satisfactory Hamlet. But in spite of its moderately long run, this production seems to have left only a very slight impression, probably because it provided no particular revelation in stagecraft or in interpretation.

3. *The Modern Dress Hamlet.* (Opened November 9, 1925—88 performances.) Directed by James Light with Basil Sydney as Hamlet, it was the first of the modern dress classic revivals. Stimulated perhaps by this novelty, many people remember this as one of the most lucid and affecting productions of *Hamlet* they ever saw.

4. *The Bel Geddes Hamlet.* (Opened November 5, 1931—28 performances.) This was the most "original" and yet the most disastrous of all *Hamlet* revivals. Its failure cannot be entirely attributed to the performance of its principal actor. This ambitiously conceived New York production was an extreme and unfortunate example of the director-producer at work. What the audience felt, seeing the big square blocks of the set, the obvious trickiness of much of the lighting, and the ill-taste of some of the production numbers, was the irritation that comes from apparent straining for effectiveness rather than the irresistible impact of an organically conceived and executed theatrical effect.

5. *The Gielgud Hamlet.* (Opened October 8, 1936—132 performances.) This, New York's longest run of *Hamlet*, was produced by Guthrie McClintic, who gave it a mid-17th century setting and an interesting cast, particularly in the women's parts (Judith Anderson as the Queen, Lillian Gish as Ophelia). It was, however, primarily Gielgud's own performance, (worked on and developed during an earlier series of London productions)

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that made it the great success it was. It was an extraordinarily talented and mannered Hamlet, with a special kind of beauty and excitement. Whether one liked it or not it was impossible to deny the actor's extraordinary absorption of the part, the extreme interest of his readings. (For an instructive analysis of this performance see Rosamond Gilder's book, *John Gielgud's Hamlet.* See also pp. 455 ff.)

6. *The Leslie Howard Hamlet.* (Opened November 10, 1936—39 performances.) This was not a successful *Hamlet,* and the star was treated by the critics with extreme severity; the production, on the other hand, received considerable praise. Actually, it was an outstanding example of a poorly integrated revival. Here was a matinee idol, and one of the theatre's most sensitive and intelligent actors of modern comedy. Those are the qualities which he should have employed in his *Hamlet.* His entire production should have been nothing but a frame and background for a small, but infinitely sensitive portrayal of the part of the unfortunate prince. Instead of that, Howard surrounded himself with one of the most massive and grandiose productions ever seen on Broadway. Dwarfed by great masses of masonry, surrounded by archaic theatrical costumes, he made it utterly impossible for himself to give the only performance of *Hamlet* he had any right to attempt.

7. *The Evans or Full-Length Hamlet.* (Opened October 12, 1938—96 performances. Revived December 4, 1939—40 performances.) This production conforms exactly to the definition already given of the Evans-Webster revival technique. It was extremely well received by critics and audiences.

MUSIC IN THE THEATRE

Marc Blitzstein

THIS is a series of notes on music in its relation to theatre-production, taken down more or less at random, and aimed at those likely to be involved in that relation. Some of the notes are peremptory in tone, in cases where the author feels fairly sure of himself. Others are only suggestions, to be taken as such, and used as springboards for the reader's imagination. No attention, however, is paid to the problems of grand opera. It is an enormous mess and tangle of a subject; and a discussion would serve little purpose here, since few theatre-groups are as yet on the verge of tackling *Tristan* or *Traviata.*

(1) For the Director

Yours is the over-all esthetic job. In deciding about music for a theatrical production, there are several things to keep in mind. In the first place, not all plays need music. Particularly the discursive or cerebral ones, like many of the works of Shaw, Wilde, Ibsen and Behrman, are better without it. This may be because they are dramatic theatre, but not theatric theatre; and music, instead of relieving the talkiness with "contrast," turns out to be an intrusion. Music between acts of such plays is of course possible, and lends a certain elegance to an evening, especially if it is in the period of the play. And in certain instances there can be an effective "melting" of entr'acte music with the subsequent rise of the curtain. But this is a ticklish business, and wants a good musician to handle it.

When you have decided that a script really calls for an incidental score, or for the still more ambitious inclusion of songs, ballets, etc., find the right composer. This sounds flippant, perhaps. But the right

composer is not always the best composer. He must be an intuitive composer; certainly his biggest task is to find out what the director wants from him.

Solve all the practical problems together with him: how many musicians, where they are to be placed during performance, and so on. If possible avoid having them in the wings; a rather arty dance-recital psychology is set up by the audience's awareness that the music is just out of the visible horizon. The pit is good; *really* backstage is good. A new idea was tried in *The American Way* and in *Night Music*: cuing and piping the music through microphones from another part of the house. Putting musicians in the boxes is "cute," and for special use only.

Then solve certain esthetic considerations with the composer: where in the script music is to go, whether it is to be a song, a dance, or incidental music; and the general nature of the mood. Here the director must be as articulate as possible. Meyerhold once asked his composer for a "scabrous waltz"; "scabrous" is an adjective that rings a bell somewhere in a composer's insides. I remember Orson Welles telling me: "Make the Fascist March for *Julius Caesar* pompous, raucous, and corrupt." In short, put forth your best literary endeavor to convey to the musician the *kind* of thing you want; and then—leave it to him. If you have picked a good man, and gone over the preliminary needs, your musical task is over. Don't take on the added one of music-critic; allow the composer really to collaborate with you, by adding his contribution to the whole esthetic job. . . .

One extra point. The *pace* of a performance with music is always different from one without. Music will slow up the proceedings; therefore, the lines of dialog must move more quickly, in terms of ideas. If the music is related to character-delineation, it can do in a jot something which spoken explanations would have to drool over for minutes. Watch this in the next movie you see. You will find music an extraordinary heightener of effects; but it is skittish, demanding, and can cause disaster at the slightest inattention.

(2) *For the Composer*

The most important aspect of the whole procedure is to keep constantly in mind that you are doing a theatre-work, and not a symphony. This may sound obvious, but many theatre-scores have gone on the rocks because that fact got lost in the shuffle. The difference is

at once more important and less drastic than is supposed. It does not mean a complete turnover of the composer's craft; it does not mean a lowering of musical quality. It does mean a manipulation of musical elements on the basis of their adjustability to another medium.

The whole level must be kept several steps below the action, or the words, or the movements. Write less complicated music; if it is instrumental, keep the colors less "interesting" than in concert-music; use less variety, more sustention. You must find the type of music which has the conspicuity or the lack of it required for any given theatrical moment.

The composer will probably never write theatre-music which does not fall into one of the following categories:

(a) *Harmony background:* music which heightens, enforces, lends atmosphere to, the theatre-scene—so-called "incidental music." This music stays in its place; it should be listened to but not heard as in a concert, and yet it would be missed if removed, as though a light or glow or amount of warmth were taken away. A boy and a girl sit on a park-bench, making love. Their words are intermittent, and mumbled; the music takes care of the silences, and also fills in the romantic picture.

(b) *Counterpoint-background:* the music is still secondary, but it has climbed into a position of attention and focus, in that, in some way, it *comments* on the visual or on other auditive elements. The girl is seated on the park-bench alone; the boy has left her. The music plays the same love-motif: now we need that music, not for warmth, but for actual narrative understanding.

(c) *Harmony foreground:* music as part of the story itself. The simplest example is of a mother singing a lullaby; as we listen we watch the baby pass from whimpering and generally unhappy wakefulness to contented sleep. (The movie musicals use this method all the time: the torch-singer sings the blues, as the camera passes from one listener's face to another; the blues itself is the main item.)

(d) *Counterpoint-foreground:* wonderfully effective as a device, but also perilous in the extreme. A blues is being sung by a torch-singer; we are "in" on the plot sufficiently to know that the moment of the performance has been chosen for a murder by stabbing, in a room beyond the café. The singer knows it, too. The singing thus has both the quality of the song and that of suspense and excitement; and if it is a movie, and the camera-man is up to snuff, we see in the close-up

of the singer, the murder itself being committed in the upper left-hand corner of the screen.

These are the categories, and little theatre music is ever written outside them. A general suggestion *musically* is horizontal writing (all the way from melodiousness to strict polyphonic and contrapuntal interest) for foreground musical moments, and a more or less vertical harmonic treatment (chords, percussion, slabs of arpeggios, etc.) for the background spots.

Prosody. The setting of English words is a large field, full of traditions, all of them bad. In so-called "serious" music, there are the execrable formulas of "wind" pronounced "wined," all *a's* broad, and all *r's* rolled ("—Ond the mon took the maiden's hond, ond verrrry verrrry merrrry were they!"), and of the distortion of words and meaning to fit musical phrase. In "popular music," where these things are managed much better indeed, there are other tedious and worn-out tricks, notably the refusal to get off the "oom-pah" beat (which assures a dance-band revenue), and the singer's compensation for the same, whereby she never sings on the beat. There has to be a re-seeing of the whole problem of prosody from the bottom up. I can think of no better way of beginning such a re-appraisal than by carefully studying the score of Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts.* Here, precisely because the Gertrude Stein text makes no sense, the artful handling of English words is projected in clear relief. I would describe Thomson's method as "natural" but not "naturalistic." The words come easily and singably out of the singer's mouth, their musical pattern and cogency being perceived in the act of singing, not intellectualized, and above all not instrumentalized.

Instruments. There has been of late a great deal of dabbling in special instruments for theatre-scores, usually to substitute for many musicians. The Hammond organ, the novachord, solovox, and combinations of the ether-wave instruments have all been tried. I am rather against them than for them, for I have yet to hear a fine musical sound come out of them. For special purposes, of course, they are serviceable as the oscillator, anvil, temple-bells, or any of the other utensils from the sound-effect-man's kitchen. There is an artful way of using the Hammond organ, *inside* other instruments, so that only the filled-in sounds are heard—their pitch rather than their color. Since the color of this instrument consists of all the variations of the

human squeal imaginable, I should think carefully before scoring for it.

Timing. In writing music for action—i.e., for entrances, exits, etc.—there is a neat question of timing involved. Naturally, theatre-sense, grasp of the psychological necessities, is required here. But for study, one could do worse than to look over the last operas of Verdi—*Otello, Falstaff*—for perfect theatre-timing.

(3) For the Playwright as Librettist, Lyric-writer

(a) A complete libretto, to a full-length musical work, should be about two-thirds the length of a full-length play script. This is approximate, but has been found to work.

(b) There is no need to worry about finding justification for music in the script—that is, narrative justification. If the form or the style calls for music (if it is fantastic, or lends itself to songs, etc.) that is enough. There is no need to set the plot "back-stage of a musical show" or "rehearsal-time in a WPA symphony orchestra."

(c) In writing lyrics before the tune is composed, be simple, full of long vowels and *easy* rhyme-schemes. Don't be misled by sophisticated Broadway lyrics; they may seem intricate, but they are always easy to say, therefore to sing. Speak your lyrics aloud, find out how quickly they can be spoken and still be intelligible. Your composer can perform no sleight-of-hand tricks with speed. If the tune is already composed, then your problem has been transferred from timing, which is already done for you, to *spacing.* Be careful to follow the melodic line, not only for words which fit it, but also for ideas which rise and fall with it, paying particular attention to the "carry-overs." Unless your script insists upon it, your "poetry" should be like your prose, not "highfalutin," or "artistic," but simple, conversational; only tauter, more condensed, more economical.

(4) For the Actor

If you are called upon to sing in the course of a play, and you have not sung before, don't become dismayed. I have done most of my best work with singing actors rather than with acting singers. You need more lung-power for sustained notes, of course; but you don't need what is commonly and breathlessly spoken of as a "voice." If it is a revue-type of song, the words are more important than the music. You will find that the voice naturally falls on the more important, held notes

of the tune in any case; the others can be indicated in a kind of running *parlando*, a speak-singing which sounds horribly difficult theoretically but is the easiest kind of delivery. It requires vocal and mental relaxation; concentrate on the meaning of the song.

In singing, you will find that your voice has more projection and strength than when you speak; therefore you must be careful to watch the moments when you are passing from speech to song, and *vice versa*. Make sure the same quality comes over. There is a school which asks for singing while singing, and speaking while speaking. This sounds very pure, and very sound: but when it is a question of theatre, it simply will not do. The linking force here is *personality*. As audience, we demand that the same person speak to us who has just sung. This means some compromise on the part of the actor in both mediums. I once heard a soprano (who shall be blissfully nameless) do Mozart, the *Entführung aus dem Serail*, I think. Glorious she was, when she did her aria. But then the script called for a few sentences of dialog; and my goddess came tumbling down. . . . There came a childish girly-girly voice, barely audible, squeaking away, in a fashion no one could possibly accept as the same character. This is one of the defects in our training of singers; it is the essence of that wretched thing called "placement." Don't, if you are a singer, "lean on your placement." If you are an actor who has not studied singing, you have probably never heard of it. Be grateful.

DANCE IN PLAYS: USES AND TYPES

George Beiswanger

DANCE is an autonomous and highly specialized art, important in its own right and concerned with creating its own independent theatre. As such, it falls outside the scope of a book on general theatre practice. But dance also flourishes today on the stage-at-large, lending brilliance, strength, and at times even a structure to more inclusive theatre forms. Indispensable to Greek drama and to much of Molière, part of the decorative charm of Shakespeare, a major resource of musical comedy, and of increasing importance in modern playwriting, play dancing—to coin an awkward locution—deserves attention and careful analysis. In the professional theatre, it is entrusted to skilled men who know what to do with it and how to co-ordinate its often explosive energies with the rest of the show. But in the nonprofessional theatre, it is too often left to chance.

As a matter of fact, the problems involved are many and by no means easy of solution. What types of plays actually require or profit by dance? What kind of dancing is functionally suited to each of these types? What complications in acting, direction, and décor does dance introduce even when it is "incidental"? When and to what extent should dance be allowed to influence and control the production as a whole? What has dance itself, as a specialized art, to contribute to general theatre technique?

Definite and specific answers to these questions have begun to emerge during the past twenty-five years. These have seen the American stage moving towards a full-bodied and mature conception of theatre,—one which restores the stage as a place in which many arts, including dance, can meet, pool their several resources and work

together without giving up their identities. The dismembered theatre of the last century, impotent as it may have been in a larger sense, did cultivate important values within each organ. It brought ballet, for example, to a level of virtuosity and expressiveness such as it had never known in the more commodious theatre of its early history. Such gains are to be kept and the right place found for them within the generous framework of the new stage.

We have learned that it is not within dance's power to make of itself *the savior* of the theatre, as certain enthusiasts of two decades ago were wont to think. There are large areas of drama that have little or nothing to do with dance *per se*. There is no dance, for example, in Ibsen this side of *Peer Gynt* (except for the "tarantella" in *A Doll's House*), in Chekhov or in Shaw. Organic rhythms undoubtedly permeate the works of Eugene O'Neill, but—with the exception of *Emperor Jones* and *Lazarus Laughed*—it is a mistake in tactics to make these explicit by any kind of *danced* movement. Straight acting plus a tension—a certain pulse—in the tempo of the play is all that is necessary. Even *Emperor Jones* calls for a rhythm in speech and action that approaches dance only from afar. The time is past when any "poetic play" seems by virtue of that fact fit subject for the vagaries of interpretative or *natural* dancing, and when any highly wrought drama is thought to afford occasion for an orgy of dancing! If a director can find any reasonable excuse for doing without dance in a given play, he is wise to refrain.

The Dance and Acting

It likewise follows that, by and large, dancers should remain dancers; and actors, actors. Dance's contributions to the craft of acting are not general but specific, and perhaps boil down to two points.

Projection. The first of these has to do with projection—the ability of the actor to carry across the footlights as a visual stage person. Few actors have a clear idea of what this consists, or how it can be obtained; yet every good dancer possesses it, and in the majority of instances it has been acquired. For it is a matter of body strategy, stemming of course from a state of inner, psychic togetherness, but consisting concretely of a carriage that is the outward image of vitality, dignity, and power and that has become the dancer's second nature.

Head over the center of the torso, the back arched and taut, the peripheral energies marshaled, balanced, concentrated, at ease—it is

this dance *persona* which goes far to explain the good account that dancers almost invariably give of themselves when they essay an acting role. (Vera Zorina in *Louisiana Purchase* and Eugene Loring in *The Beautiful People* are recent examples.) By virtue of having to dance, the dancer is forced to make the body a directly theatric thing. It is the secret of doing this which training in dance can help the actor to discover.

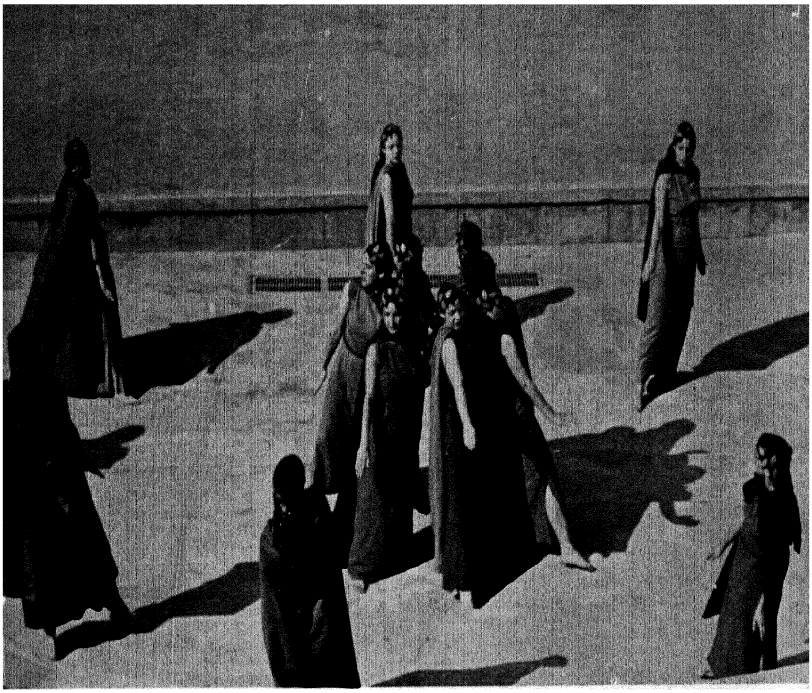
Gesture. From dance, the actor can also learn much about resourcefulness in gesture; about the necessity of searching beneath conventional acting language, for the word that is unique to the acting moment, a gesture that is precise, complete, and consummate. Actors come to lean upon words; costume, make-up, and lighting are further props; the director's bag is full of tricks. There is thus almost every excuse for drifting into a state of non-acting; a few broad strokes are casually brushed in and the job is done! The dancer cannot beg off so easily, particularly if he has chosen to work outside the ballet idiom in what is termed the modern dance. He is forced by the very austerities of this new medium—scant décor, sound accompaniment rather than music, the eschewal of conventional story and emotion—to break through the wall that separates passion and gesture, emotion and motion, in order to create gesture from within. This is perhaps dance's most significant challenge to acting today.

Reviewing one of Martha Graham's performances, Stark Young recently wrote: "Martha Graham in my opinion is the most important lesson for our theatre that we now have . . . Her work can be studied for its search after stage gesture in the largest sense, some discovered and final movement. And it can be imitated in the perpetual revision and re-composing that she does in her search for the right emphases, and the right pressure to be given, as if she were feeling for the bones of the work's body, within the flowing articulation of the whole. The point here is . . the scraping back to the design, the lyric and almost harsh resolution to be honest toward it. This projection and this firm statement of the emphases are what the ordinary acting needs to discipline its shiftless inconsequence."[1]

Styles

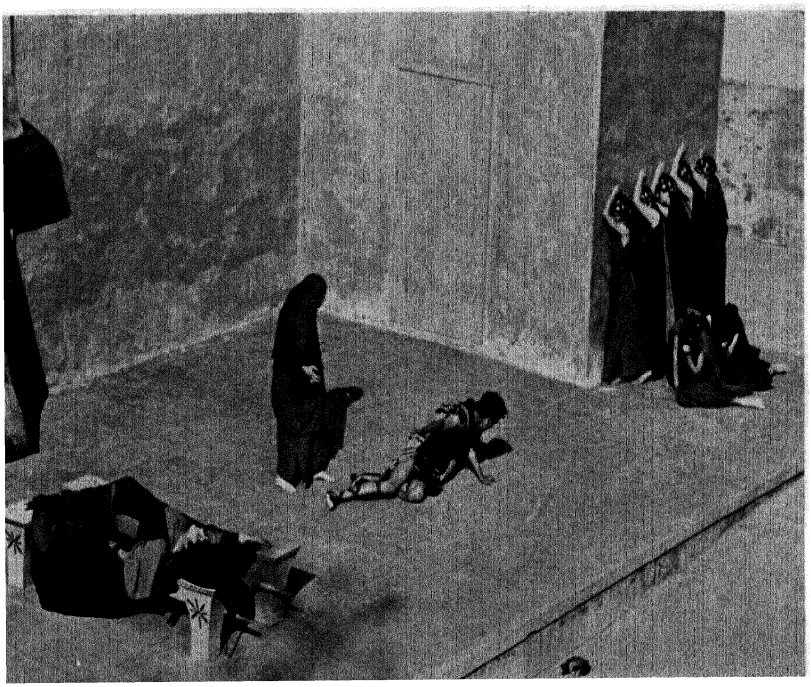
Greek Tragedy and the Choric Dance. The first important American attempt to restore dance as a component element in full theatre came

[1] *The New Republic,* April 21, 1941, p. 532.



CHORUS: *Yea, men shall see the white throat drawn,*
and blood's red spray, and lips in terror parted.

Since Isadora Duncan, the Greek drama has been an important source of inspiration for the American dance impulse, and has furnished many significant occasions for applying the new discoveries in technique and form—particularly in college and university theatres. Euripides' *Electra*, illustrated here and on the next page, was produced by the Drama Association of Mills College in 1938, the tenth year of choric dance experimentation at Mills under the direction of Marian Stebbins. (***Photo: Rondal Partridge, courtesy of Theatre Arts***)



CHORUS: *Dire is the grief ye have wrought!*

The many functions which the chorus in Greek tragedy serves demand a wide range of dance patterns and a full dynamic scale. The chorus participates in the dramatic action, it acts as *raisonneur*, it sustains the play's major rhythm and beat, it supplies the lyric note, and in its keeping is that aura of solemnity, of life's meaning illuminated, that is tragedy's ultimate effect. (*Photo: Rondal Partridge, courtesy of Theatre Arts*)

as the result of a renewed interest in the staging of Greek tragedy. Early experiments in choric dance were conditioned, on the one hand, by a desire for authenticity, despite the fact that next to nothing was known for sure about Greek dance, Greek music, or the rhythms of Greek poetry as actually heard in the Attic theatre; and on the other hand, by a conception of dance derived from the music of the Romantic composers. Choirs of dancers chanted the ode, keeping time with the beat of the verse in large, flowing rhythms that held to a formal symmetry of design.

On the whole, the results were heavy in pace and dreary—and for a number of reasons. Verse rhythms are peculiarly impermeable to dance; poetry as rich in nuance as the Greek overwhelms all but the sparsest in gesture and movement, or is overwhelmed in turn; the lines of tragic acting and lyric dance almost invariably clash. Finally, one is up against the familiar convention—gesture, then speech; or *vice versa*; never the two together—which, however often it may be discarded in the straight play, is still sound practice wherever gesture expands into dance movement.

Out of this experience a new approach has come, facilitated by the discoveries of the modern dance in dynamic gesture and movement. The choral passages are broken down into their dramatic components —turned into dialog, as it were; and dance is used not as accompaniment but contrapuntally, the dance choir being broken up into separate nuclei or even single figures which move in anticipation of, or in response to, the phrases spoken. Short, percussive beats, quick turns, and a stride or two keep the beat of the larger, inclusive rhythm going. Floor patterns are no longer regular and formal (a practice derived from Renaissance ideals rather than from any certain knowledge of Greek choreography) but take their cue from the dynamic asymmetry of contemporary painting, sculpture, architecture, and dance.

Whether all this results in "authenticity" or not is beside the point. The meanings of the poetry are forced out and given thrust. The odes become dramas within dramas. Dance movement can spill over into the body of the play, giving concrete action to what otherwise tends to appear static to today's audience; and this effect can be attained without violating the essential spirit of the classic theatre.

Græco-Roman Comedy and Vaudeville. For Aristophanes, Plautus, Terence, and plays which hark back to the comedy of antiquity, the dancing needs not so much the benefit of classical lore (though this is

by no means unimportant) as a wide and enthusiastic familiarity with vaudeville, the antics of the hoofer and the eccentric, and the routine chorus dance. Little by way of adaptation is required other than to take advantage of classic motifs in movement and costume and to give the idiom some original and appropriate twist. The dance director must forget most of what musical comedy has added by way of polish and refinement since pre-Ziegfeld days, holding himself strictly to the humors, the acrobatics, and the slapstick of our own indigenous "dance of errors." Any blurring of accent and line, any softening of the innate vulgarity is that much lost. As a recent Harvard production of *The Birds* testified, the use of swing music and the kind of dance associated with it is much to the point.

Shakespeare—the Dance of Courtiers, Rustics, Clowns and Elves. The most frequent error with reference to the dances in Shakespeare's plays is one of initial conception: since there is dancing, let the production be dance-controlled! Choreography spills into the surrounding scene or, in the case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, spreads over the whole play. Shakespeare's interest in pageant and spectacle is made an excuse for projecting dance artifice even into the tragedies, *Hamlet*, for example, being turned into an exercise in orchestrated movement. There are two sound objections to this: (1) the line that threads a Shakespearean production must be, first and last, an acting line drawn directly from the substance of the play; (2) the dances in Elizabethan drama are "incidental" in the technical sense of the term, they "enter" and "exit," they are there for a specific theatre effect.

Frank acceptance of this convention (perhaps it is our modern blurring of the distinction that should be called the convention) simplifies the problem and permits the sweet formality that is a chief charm of the Shakespearean interludes of song and dance. Furthermore, it facilitates the use of the particular dance forms which Shakespeare, as his language shows, had in mind—the galliards, courantes, gigues, etc., which comprise what we now call the "pre-classic dance." Research has uncovered much detailed information about the steps, floor patterns, and accompanying music of these court dances and their rustic and pastoral counterparts. Contemporary dancers have taken them up with genuine enthusiasm and have learned how to style them with a freshness that does not cut across their original intent. Simple in pattern, they demand little by way of dance virtuosity, though they

need to be done with the precision and elegance of our own ballroom dances when skilfully performed.

The dancing of Shakespeare's rustics and clowns is in vaudeville counterpoint to the courtiers' elegance. This means something better, however, than mere clodhopping. It is shrewd theatre (as vaudeville knew but producers of Shakespeare are apt to forget) to make the awkwardness calculated, the clumsiness virtuoso, so that the clown turns out to a better dancer than one would ever suspect him of being. And this goes even for Bottom the Weaver, and for boon fellows in their cups. When Sir Andrew says, "Faith, I can cut a caper," he should perhaps be taken at his word.

The extended dance sequences in *As you Like It, A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest* are in character brief English masques, out of which in their Italian and French forms ballet eventually came. But ballet technique *sur les pointes* is historically inaccurate and artistically out of place, as are also the cheese-cloth costumes, pastel shades, and soft, romantic dancing that frequently take its place. These are not child ballets. Genuine fancy, not whimsy, is the key, and attention should be placed on a certain solemn dignity amidst the daintiness that will do justice to the pastoral and allegorical themes and will reflect the Elizabethan realism towards things of the imagination.

Molière—Satire in Dance. At the court of Louis XIV and his successors, dance became ballet, i.e., theatricalized, professionalized, set on the stage. In much the same way, politically and socially speaking, royalty also took the stage, walking the boards of court life, its aristocratic attendants in tow, while the rest of mankind looked on, envied, and aped. It is this bourgeois imitation of nobility and also the eternal bourgeois concealed under the royal coat that Molière satirized, and to which the dancing in his plays must be in tune. Many of these are, in fact, *comédie-ballets*—musical comedies we would call them today. The "dance of manners," wittily distorted, is called for, as Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman demonstrated in the Theatre Guild's Arthur Guiterman and Lawrence Langner adaptation of *The School for Husbands*—a minuet, for example, thrown off key with knowing elegance, and the pantomime of the *commedia dell' arte* distilled into high gesture. Restoration comedy requires the same approach, and any related play in the vein of the comedy of manners.

Opera and Ballet. With both comic and grand opera beginning to

appear in the repertoires of the tributary theatre, a recrudescence of ballet is imperative. For there is no other dance idiom—in its present stage of development, at least—which quite meets the spectacular requirements of the opera dance. For the amateur stage, theatricalized folk dances of the European tradition are the most workable substitute, and are sometimes even preferable, as in *The Bartered Bride.* Lighter lyric operas and the operetta will employ the language and forms of musical comedy dance; if Gilbert and Sullivan can be "swung," so can Offenbach.

Musical Comedy and the Show Dance. Outside its own special theatre, dance has no more congenial home today than musical comedy and the revue. This is particularly true of the Broadway show, which has always taken dance to its own but never with such expert brilliance as during the last few years. The dancing, in fact, has developed to the point of creating, in the words of Edith J. R. Isaacs, "a musical show that is not a comedian's holiday but a dancer's, or, let us say, not a jesting but a dancing comedian's holiday."[2] It has reached into musical comedy for its core—a pace, a rhythm, a beat; and that beat often takes charge of the works.

The basic materials of the Broadway dance are, of course, not particularly original: ballroom and social dance, past and present; importations from abroad, Central and South America being the present most fertile source; rhythms from the nightclubs and the dives; and, as always, ballet. But the ways of putting the materials together are as novel as they are sound. The mechanized chorus line and the mere routine are out. Floor patterns have become fluid, the ensemble informal and off-balance. The dancing merges into the rest of the show with studied casualness; it takes part in the dialog, it contributes the witty aside, it styles the *mise-en-scène* with gesture and pose. Tappers like Ray Bolger and Gene Kelly assume the lead, lending their art to the book itself in a combination of dance, comedy, and straight playing.

The result is a kind of lyric theatre that is moving steadily toward opera, a theatre whose dance is technically on a higher order than it has ever been and yet remains open and genial in characteristic American style. Such dance calls for performers who can act as well as dance, and for dance directors, such as George Balanchine and Robert Alton, whose competency takes in almost every branch of the show stage.

Regional Plays and the Folk Dance. Writing close to the soil, Amer-

[2] *Theatre Arts Monthly,* June, 1936, p. 415.

ica's regional playwrights like Paul Green and Lynn Riggs have tapped unsuspected reservoirs of folk song and dance, materials that have escaped the assembly lines of Broadway and Hollywood and retain a fresh and flavorsome simplicity. The interest in the regional play has coincided with a vigorous folk dance movement, planted in innumerable centers from New England to the western range, which combines indefatigable research into the origins and permutations of these hardy dance forms with plain, downright enthusiasm for dancing itself. The dances are deceptively simple; actually they require considerable training (there is no need for the professional, however) if they are to be smoothly done and with style.

High spirits are essential, but a fine line must be drawn and kept between that and the stereotyped animation—the over-exaggeration to the point of caricature—which plagues so many folk-play productions. To a large extent, the false effect stems from a need to compensate for a lack of dancing skill. Negroes are traditionally good at their own dances, partly because they lack self-consciousness but also because they really know what they are doing. In the folk dance, as with everything else, spontaneity and *élan* are the products of training and its resultant ease in performance.

The Dance Play. The most challenging development in the field of theatre dance today is the emergence of a new theatre form, so new that it lacks a name. For those who saw *Billy the Kid*, the one word which Eugene Loring (dancing the title role) uttered as he stood taut in the semi-darkness of his desert hide-out opened up a whole realm, heretofore unexplored, of dance expression. Dancing to speech is, of course, not new. Greek drama had it. Salvatore Vigano, Italian choreographer of the early nineteenth century, saw its importance for the adequate expression of tragic themes in dance. What is new is a spoken libretto expressly conceived in, of, and for dance. Martha Graham's *American Document* is meaningless on the written page, without the dances for which the words were put together. *Letter to the World* uses fragments of Emily Dickinson's poems for the sole purpose of evoking dance movement. The dialog of William Saroyan's *The Great American Goof* is dance generated and dance centered.

The *dance play,* then, is a drama whose script brings verbal articulateness to dance, as distinct from the choric dance which lends dance expression to words. It bestows upon dance what pantomime at its

best was never able to achieve—the naturalness, flexibility, and communicative power of speech. It is the logical fruit of the interests and purposes that have created the modern dance; for it brings completely within dance's purview the more serious and subtle emotions which the new idiom was created to capture. That it comes at this time in response to some deep-seated and urgent need is apparent.

Intimations of the new form can be found in the conversational role frequently assumed by dance in the Broadway show; in the dream-dance sequences of Moss Hart's *Lady in the Dark*; in an actual bit of speech-dance play in *Louisiana Purchase*. An even more important indication is the surprising adaptability of modern poetry to the dance play. A Bennington College production recently used Hart Crane's masterpiece, *The Bridge*, as a dance script, disclosing beneath its verbal surface a drama of real power. T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* has proved equally congenial. These and other examples suggest that the contemporary poet has held off from the stage not from lack of dramatic interest or capacity but because we have just reached the point of creating in dance the kind of theatre that can take advantage of his discoveries in the poetic medium and of his particular vision of life.

The dance play ranges itself alongside the sound film and the radio play as a twentieth-century American theatre form. From all indications, it is destined to burgeon as richly within the next few years.

General Observations

1. *Clearing the Stage.* Dance needs room. This is not merely a mechanical or technical matter. The dancer's use of space sets up tensions that are part of its theatre effect. For this reason, dance as a rule can do without elaborate décor; it prefers the open, the architectural, the suggestive, the symbolical. The stage must be set to allow for this, even if it means some compromise with "realistic" demands.

What the dancer does with space must also be taken into account by the actors who are on stage at the time. It isn't merely a matter of giving the dancer room. The actor must find some way—by increased concentration, perhaps—to compensate for the tension which the dancer spreads, for the excitement in which dance immerses the whole scene. The only exception to this is the play in which dancing is frankly a spectacle, the actor becoming for the moment part of the audience.

2. *The Question of Costume.* Except for period and costume plays in which richness of décor is part of the dramatic effect, the dancer's body must be left quite free. This means simplicity in line (and in color as well), and a strength in design which will aid and abet the dancer's theatric image. To avoid clouding this image, the costumes of non-dancing actors have to be brought into line—a fact of which the designers of our better musical comedies and revues are more apt to be aware than those who design for the legitimate stage.

3. *Dance and the Magic of Things.* As a rule, the actor's use of stage properties is dictated by utility, some piece of business in the play. Our inveterately realistic stage has lost most of the sense of the expressive and symbolical properties of things so characteristic of less sophisticated theatre traditions. But this sense is being restored to us through the camera eye, the imagination of our Saroyans, and through the medium of dance. Standards, banners, scarves, baubles, etc.—dance movement can be used to endow things with magic and add another dimension to our present theatre.

4. *Music for Theatre Dance.* Opera supplies its own music. Ballet has its classic scores. Musical comedy has developed its own expert composers. But for the dance-play and the straight play in which dance is "incidental" the music usually has to be contrived. It is becoming more and more apparent that the best recourse is modern music and the contemporary composer. Because modern music is percussive, fragmentary, full of dramatic dissonances and a kind of inner tautness, it is peculiarly responsive to theatre effect and to the style and spirit of today's dance impulses.

DIRECTING MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT

Musical Comedy and Revue

TWO of the most successful forms of theatre production are generally considered a special indulgence and set beyond the pale of legitimate—that is, conventional—play-making. These are the revue and the musical comedy. Nevertheless, the fact that they meet with such wide acceptance is indicative of their importance to the living theatre. They provide such time-honored gratifications as direct entertainment and the release of play and fun; they represent one way in which human beings overcome the anxieties and burdens of existence.

They have a long and honorable existence: The *revue* was inherent in the primitive comic processions of Greece and Italy when the people celebrated the fertility of the earth and its children, as well as indulged in a greatly needed release from social convention. Wherever, in fact, villagers and townspeople sought release—in pageants, medieval saints' processions, country revels, and seasonal festivals—the germs of the revue were present. *Musical comedy,* requiring as it does more integration, is naturally a more sophisticated development, but it may well be said to have started as early as the fifth century B.C. in Athens, where the burlesque comedies of Aristophanes enjoyed as much prestige as the tragic art of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. (Since Aristophanic or so-called Old Comedy had a musical accompaniment, songs, and choruses, it was of the same *genre* as *Of Thee I Sing.*) Gilbert and Sullivan operettas—in fact, all operettas—are near cousins to contemporary musical comedy.

It is a mistake to assume that the content of the revue and of musical comedy is necessarily insignificant. In their origins, this was not so, as the social criticism in the early phallic processions and the vital

topicality of Aristophanes' comedies prove. It is not so today either; although there are exceptions, which generally prove to be failures nowadays, most productions of this kind are studded with topical satire—with political and social comment or exposé, as well as with travesties on pretentious art and manners. This has been true of such recent professional revues as *Pins and Needles, Sing Out the News,* and *Meet the People,* as well as of non-professional efforts in the field; and of such musical comedies as *Of Thee I Sing* (which won the *Pulitzer Prize*), *Hooray for What?*, and *Louisiana Purchase*, the first and third having satirized American politics and the second, profiteering in munitions and espionage.

It is also to be noted that these seemingly distant forms of theatre give rise to some of the most ingenious productions of our stage. Unlike most plays, which are still presented with conventional, generally plodding realism, the musical forms thrive on *imaginative stage settings and scene sequences*, on color and variety, on the dance and ballet—in short, on all the arts and all the resources of *theatricality.* Virtuosity is also at a premium in the performances, the actor frequently combining the talents of a comedian, pantomimist, singer, dancer, and even acrobat. Little wonder, then, that leading performers like Ethel Merman, Beatrice Lillie, and Al Jolson are reckoned among our most accomplished actors.

A special talent is quickly recognized in this field; hence opportunities for younger people are more abundant than in the non-musical stage. Since, moreover, many young people often have an assortment of minor talents at their disposal—that is, some ability to dance and sing (alone or in a chorus), to deliver a few lines of dialog, to mimic some celebrity, and perhaps to perform a trick or two—amateur theatricals are possible. Such notable musical revues as *The Garrick Gaieties, Meet the People,* and especially *Pins and Needles* (in which the performers were all members of a trade union) were not far removed from the amateur status and yet revealed an abundant professional quality. In the community and college theatre, the staging of a musical revue may actually tap the potentialities of many members and enlist the accomplishments of various departments.

The revue and the musical comedy have many elements in common. They both have, in addition to spoken dialog, a score, they employ singing, dancing and choruses, and they use *"specialty numbers"* such as special dancing, acrobatics, pantomime, comic recitatives, and "take-

offs" or imitations of public figures. Both forms require variety, color, and lightness.

Of the two types, the *revue* is the less integrated one, consisting of a rotation of *"skits"*—minute humorous or satirical scenes—and *"numbers,"* which may be individual or group dances, songs, acrobatics, and what-not. It is a mistake, however, to assume that the order can be haphazard. An effort should be made to create some *relation between the parts*; thus, a skit or little scene may well lead into an ensemble number which amplifies in dance or song the idea or content of the scene, and at no time, perhaps, should one non-musical scene be followed by another. (This would reduce the effect of variety, and would disturb the underlying musical pattern.) The scenes themselves, however slight, must follow the principles of *dramaturgy*; they must establish the situation, develop it, and then resolve it—they must mount rapidly to a climax or score a point with maximal effect. The greatest danger is *length*; since the skit is neither exploratory nor profound, and since it depends upon some previous understanding on the audience's part, the director must guard against blunting the point with too much exposition and too elaborate development.

Finally, it is to be noted that it is well to strive for some *"frame"* for the variety numbers. The word "Gaieties" or "Follies" in the title of the show already suggests some kind of frame, informing the public that it will see an assortment of entertainment. This frame can be amplified or made more concrete by some *unifying notion or idea. Pins and Needles,* for instance, posed the idea that the workers of the garment industry were expressing their views on the world and were sticking "pins and needles" into it. (In *Meet the People* it was that the audience would meet the common people and was going to like them.) The frame will be established by the opening and closing numbers, and generally with the entire cast appearing in the two numbers. (In the closing one, the performers may go through a small portion of their routine, to remind the audience of their contribution to the show, and to receive some parting applause.) The music of the overture and of the close can also complete the frame by being identical. The director should be aware of the necessity of at least some factitious *unity* in the revue, and should be ingenious in establishing it.

The *musical comedy* possesses a comic plot that progresses throughout the show, and is consequently much more unified. A special "book" or libretto is written for it. Although the *plot* is the spine of

the show, it does not require anything like the consistency, careful exposition, and painstaking development and resolution of a non-musical comedy. The music adds another dimension to the dramatic story, telescopes exposition and resolution, and by putting the audience into the proper frame of mind leads it to accept a great deal on faith. In fact, too careful an establishment of characters and scenes militates against the show, by retarding it and dampening the spirit of the proceedings. Consequently, musical comedy is most effective when it uses a variety of related little scenes, bursts into song, or breaks into dance frequently, varies the settings, and affords the cast an opportunity to exhibit its versatility. The play must be broken up into entertaining individual beats or segments; it should look and move more like an earthworm than a vertebrate.

Tunefulness is an essential, and some numbers, first announced in the musical overture, require repetition both within the play and at the close. The audience is grateful for tunes it can remember, and the memory is further gratified when a pleasant performance is associated with the song. The words or *lyrics* should be graceful and witty; they must come to the point quickly, and the director will have to make sure that they are rendered distinctly and with emphasis on key words. Beautiful sound without meaning should be absolutely taboo.

Both in the revue and musical comedy there are a number of special procedures that need attention. Among them are the reprise and encore, the number "in one," coping with audience laughter, and the multiplicity of sets.

Reprise and *encores*: The audience likes to have certain favorite numbers repeated. The repetition of a catchy lyric or dance is pleasurable; the encore should be intelligently conceived, and should round out the number. How many times a number is to be repeated by request must be determined by the clamor of the audience, the exhaustion of the performer, and the variations provided for the latter by the librettist. Since gratification of the audience is the first consideration, taking precedence over unity and credibility (the musical forms make great claim upon suspension of disbelief!), it does not greatly matter that the flow of the plot may be interrupted by the encore, or that other actors are already on the stage for their skit or number when the performer reappears by request. The other actors must

remain frozen in their tracks or make themselves as inconspicuous as possible during the reprise.

The Number "in One": Since the musical show uses a great variety of sets, it is important that the stage crew be given time to arrange them on the stage. To this end, numbers that can be played in "one"—that is, on the forestage—are employed. These numbers must not be too numerous, they must be varied, and they should require very little movement in any direction other than from left to right or vice versa. Since the performers will be conspicuous in that position, they should be particularly agreeable to the audience, and special care should be taken with makeup and lighting. And, of course, it is well to motivate the location of the actors; for instance the curtain before which they stand may be painted to represent a street or a building, and the actors in front of it may be supposed to be going through the city or standing before the "building" for a special reason in accordance with what happened in the preceding scene; for instance, in *Panama Hattie* some sailors who left a saloon a moment ago in order to catch a saboteur proceed gaily to their destination and pause for some specialized horseplay. (Less motivation or justification is needed, of course, in a revue than in a musical comedy.)

Audience Laughter: As in all comedy and farce, it is important for the actors to know how to manage laughter, as well as applause, from the house. They must not disregard either, they must not "kill" laughs by running on, they must wait until the audience subsides; some stage business can take care of the interval. Since the imaginary "fourth wall" predicated for a realistic setting is no barrier in the musical forms, the actor can also comport himself more like Elizabethan performers who were in contact with the audience. Particularly if he has a "personality," he can respond directly to his public; he may acknowledge its applause at the conclusion of his number, may discreetly smile back at his public, and may even incorporate in his encore some words of direct address. (If, for instance, he is depleted of variations, like fresh words to his patter or song, if he is tired, or feels that the continuity of the show is being unduly interrupted, he can excuse himself with an ingratiating gesture or a well-chosen phrase.) This creates greater intimacy with the people out front and puts himself, as well as them, at ease. The art of *informality* must be mastered, although it should be exercised with discretion and good taste. A show of courtesy is also helpful, as when the actors who are

already on stage applaud the actor who comes out for an encore (although this liberty has to be discreetly exercised); a spirit of friendliness on the part of the cast may be appreciated by the patrons.

Settings: Although the backgrounds should possess color and sometimes even splendor, qualities that should be duplicated in the costumes, there is a still more important consideration: the sets should be selected and constructed with an eye to *mobility*. Since they have to be shifted frequently, they should be light; they can even be fragmentary and suggestive, with larger sets so devised that, with minor alterations, they can serve in different scenes and can be employed as backgrounds for the smaller sets. (If a revolving stage is used, the problem of shifting is of course simplified.) Curtains can be used to advantage, and the resources of lighting should be exploited freely. It is important to remember that an ounce of *suggestion* is worth a pound of realism, and that suggestion can achieve maneuverability without sacrificing anything worth retaining in a revue or musical comedy. Nor do areas for entrances and exits have to be scrupulously realistic, so long as they do not violate the logic of the particular scene. Since the cast is large and often appears *en masse*, sufficient space for exits and entrance must be provided; it is most essential for the actors to be able to move freely, without tripping or jostling one another.

Some confusion of labels may require a final clarifying note. Recently, the term *"music drama"* has been used with some freedom to describe productions like *The Lady in the Dark* (Moss Hart's psychoanalytical fantasy, in which Gertrude Lawrence received much acclaim) and Phillip Barry's topical allegory *Liberty Jones*. "Music-drama" is to be distinguished from musical comedy only by greater depth or significance of theme and treatment, and by greater seriousness. The label is applicable to *Lady in the Dark* because it presented the psychological problems of a career woman and traced the stages of her cure; to *Liberty Jones* because it represented the plight of liberty persecuted by three totalitarian powers; and perhaps also to John O'Hara's realistic *Pal Joey*, an incisive characterization of a night-club entertainer that exposes at great length his insufferable shallowness and egotism. Music-drama extends the range of musical comedy by making comic spectacle subservient to a sober examination of truth. It requires greater restraint in plotting, as well as in the distribution of comic or spectacular elements, and demands greater concentration from the audience. Direction and acting must pay heed

to these conditions, without, however, stinting too greatly on the sheer entertainment values of the play.

From what has been said it is not difficult to conclude that the conditions of producing and directing the musical show are anything but ideal. They are less well ordered and organized, call for more compromises, and teem with more of that intangible element we call "show business," than any other form of production. Mr. Charles Friedman, known for his productions of *Pins and Needles* and *Sing Out the News*, describes the problem with appropriate exuberance and some pardonable cynicism. The young director should be aware of what faces him; nor does this apply solely to encounters with the professional or commercial theatre. This should not, however, discourage him too greatly; the difficulties are inherent in the art, and they are perhaps compensated by its vitality. In no form of production are we more conscious of the fact that theatre is—*theatre*: namely, make-believe, creative exuberance, and a release of energies.

Everyman's Ziegfeld by Charles Friedman

THE musical play is brought into being by the widest possible combination of specialized theatre talents—literally, from juggler to voice choir—but it does very nicely without that functionary, the director, as he is popularly conceived. Go into any theatre-shop where a musical is being fashioned and nowhere will you see a director thumbing his right hand through a 120-page script while his left hand, baton-like, waves the actors through their solo and ensemble performances. When you take your stealthy peek at the director of the dramatic play (rehearsals are momentous secret conclaves; you cannot attend, you can only eavesdrop; best stay hidden in the abundant shadow . . .) he may have very little resemblance to a Toscanini but you are observing a *conductor* in action. His score and his orchestra are both before him and he will soon master their limitations and play you the play. Whatever creative work he has done (creative in the strictest sense) is well behind him. In many leisurely afternoons beside a Bucks County pool he has gently prodded the author through the rewrite or buffaloed the star into the set groove of her part. Now it is clear sailing. Unless he is a complete bungler, he has the whole play on its feet in a week, and in a week more he can present a rough run-through of opening night merchandise.

An organism as complex as the modern musical has a Headman,

to be sure, but you will have difficulty identifying him in the tangled traffic of the rehearsal at full throttle. You discreetly side-step sixteen shapely bathing suits and there is the curtain high up and out of the way, and there is the big 1000-watt glowing naked in its wire basket. You are in a blaze of light and nobody bothers you. Why should they? If you've come to sell upholstery, hairpins, or a practical horse you'll talk soon enough—your wares are needed and you're welcome. If you're taking it all in with a half smile and a roving eye you may be a special-feature contact of the press agent's and you're decidedly welcome. Go about your business then. Do you like that production number on the stage? That's good. You are one of the privileged few who will ever eye it in judgment. It will be set and costumed for Broadway for a cool $15,000, will take up eleven too long minutes, and be junked in Philadelphia. It's, perhaps, that little tune so faintly enticing you from the gentlemen's anteroom that you ought to pay some attention to. The song is being tossed in as a *breather* between two large scenes, but it will step out on the stage, stop the show cold, and be the smash hit of the season. Later on when the butcher boy swings up your walk whistling this *lied* of the land you'll think "How silly of me, I never dreamt it." Well, none of this gang, working so hard at play, dreams it either. Here is your first lesson—you have witnessed the fluid uncertainty of the Headman's material.

Take your second lesson from a close-up of the Headman at work. That knot of bodies in the fifth row is the powerhouse of this community, and he is in the center throwing the switches. The sweaty man at his left is the arranger. He's saying that if he rescores the song in the key of the new Hollywood cutie the number will not only sound terrible, but he can use none of the fireworks in the soprano's orchestration as the Hollywood cutie can barely be heard above a piano.

Switch One (shorn of its gentle profanity): "Put it in the cutie's key. She's got the legs."

The expensively groomed man at the right is an agent. He represents a Texas *chanteuse* who took New York by storm last year and now, with passionate sincerity, he is offering her to his best friend—at an astronomical figure.

Switch Two: "Split the difference and we'll give her the larger billing. It is a deal?" It is.

The man with the look of a doctor, a lawyer, or a young engineer is the stage manager. His clip board must be studied gravely—he is

the works manager. "You want the sketches up out of the lounge tomorrow. That won't give the dancers enough time on the stage."

Switch Three: "Get a second theatre."

So it goes, dance director after arranger, agent after agent, assistants and writers and specialists piling in for crisp collaborative huddles and dashing back to their posts. There's something familiar about the Headman's performance—isn't there?—in the urgency and diversity of his problems, in his sure-footed, deadline attack? Less like theatre and more like going to press, you think—and you're right, for, in a different setting, but with the same hum and rattle, you are watching an *editor* at work.

You have here the core of difference that distinguishes the director of the musical play. He may have a specialized talent as a producer, a writer, or a choreographer but if he knows his business as Headman (and most do—you can't monkey with $100,000) before he is anything else, he is an editor. He has to be.

The musical comes as close to being a minute-to-minute mirror of the times as the laws of theatre will permit. Many depressions ago there was vaudeville. On intimate terms with its audience, it could direct some of its turns and patter into virile commentary on the world outside. It was never the vigorous forum that a healthy people needs, but it frequently did talk out and the guffaws and cheers had public effect. Today, pictures and the radio operate in the full-grown jungle of our individualist society; by their very nature as mass-entertainment media they cut across too much privilege in conflict to be anything but passive neutrals. Only the "legit" musical, today still an easy-going, uncensored affair, can afford the luxury of candor. That this is no mean commodity is being proved nightly during the Broadway season: in one show, the comedian is an official who knows his politics and audiences are packing in to laugh and hiss—at handsome admission fees.

I must add hastily that, at present, the gold mine seems to be in the candor itself, and not exclusively in its social uses. Highly marketable, as well, are casual disrobing of ladies and open discussion of sanitation. The shaping of these back-house wares, however, is a special and esoteric technology the mastery of which is hopelessly beyond my gifts.

Our Headman, then, edits his show with an ear to *topicality*. The form in which he works is completely opportunistic and flexible. Even

the "book show"[1] doesn't constrain him, for musical comedy plots are kept deliberately uncomplicated, so that their elements may be willfully interchanged or deleted. When the plot tumbles on the stage and unravels itself in a pell-mell of quick dialog five minutes before the finale, understand that the darling little story has been deliberately bound and gagged and dumped in the corner all the while you relished those keen specialties up above. What do you want for your money, logic, order, the Unities? Then go elsewhere. All is fun here. We're busy with paste pot and shears patching up a crazy-quilt of the newest news. If we can we'll get in a telling crack about Roosevelt, and taxes, and Hollywood, and the Man Everyone Despises. Is this a *play*-house or isn't it? Sure, the whole thing outside is only a great big mess of a show. Put it on then, tonight at 8:30, piece after piece . . . get the laugh, get the hand . . . get new stuff tomorrow.

There is news in new faces, new places, new clothes: many a fashion here gets its first nod to strut triumphantly into the lore of costume. The setting for the newest public interest must be instantly duplicated in false-face, and a strange and beautiful geography it is: during the depression (major) one Headman discovered the Automat and it was great news to his $4.40 customers; comes the defense program and we are set down in the Panama Canal. You may expect the Orient, next, to drip its color from one end of 45th Street to the other.

There is special news in new faces: what the threshold of Saint Peter's gate is to the stormers of Heaven the six square feet, breathlessly designated as downstage center, are to the would-be gods and goddesses of the theatre. All eyes converge here and, if the face standing there is a good one, a hundred cameras will focus on it and a million imprints will go smiling out to the avid butchers and bakers and machine-tool makers of the world. The appetite for new favorites is far-flung and insatiable and the Headman is its caterer extraordinary. An artist of the new boogie-woogie, or the newest Latin *tipica*, or someone who does the oldest things in the newest way—these must be scouted out and spotted on those six square feet. While running his exacting show business, the Headman must look after a sideline supplying nice fresh household gods.

But it all works out fine. By the strange alchemy of theatre these stellar personalities are both a by-product of the Headman's labor *and*

[1] A show with characters who act out a plot story. There is no "book" to a revue, which is a series of numbers unrelated by plot.

a large part of his essential raw material. While it is true the show must be shaped for them they, in turn, give the show its shape.

The actor is a more creative factor in the Headman's job than he is in the drama. The dramatic actor, at his very best, is a wonderful kind of live modelling clay that the director can shape into the inner and outer reality of the character he is portraying. The less overbearing and persistent his own personality is the better. The more tractable his physical and emotional mannerisms, the cleaner and surer will be his job and the director's. But in the musical actor you take on an entirely different animal. His great stock in trade is his bag of tricks, his set routines, his certain and constricted field of activity, take it or leave it. You take it and you've got a precocious prodigy on your hands, a miracle baby that needs careful care and feeding. He's a specialist: this he can do superbly, this he can't even see, this is bound to hurt him, "this is more like me." He prescribes, lobbies, and throws tantrums for flattering material and may even suggest, with ponderous tact, the bringing in of a writer or two of his own—just to help out. You see your work cut out for you and you are foolish not to follow its main outlines. If your ballet dancer insists on another spot and you swear that it's comedy you need—why not have her do a funny ballet? You may have to drown in black coffee and squander more sleep hours than you can afford but you will get just the idea, and the ballet will click. If your comedian is a natural as a milquetoast don't cast him as the Wolf in the Wall Street sketch, which is the lead, but let him do the Sheep—and build up the part. Of course it won't be the same sketch, but who will stop to check under the barrage of laughter you've loosened? You can let the tap specialty come from nowhere, it's all right, it's the *sock* of the evening. *Talent,* you learn very quickly, needs only the briefest nodding acquaintance with an audience to be completely at home. It is the most welcome thing in the theatre.

Script and actors, these are the elements, the posts and the lintels for the construction. What about the architecture? Is there a body of principle that can help the practical builder achieve utility with beauty? There is, but the formulae are subtle and devious and no two Headmen work alike. One rule, however, is given universal application: keep everything in flux till the very last second. Cooks have learned this secret long ago. They stir and stir, and baste and blend and stir, one eye on the clock the other in the cook pots. At the cli

mactic moment—curtain—permit us to present you our savory symphony! Similarly, the Headman lets nothing jell into stale readiness before he has the entire banquet ready to serve, but keeps all his elements boiling about, tentative, *dynamic*. But here, unfortunately, our simile ends,—which explains why there are many cooks but so very few Headmen. The Headman has an equally urgent duty to himself: to stay uncommitted and free, the master and not the slave of his material, alert to axe out the deadwood with cold indifference to investment and tears, and give all-out aid to the fit, the promising, the fruitful. Whereas the chef can pin the menu to the wall, roll up his sleeves, and proceed with reasonable certainty that his experience will guide him to the achievement of a masterpiece of cookery—for the Headman every new show is in itself a brand new experience (which explains why there are so many failures). Far from knowing that his carrots and his string beans and his roast will turn out just as he planned, the Headman cannot for the life of him guarantee the success of any of the twenty-and-two dishes he is preparing. The idea that looked great on paper is just awful on the stage; the actor who killed them in rehearsal just doesn't get over; the order that looked so ideal simply won't work; worst of all, the jokes that had the whole cast in stitches are being met with blankest boredom. Instead of the two hours of sure-fire show that you planned you have a loose, disjointed parade of gew-gaws shot through with dull black stretches of nothingness. If you get very panicky you will throw out the whole thing—and it has been done. If you see some hope and you use your head you can apply a drastic remedy—this too has been done: you take everything good and sure and bunch it together into one good act. What does this do for you? Instead of having a full bad show you have half a show, but a good one.[2] You have isolated your problems to the one sick half, you know just where and how to set to work and you do so without any lost motion. Usually you are working with managers, treasurers, and press agents on your neck, dolefully threatening disasters if you postpone. Time is what you need, time! This gives it to you. Good luck!

Balance and *tempo* are the twin motors that keep your show flying. You can make a freak landing with one or the other but you are safest when both are doing the pulling. For *balance* you distribute your pieces placidly in a functional relation to each other and to the whole

[2] This is true of many a successful musical show.

The horse is a thing of beauty because its organs for locomotion and nutrition are just where they should be; there are as many of them as are needed and no more. You wouldn't, therefore, have two finales just as there wouldn't be two tails. You will have as many production numbers as you need and no more, and as many sketches, solo numbers, and specialties as you need and no more. With discipline you'll manage to discard that Chinese ballet (though it's been the dream of your life) when you already have color and splash in the Maytime number and you've got to make room for the Negro boys. You may dress them in cloth of gold and light them in vivid pink and purple, if you insist on going exotic here, but by all means get in the Negro boys. You are the editor now more than ever. The newspaper balances itself for the divergent needs of the family: the front page, the editorial page, the comics, the sports section, the fashion column, the quiz box, every and all chance material it can bag for the amusement and edification of this cross-section of our generation. Your audience is a similar cross-section of tastes, levelled higher by the privileged possession of $4.40 as against 3 cents. (Though sometimes, I warn you, you won't think so.) One of the most successful revues of recent time made brilliant use of this identity by frankly theatricalizing the actual content of a typical newspaper. The *plot musical* can take no such neat advantage but its consistency must extend outward to the aggressive wishes of the audience, rather than inward to the passive logic of its central idea. If you do this well you can take pride in the title of Showman but you must resign yourself to the ephemeral existence of your creation. (You can't have everything—only a million dollars, that's all!)

Tempo is no more than the rotation of your pieces in a persistent, orderly and, yes, restful manner. Tempo has nothing to do with speed. If your scheme of balance is based on good juxtaposition and contrast the progression of the pieces will make *variety*, and that will make excitement. You don't have to top yourself all the time. Don't be afraid of a change of pace. You can borrow that trick from nature—the lull before the storm—but be sure you've got the storm, and a good one.

Get off to a good start. All's also well that begins well. *Don't save the best pieces for the end.* Serve a great morsel up early in the show. This pleases and whets the appetite for more, gives you a body of encouraged and good-humored listeners that you can swing along on your bandwagon.

Don't be prodigal with money. This is an economic matter, to be sure, but it is equally a problem of creativity. Where you see a wealth of goods on the stage more often than not you will find a poverty of ideas. *Make your ideas talk for themselves, through their richness and their truth.* Let yourself be hemmed in by the rule of money: in the effort to outsmart this limitation you will be made to think twice as hard.

Don't be extravagant with your imagination. Be fresh, be new, as new as tomorrow's newspaper, no more. *Don't be freakish.* Who knows anything about Mars, and who cares? Don't send your characters to Heaven but bring the celestial personages down to 42nd Street and Broadway, let them speak our lingo, smoke our nickel cigars. See if you don't get a better result.

Before anything make sure you have the *jokes.* Never forget that your business is to entertain and that laughter is your blessed and all-important business. If you want to say something with meaning you'll make them listen if you make it funny. If you're saying nothing, and you're not funny, you're dead.

These precepts are only a pale and milky brew, you feel, and no theatrical bastion can stand before that bull courage of yours and your towering and muscular talent. Good, this is as it should be. Get to work then. But, I beg you, *don't* bet your own money on the result. . . .

THE RADIO PLAY

THE already vast and still rapidly increasing scope of radio drama needs no description. Radio is today a completely accepted theatrical medium, so much so that it would be difficult to find an important actor of the stage or screen who has not appeared before the microphone. Universities and schools have followed suit, not merely with educational programs (many of them dramatizations rather than lectures or classroom discussions), but with radio plays written by students of playwriting and performed by student actors.

Radio in the College Theatre

By the summer of 1941 the Yale University Theatre had completed its third season of weekly broadcasts of student plays by its actors. Professor Walter Prichard Eaton's statement on this activity should be instructive to college and university departments of drama. In reply to a letter from the author, Professor Eaton writes:

"The value to the writer lies in the emphasis radio places on the spoken word, and the necessity for clarity and brevity. Radio enables him to hear his dialogue naked, as it were, and to test how far it can carry his dramatic ideas. It also enables him to get practice, if he is so inclined, in writing verse dialogue, something even the college stage as yet does not much encourage.

"On the whole, however, I should say the problems radio writing raises might easily outweigh the values, for the playwright. Radio not only invites, but almost demands, short multiple scenes; and sound stage training calls for practice, rather, in sustaining a long scene and developing it to capacity. Sound stage training, also, calls for constant practice in visualizing the scene in terms of movement, in creating effects by visual means, in the appeal both to ear and eye. Much that is most effective on the stage is useless in radio. Therefore the play-

wright, attempting to practice both techniques, has constantly to shuttle back and forth—which creates a problem that may well be dangerous for a beginner.

"I should say that radio acting is of little or no value as training for stage acting, though the reverse is not true. It may give practice in coloring the voice for effects, and in clear enunciation and significant inflection. But against this must be set the complete neglect of body movement and expression, and a thousand subtleties of characterization. (I cannot speak of directing, because our plays, though written and acted by our students, have been professionally directed. I fancy a student director would find the same difficult problems of adjustment as the playwright.)

"You will inevitably ask, after this, why we permit our students to give so much time to radio work. The answer is, first because they get paid for it; they need the money, and they benefit by the semi-professional standing it gives them when seeking employment later. And, second, because if a young writer, or young actor, is really gifted, experiments with different techniques will do him no harm, and may in unexpected ways prove a benefit. But only, however, if he does not try to make each a major interest. If the same student were to write the radio play each week, while trying to learn stage playwriting, or the same actors should perform, the result would be bad, I am sure, and we should be forced to discontinue our broadcasts. As it now stands, a playwright does a radio script only when he gets an idea which seems to fit that medium and to lack stage elements, and hence forms a pleasant (and lucrative) diversion in self-expression."

For better or worse—and in some respects for better—the student of play production can no longer ignore the theatre of the air. Instead, he must acquire knowledge of the new medium and, if possible, mastery of its technique.

The Medium. Effectiveness in radio production is entirely dependent on one's understanding of the medium. It is theatre addressed, as Norman Corwin aptly says, to "an audience of the blind."[1] It is compounded of words, music, and sound-effects, without the visual collaboration that augments them in the theatre and in the films. It must, therefore, address itself solely to the ear and can only trust that the

[1] *Theatre Arts*, February 1940, p. 130.

listener's imagination or mental associations will do the rest—that is, will conjure up the visual reality.

This circumstance affects the whole procedure of radio production. It must not demand too complex a visual imagery from its audience, and it must be simple in conveying thought, feeling, or action. The listener has no pages to turn back to when he misses something, and cannot rely on visible actions to clarify or define the actor's words. For the same reason, the pace must not be too rapid; time must be allowed for most of the words and sounds to impinge on the hearer. However, the pace must not be as slow as in the theatre, and the script cannot be as long as a stage play, because the ear, unsupported by the eye, can quickly tire, and time is money on radio!

Since the broadcast addresses itself largely to the imagination of the public, it takes many liberties and also runs many risks, the greatest of these being elusiveness. It can arouse and stimulate the imagination, as well as sustain it; it can create mood and atmosphere through music and other sound-effects; and it can be remarkably suggestive. At the same time, it must give the listener simple and easily recognized things to hold on to—clear identifications of persons, places, weather, and time of day; and all its sounds must be easily identifiable or quickly identified for the public.

Since, moreover, radio differs from the stage and film in reaching individuals or at most small groups, it cannot operate on the principles of so-called mass psychology. It depends for its effect wholly on individual psychology. And to this must be added such audience conditions as the likelihood of interruption of concentration by ringing telephones and door-bells, visitors, and the numerous details of home life, as well as the ease with which the listener can express his impatience by turning the dial. He has not paid for a seat in the theatre, has not dressed and traveled to witness the show, and is not wedged in between other spectators who make it difficult for him to leave without being conspicuous and annoying.

Consequently, the radio performance, as well as radio script, must attract instant attention by starting arrestingly. This start selects the audience too; when the play opens with a melodramatic announcement, a popular signature, and the rat-tat-tat of a machine gun, it is certain that some people, for whom the program was never intended, will turn the dial quickly, while others (a vast majority) will settle down to having a very good time. In short, exposition must be elim-

inated entirely, reduced to an absolute minimum, broken up, or presented suggestively through sound. Given the above-mentioned audience conditions, radio production must omit all business that does not advance the plot directly. If such business is needed to create a setting, it must be brisk, to the point, and placed at the beginning of a scene. Its scenery, being compounded of airy nothingness, can be erected almost instantaneously in the mind; a suggestion is sufficient. The place can be shifted so rapidly that many transitions are unnecessary and others take only a few seconds. Costume needs the barest establishment (the rustle of a gown, etc.) if any. "Radio usually allows existence only to whatever is dramatically useful at the moment."[2]

Methods and Mechanics. As already noted, this auditory theatre has three components—speech, music, and sound effects.

(*a*) *Speech.* There are definite limitations to the number and complexity of the characters in radio drama. Members of a mob are a single unit, and do not have to be identified individually, as a rule. But a small cast is needed for characters that must be identified by the radio audience. Since these can be differentiated only by voice, the clearest procedure is to allocate characterization to readily distinguished voices. Tenor, baritone, and bass, falsetto, treble, contralto, soprano, and alto, and dialect voices, used for different persons, will establish them during the performance. Two voices of the same quality in the same play—two baritones, two sopranos, etc.—tend to be confusing. Moreover, characters who do not speak, are not addressed, or are not referred to, will disappear rapidly from the listener's consciousness, so that the speakers have to be re-established in some way. This leads to avoidance of complex character groups and to general simplicity of plot in radio drama.

Out of the nature of the medium, however, arise many liberties for the radio playwright and producer. For instance, characters who are no longer needed for the plot action can disappear without so much as a by-your-leave; all they have to do is remain silent. They are not in a visible and unchanging setting; therefore, their exits, like their entrances, do not have to be established in all instances and can be made quite freely. Such vanishing of the actor can also be used for weird and expressionistic, as well as comic, effects; now he's here, now he's not! Then, too, the fact that he is not visible makes it more possible for him to become a narrator (a device that opens a fruitful field for

[2] Erik Barnow, *Handbook of Radio Writing.* Little Brown, p. 23.

dramatic poetry—witness *The Fall of the City* and *Air Raid* by Archibald MacLeish), to slip from this role into a dramatic one in which he uses dialog to talk about himself, and to give voice to his inner self. The last-mentioned procedure is the "stream-of-consciousness" technique that has proved so natural and effective in the theatre of the air-waves. The character's thoughts and memories dramatize themselves in his mind by means of colloquies between different elements of his ego and by voices from the past, his mother's, his own when he was a child, and so on. (See Arch Oboler's *The Ugliest Man in the World.*) This makes possible an introspective psychological treatment of drama, besides enabling the writer and producer to combine the real and the unreal and to telescope scenes that the stage would have to represent *in toto.*

It may be noted in passing that the Narrator may be an announcer, a character and a listener or stooge who draws him out, or a group of voices which alternate and so produce a dramatically exciting, somewhat expressionistic, narrative. The last-mentioned procedure is especially effective for documentary broadcast or living newspapers of the air, and for dramatic recitation—in poetic choruses or mass chants, as in the John Latouche-Earl Robinson radio oratorio *Ballad for Americans.*

(*b*) *Music* is employed variously to create an instant mood or atmosphere, to bridge moods, to underscore or supplement or comment on an emotion or situation, and to shift the scene of action, functioning in this respect as the radio's substitute for the theatre curtain and revolving stage. It can even represent stage business, such as the waving of a magician's wand or of a sword.

All networks and established local stations own a music library containing recordings equal to every occasion and every need. The music, which may last from several seconds to a few minutes, is catalogued under easily identifiable headings such as appassionato, mysterioso, chase, reverie, dread, and sea. The radio production avails itself of these recordings, unless a special score is provided.

3. *Sound Effects.* The problem is to find effects that identify themselves immediately to the listener. There are many of these: doorbells, opening and closing doors, horses' hoofs, fog horns, and so on. Other sounds—like rain, thunder, trains, and automobiles—sound too much like some other effects to be used without preliminary identification, such as some reference in the dialog or in the narrator's speech which

sets the background. Radio production must make certain that there will be no ambiguity of impression. However, it is also to be noted that one can dispense with many naturalistic sound effects; there is no reason, for instance, why we must always hear doors opening and closing unless they have an expressionistic effect or identify a change of place, or why dramatically uninteresting footsteps in a living room should be conveyed to the audience. *Wherever sound is not dramatically important, it can be omitted.* The auditor's will-to-believe will co-operate handsomely with the production.

Sound can be employed not only for natural effects but for emphatic stylization or to create eeriness or tension. In such a case, the sounds can be conventionalized or expressionistically treated, as in the case of the ticking of a clock or a metronome, heart beats, and unnaturally rapid movements.

Sounds can be prepared by simple means in the studio, by crushing paper, stamping on a box, crackling cellophane, beating kettledrums, and so on. Some can be produced by the human voice. And practically any sound can be projected by means of records, which contain several effects of short duration on each face. Gennett Records, Richmond, Indiana, will provide anything from "bacon frying" and "hogs grunting" to "putting ice into pitcher" and "milking a cow."

Alternating, combining, or overlapping speech, music, and sound increases the range of radio's auditory effects. Transitions in which speech, music, and sound drop (fade) from full volume (known as "in spotlight") to half volume ("in background") to zero volume ("out" or no sound) produce effective scene and time shifting. The reverse—that is, voice or music or sound coming up (*fading in*)—is equally possible.[3] These transitions can be treated contrapuntally, moreover—with the voice dying down while the music or the sound comes "up." Flexibility is further achieved by the subtlety of the entrance or exit of the auditory component, indicated by the terms "sneak," "sneak in," "sneak out"; here the beginning or ending of a sound or musical effect or a speech is barely noticeable. Also one musical theme may proceed to another without a break, transporting the listener from one mood or atmosphere to another almost instantly. This is indicated by the term *segue.*

[3] "Fade out" means complete disappearance of sound; "fade down," dropping to background volume.

It also makes a distinct difference whether the fading comes from the speaker, who conveys the impression of leaving or entering by moving from or to the microphone (a *studio fade*) or from the controlboard through a gradual reduction of volume by the engineer; in the second case, known as a *board fade,* a scene is curtained or the change in volume can be editorial, in the sense that the engineer determines the attention value of any component of the production—that is, whether the actor's words or some sound effect is the important detail. As Erik Barnow notes, "Volume is radio's spotlight."[4]

Formal transitions can be achieved by mechanical means like "slide whistles," to suggest rising in air, and Chinese gongs; the gong sounds and the scene begins. For both illusionistic and expressionistic purposes, radio has, moreover, developed unique devices like the "*filter,*" which muffles the voice, by eliminating upper or lower frequencies, and can suggest telephoning and other actions, as well as create mysterious effects. Another device is the *echo chamber*, with the sounds transmitted into a special, preferably tunnel-like, chamber and then retransmitted to the listener in combination with the sound from the studio, creating echo-like, labyrinthine, ghostly, and atmospheric impressions. Effective use can also be made of the fact that some studios have a *dead end* which allows practically no reverberation and a *live end* which reverberates a little. The position of the microphones at the dead or the live end makes a difference in the effects of sound.

Producing a radio play is, in short, creation by means of controlled sound-waves. It makes the ear "see." It treats time and space with the utmost freedom. And it makes claims upon the imagination that would astonish the average producer of a stage play. Directing radio drama is therefore a specialty. Its basic procedure is described by Mr. McGill, who supervises much of the dramatic work of the Columbia Broadcasting Company.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

DIRECTING THE RADIO PLAY

Earle McGill

IN AN era when the drama has come increasingly to find expression through the medium of electricity and the loudspeaker it would seem to be a director's early concern to start thinking not only in terms of surprise pink gelatins and pin-wheel spots but also of tubes and turntables. For better or worse in the last ten years, the amusement industry has come almost exclusively under the thralldom of an electro-mechanical economy dominated to a great degree by engineering-minded people. The prompt book has given way to the volume indicator reading; and equipped with sufficiently sensitive receiving apparatus, the audience can take seats anywhere from here to infinity. The midway is no longer a dusty meadow covered with peanut shells and muddied with pink lemonade. It is a function of electrical resistance.

The various worlds of the amusement industry have always been held together by strong sentimental relationships but traditionally, the blood lines that separated one branch from another tended to remain biologically true. Intermarriage was often permitted but as a general thing not encouraged. The practitioner of any one of the fields—of vaudeville, musical comedy, or the "legit"—might take a "flyer" in one of the others, but he usually came back to where he belonged. Each province had its own language and mores, and there have been few who wandered from one to the other and felt equally at home in both or all three. In radio, such sharply defined provinces of entertainment do not exist and a director can find himself involved in the production of broadcasts that follow a wide variety of entertainment patterns.

The General Problem

Assuming that our concern is primarily with the dramatic broadcast, since that is the form upon which a director can impose the skills and attributes which entitle him to the name, an examination of the routine involved in producing such a program will show clearly the function of the radio director. A radio play tells its story in sound, that is by means of words, sound effects, and music. These sounds are picked up on one or more microphones, are converted into electrical impulses, and fed by wire to an antenna, whence they go out over a wave band to be picked up again by receiving antennae. They are reconverted from electrical impulses back into sound impulses by the receiving set to come out of the loudspeaker in the same form in which they went into the microphone. Primarily then the play must tell its story completely in aural and not in visual terms. Just as in reading a manuscript the stage director should bring into play a strong sense of visualization of the movement of the actors in terms of their physical position and their stage business, the radio director must read his script in terms of carrying the story forward continuously by a *logical progression of sound images*, either in words or sound effects, or music, or by combinations of all three.

Furthermore, the play must tell its story (or in the radio serial its segment of story) within the limits of the time allotted for its telling on the air. This demands from the director a strongly developed editorial sense which will enable him to cut or trim the material to an approximation of that time demand, if it is too long, or insist that its author enlarge upon it if it is too short. In the first instance the result must not seem to be truncated, and in the second it must not seem to be padded. The good radio director acquires very early in his career a healthy lack of reverence for the written word. In the theatre the director, the producer, and the playwright waste hours beating their breasts and consulting the stars before they tear out two lines of dialog whose sole sanctification lay in their having somehow or other found their way onto the manuscript. An intelligent but ruthless blue pencil is indispensable around a radio studio.

What the Director Must Know

A radio director should familiarize himself with the routine of the broadcasting station in which he is about to work. In the theatre an accumulated store of mechanical wisdom has grown up dictating

forms and routine, and a smart director leans upon it. In a radio station, a smooth, well integrated routine has necessarily grown from past experiences and from the fact that one broadcast involving complicated telephonic manipulations follows with no intermission upon the heels of another. To recommend acceptance of this routine without question is not to urge a slavish submission to the *status quo*. It is simply to assert that successful broadcasting derives from closely coordinated and highly technical engineering operations that are not easily dispensed with, or ridden over roughshod with impunity.

Broadcasts are budgeted to cost a fixed sum of money. In laying out plans for a show, the restrictions in cost must be scrupulously observed. All the necessary rewriting should be done on the script before going into rehearsal, and the director should plan to get his show ready for air within the limited number of rehearsal hours permitted by the actors' union, unless money has been allocated for overtime. All facilities, special wires, special sound effects, studios, and engineering gadgets should be ordered in advance to be available when needed. These implements of effective broadcasting are not forthcoming at the press of a button. It takes time to place them in readiness, and time is the merchandise of radio, not one of its waste products.

In laying out a cast for his play, the director should bear in mind that according to union rule, an actor is allowed to play one part and one double, that is an additional part in which he may disguise his voice so effectively that the listener will be unable to penetrate the disguise. For his first broadcast a director should employ only actors who have had experience working in radio. There is a standard assortment of microphone tricks, including doubling, that any radio actor knows, and to engage a group of actors who know no more of those tricks than the director does, would be truly a case of the deaf leading the deaf. As he becomes increasingly familiar with the medium he may be more enterprising in using less experienced radio actors and spend a little time helping them to acquire standard "mike"-practice. The wider his knowledge of usable actors, the more the director may add vocal- and actor-coloring to his shows, and the less he will come to be dependent upon a small body of slick and facile performers who, because of a pressing demand upon their talents, can give him only a limited amount of rehearsal time.

Practically all dramatic broadcasts originate in studios. Some are produced in theatres acoustically treated to make them suitable for

broadcasting, and the director then rehearses his play in them according to the same production techniques he would employ in a studio. In general, studios are constructed in such a way as to present one end with walls that reflect sound and one that absorbs sound. If all the walls of a studio were reflective, a sound created in it and picked up on a microphone, would bounce around the walls many times until completely dissipated. Such a condition would create a high degree of reverberation and the quality of the sound on a loudspeaker would be echo-y and unpleasant. By the use of dead areas, some of the sound is absorbed and the reverberatory factor is cut down. In general, a director must strive in his broadcasts to strike a balance between the areas of reflection and absorption so that the quality of sound of speech and sound effect must be neither too echo-y nor too dead. The quality of music produced in a studio must be such as to strike a balance on the loudspeaker between resonance and brilliance of tone on the one hand and instrumental clarity or definition on the other.

Directing Routine

The radio director does his directing from the control room. All microphones in use in the studio are connected with a console at which an engineer sits and "rides gain," that is, mixes the output of sound. The volume of this output of sound is constantly registered by a volume indicator. If the show consists of a cast, an orchestra, and sound effects, and each one of these elements of the show uses a separate microphone, three of the dials before the engineer on the panel are used: one controlling, for the purpose of transmission through the air, the volume of sounds (speeches) made on the cast microphone: one controlling sounds made on the sound-effects microphone; and the third picking up the sounds coming through the orchestra microphone. The over-all volume of the three dials is controlled by a master dial on the panel. The progress of the rehearsal is heard by the director and engineer over a loudspeaker (monitor), and the director communicates with the cast and the studio technicians by speaking into a microphone at his desk in the control room, the output of which feeds to a loudspeaker in the studio.

Allowing for individual preferences and local conditions, the routine followed in directing or producing the dramatic broadcast is fairly standardized. The cast is called for rehearsal, parts are assigned, and the script is read through from beginning to end. The first reading

does not take place before the microphone, since this is probably the first time any of the cast have seen the script. During the reading, the engineer is usually occupied getting the studio in readiness, setting out the requisite number of microphones, and placing them in the proper positions with relation to one another. At the first reading the director sketches in lightly the general interpretative trend he would have his actors follow; and using a stopwatch, he gets an approximate timing of the show, allowing an arbitrary ten seconds for each music bridge (transition from scene to scene by means of music), and ten seconds for complicated sound-effects patterns. If the script is much longer than the broadcast calls for, good practice dictates that cuts be made at this stage of the rehearsal, rather than continue rehearsing material which of necessity must come out later anyway.

The director now proceeds to direct the cast from the control room with the cast working at the microphones. From this point forward the direction of the dramatic broadcast is a co-ordination by the director of the efforts of the studio technicians, that is, the actors, the sound effects engineers, and the orchestra with the engineering facilities of the control room. Besides interpreting his script dramatically, the director develops it in terms of sound levels or volumes worked out in conjunction with the engineer. It is at the "mike" rehearsal that sound perspectives are built, and it is in the construction of sound patterns built in perspective that radio direction veers away from stage direction and proceeds on its own in *a technique that is based exclusively on sound levels or volumes.*

Perspective in Sound

At this point a more extended explanation of *perspective in sound* may be of value. The listener at the loudspeaker must have help in creating for himself the *illusion of depth or third dimension,* and the radio director must give him that help by *building sounds at varying distances from the cast and sound-effects microphones*: sounds built up around the actors to carry out the realistic demands of the dramatic picture intended by the playwright.

A dramatic broadcast is no better than the illusion of depth that is achieved for it by the director building sounds perspectively. In the theatre, an actor stands exactly center stage and says to another: "I shall leave this room"; then he proceeds to walk upstage, open the door, go out, and close the door behind him. The action is simple,

direct, and the eye needs nothing to complete the picture. In a moving picture, the same stage business occurs, with the addition sometimes of the close-up used to accentuate the whole movement of the character from the one place to the other. In radio, when the actor says, "I shall leave this room," the ear is the sole device that enables the listener to know whether the character has done what he says he is going to do, and the ear can be extremely fallacious. Its impression needs to be accentuated, and this accentuation is achieved by the director's creating a sound perspective of depth at the microphone rehearsal and carrying it through on the live broadcast on the air.

An actor placed at normal speaking distance from the microphone for the purpose of radio drama is standing *center stage*. We have to accept that position as a starting point, and once the ear accepts the fiction of center stage, resultant sounds have to flow from that fiction. When the actor on the cast microphone says, "I shall leave this room," he moves backward on the "beam" of the microphone,—that is, on that area on the live side of the microphone in which sound is picked up for transmission with maximum clarity. The door that he presumably opens must then of necessity be a door that is placed off the beam of the *sound* microphone (an upstage door, so to speak), and when the door opens and closes the listener gets the illusion of depth. To reverse this dramatic picture, if an actor is at the microphone and the dramatic business requires a door to be opened and a character to enter the room and walk toward the figure at the microphone, the door still off the sound microphone is opened; and the character entering speaks his entrance as he walks in on the beam of the cast microphone to the normal microphone-speaking position.

By balancing the words spoken on the *cast* microphone with the sounds produced on the *sound* microphone, the illusion of depth is created. If an actor says: "I shall open the door," and we have every reason to believe he is standing at the door, the sound of the door opening must be in the same perspective as the character who opens it. In other words, it must be "full" on the microphone. It would be silly if the ear caught the sound of the door opening at some distance from the speaker. If a dramatically fictional sultan were to say: "Ho! Slaves," and clap his hands, and if the hand-clapping seemed to come ten feet The handclapping must be about the same distance from the micro- from where the sultan is standing, the result would be incongruous. phone as the sultan.

To enlarge upon the fiction of center stage we must use another term that is derived exclusively from radio. When a character is center stage, the microphone is said to be "with him." To illustrate this concept, take the simple case of a man and a woman standing in ordinary conversation. The microphone is *with* these two people. They are our story. They are our drama. We want to know what they are saying. The moment these two people separate, the director, to establish a perspective, must decide *with* which one of the characters the microphone stays. If our dramatic interest is with the man, the microphone stays with him, and when the woman says: "I shall leave this room," obviously she will go "off microphone," and if further words are exchanged between them, the woman's words must be read from an "off microphone" position, and the man's words continue to be projected to her "on microphone." Thus the illusion of depth is preserved, the male character still remains center stage, and the microphone will remain *with him.*

From the listener's point of view, someone must always be "on microphone." Within a continued story there can be moments, rationally prepared for, when all the action can be "off microphone," but sooner or later the microphone must be *with* somebody. It is only by the microphone's being *with* somebody that further sound perspectives may be created. *A radio drama is a story told in terms of a series of sound perspectives.*

During the course of the microphone rehearsal, the succession of *sound cues,* cues to the engineer and cues to the cast, is determined. It is in the giving of cues by the director and their acceptance by the actor that one of the major differences between stage and radio acting lies. Since a background of music and sound effects must be interpolated by the director, and since this background is a matter of levels of sound worked out in the control room, it follows that in innumerable instances during the course of a broadcast, acting at the cast microphone must wait upon the completion of these control-room operations. Radio actors must at all times co-ordinate their efforts in the studio with the mechanical operations of the control room.

Radio Rehearsals

It is at the microphone rehearsal that the work of the director of the radio show parallels the work of the director as he is understood in the theatre. It is here that he imposes his own background of

experience upon the play. It is here that he molds the dramatic forces in the script and sees to it that they are fully expressed and interpreted through the actors, mechanical sounds, and music. Upon this task he brings to bear everything that he knows or has learned, all that his own judgment, taste, or wisdom dictates is necessary for the perfect realization of the dramatic intentions inherent in the manuscript before him.

The microphone rehearsal is followed by a *dress rehearsal,*—that is, a performance of the script from beginning to end with every unit of the production present: cast, orchestra, and sound. The dress rehearsal is timed from beginning to end by stop-watch. The director must note during the dress rehearsal all the errors of performance, whether interpretative by members of the cast or mechanical by studio technicians. At the conclusion of the dress rehearsal these corrections are passed on to the offenders, cuts are made in the script to bring it within the allotted time length, and the show is presumed to be ready to go on the air.

During the course of the air show, the director literally directs the show. He throws all the predetermined cues, maintains a constant check on the general quantitative and qualitative level of sound, working closely with the engineer; and he manipulates the tempo of the show in such a way as to enable it to finish on time.

The director from the stage or pictures need not approach the radio studio with the feeling that it is hedged in by any more esoteric barriers or procedures than those that have been already outlined, or that his artistic impulses may be cramped by offensive categorical imperatives. It is true that the theatre consistently employs a language more vigorous and unconfined than that encountered on radio wave bands, while some of the more lusty aspects of sex have still to be explored in radio drama. But after all, radio wings through the home from cellar to attic, and while this may be a blessing in coverage it serves too to put a check upon the impulse toward a more untrammelled speech. Nonetheless a director who approaches radio with an intelligent awareness of its mechanical limitations and an honest respect for its endless possibilities as a vehicle for expressing the best in man's thinking and aspiration, will find in the medium lasting and worthwhile rewards.

Radio from its very nature utilizes many different techniques of presentation. Its social character embraces innumerable applications

which flow out of the medium. The ordinary "talks" broadcast, the remote pick-ups, the audience participation shows, the forum or round-table discussions, are not without their counterparts in other mediums. But radio presents these techniques with relatively less expense and with an amazing reportorial swiftness that has come to be accepted as a commonplace and indispensable part of our civilization. In the course of a week, the radio director may be called upon to put on the air broadcasts of any or all of these types. The dialog may derive from the iambic cadences of Shakespeare, or it may be the spontaneous comments of two sandhogs carried from deep below the bed of a river to a world that nonchalantly accepts this miracle or turns to another with a flick of the fingers. And for all his sulphurous virtuosity Beëlzebub could not more easily summon with a cue voices from Chile, China, or Timbuctoo, than a radio director girt with a stop-watch. His stage is a diaphragm set in a horn, and his world is bounded only by a wave band on the one hand and his audience's patience on the other.

Producing in the College and Community Theatres

THE NON-PROFESSIONAL FIELD

Non-Professional Production

Community Theatre Production

THE COLLEGE THEATRE

PROBLEMS OF NON-PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTION

Limitations and Difficulties

Organization

Simplifications

Little Theatres

THE NON-PROFESSIONAL FIELD

Non-Professional Production

TODAY the study of play production has as its prime object the creation of theatre in the non-professional, rather than the professional, field. The advent of the films and radio, aggravated by the conditions of New York production, has reduced the professional stage to a small, specialized, and exceedingly risky enterprise. Today the bulk of the American theatre is being kept alive by universities, schools, "little theatres," dramatic clubs, some trade union groups, and other local ventures, such as branches of the New Theatre League.

The student of play production may envision at the rainbow's end a career in the commercial theatre, culminating perhaps in highly lucrative Hollywood acting or producing. But this is not only a remote expectation but one singularly lacking in those gratifications that arise from stability, service to the community, and artistic self-realization. It is much more probable that he will become associated with a local theatre while pursuing his livelihood through non-theatrical channels, or that he will utilize his talent in some university or school. His training must be directed toward this kind of career.

He will, however, labor under a grave misapprehension if he assumes that this requires less preparation than he would need if he were headed for Broadway. On the contrary, he will need more because of the greater scope of the college and community theatre, and because he will not be able to rely as completely on specialists to whom he can farm out much of the work; even humble carpentry is not ruled out of his domain. If, moreover, standards in the non-professional field are not generally as high as in the professional theatre, it is incumbent upon him to raise them.

The non-professional theatre's greatest enthusiast, Barrett Clark, concedes that "the acting, by and large, except in two or three univer-

sities, and in such theatres as the Pasadena and Cleveland Playhouses, is not up to the high standards of production, largely because the human material available consists almost entirely of young people."[1] The actors have less opportunity for extended training. They also lack the advantage of performing with the exceptionally expert actors to be found on Broadway. This is a serious problem. But perhaps it can be partly overcome by greater attention to training. Expert teachers are available, and it is to be hoped that the universities and schools will make extensive use of their talent. The training can be spread over the students' many years of schooling, and can be intensified and effectively pointed in preparation for each separate production.

Precisely because of acting limitations, it is necessary to pay special attention to make-up art, directorial facility, décor, and, above all, efficient organization. With these compensations, non-professional performances should be able to attain highly satisfactory results.

The greatest triumphs in the non-professional stage appear, in fact, in the domain of production. Barrett Clark noted performances of *Dulcy* at Glenn Hughes's University of Washington Penthouse Theatre, of *Both Your Houses* at the University of Minnesota, of *Green Grow the Lilacs* at Northwestern University, and of *Yellow Jack* at the Cleveland Playhouse, which, in his estimation, compared more than favorably with Broadway's premieres.[2] The staging of a new play, *Bed Rock,* directed by Curtis Canfield at Amherst, seemed to the present writer as expert as any realistic production of its type in New York. If, moreover, it is true, as Barrett Clark claims, that the production level is not "as finished as the Moscow Art Theatre, the Theatre Guild at its best, or the best productions of such directors as Arthur Hopkins or Jed Harris," the facilities and opportunities for improvement are rapidly increasing. And in one respect, that of experimentation in imaginative staging, the art of production has forged ahead in some instances beyond most ventures by the commercial stage in the past decade. This has been notably the case at the Vassar Experimental Theatre under the direction of Professor Hallie Flanagan, who brought the same venturesome spirit to some of the enterprises of the Federal Theatre. Much remains to be done, and this is another reason for the most careful study and preparation.

Finally, the student must reckon with the scope, functions, and

[1] *West of Broadway,* N. Y. Times, October 27, 1935.
[2] Ibid.

special conditions of the field in which he will be working. He must acquaint himself with his responsibilities, and impediments, as a teacher who has to work within an educational institution that requires attention to a curriculum in which dramatics is a small part, if not an actual interloper. He must understand the university's role as a theatrical center for the municipality or the state, which entails such problems as interesting program making, utilization of local traditions and economic or social interests, and the employment of simplified staging for purposes of economy or of dissemination of theatre in rural communities. Finally, he must pay heed to the fact that his theatre has a multiple function as an educational institution. It must offer opportunities for student and local playwrights who cannot master their craft without seeing their work in production, and this involves a knowledge of playwriting and play revision. It must, at the same time, constitute a revival theatre which will enable students and the community to see the masterpieces of dramatic literature, as well as the interesting new plays that road tours have not introduced to the city or state; and for this purpose the director must master older styles of production, developing some ingenuity in adapting them to contemporary theatre buildings and to the taste of contemporary audiences.

In order to relate the students' preparation to the actual challenges, opportunities and tasks that face him, this section includes the following sub-divisions: (a) a statement of the general scope of non-professional field; (b) a partial review of the work and policy of some representative university theatres, including statements generously contributed by some of their leaders; (c) simplifications of non-professional staging; (d) some problems and procedures in the little theatres.

Community Theatre Production by John Wray Young[3]

The purpose of the non-professional theatre in America today is so different from that which caused its inception as to confuse all but the straightest thinkers. Not quite three decades ago the upsurge of the European Art Theatre sent its idealism winging across the Atlantic. Within a frighteningly few years after 1912 a maze of valiant

[3] John Wray Young is the director of The Little Theatre of Shreveport and president of the Louisiana Theatre Conference, which consists of thirteen community theatres comprising a total membership of more than nine thousand. Through the clearing house of the Conference, member theatres have access to an extensive rental service for costumes, lights, and copies of plays—a notable example of economical co-operativeness.

groups appeared to sing the dual purpose of the Art Theatre; new playwrights must be heard and artistic integrity must be practiced.

Racial expressions flourish on *causes célèbres* and with such a juicy windmill as the commercial theatre of the teens and twenties as a target, torch-bearing enthusiasts were easy to find. With a tolerant smile show business watched the spread of the miniature playhouses where the productions were always at least grimly artistic. In those gay days the road and stock and Broadway were much more profitable gambling places than even the pre-Roosevelt stock market. The idea that unpaid actors could ever produce real theatre was generally regarded as a pleasant Woman's Club mirage by many as recently as 1929. The cold fact of the infiltration of idealistic theatre into the Broadway scene as evidenced by the Theatre Guild, the Provincetown Players, and the Neighborhood Playhouse was unheeded by affluent show business. Broadway merely shifted its cigar and said, "See. That proves again that the only good actor is the paid actor. They're not amateurs any more."

Then came the purifying ordeal of the Depression. Suddenly a people were stripped of an acquired philosophy of living. As the Midas-complex disappeared during the threadbare thirties the American spirit stood revealed possessing a new dignity and a new intelligence. The great experiment of giving an education to an entire nation started to show results. A race with potentialities for culture greater than the world had known before began to see that true culture is a positive, not a negative way of life.

Naturally the art of theatre presented a wide appeal. Offering an outlet for all talents and crafts, the matter of play-making had become the great American cultural hobby by 1935. And as the annual attendance passed the two million mark the new dual *raison d'être* of the American non-professional theatre became apparent. Strangely enough some of the pioneers cannot yet realize this change of purpose. They talk of the unfilled obligation of the unpaid theatre to produce new playwrights; to give voice to unproduced manuscripts. Lulled by the sedative spell of nostalgia, these arrested spirits still hope that a reincarnated Shaw, Hauptmann, or O'Neill may yet bring his trunk of plays to their stage doors.

It is pathetic that so many of those gallant souls who planted the first seeds of the new American theatre refuse to let the problems of the past rest in their deserved peace. The most cursory glance at the

recent seasons of the purified and chastened professional theatre reveals that nowhere is a new-born play given a more hopeful christening than on Broadway. There is but one stipulation and it has nothing to do with types of manuscript; it must be good theatre. And this goodness, this idealistic approach to theatre, is surprisingly prevalent around Times Square today. It is not yet the absolute attitude, for there are still short-minded men who will send out a truly number three company of a Broadway hit and wonder why it doesn't do business as Cornell or Hayes or Evans did on the same bookings. They still believe there are provincial Americans. They refuse to see that the cultural viewpoints of Dallas and Seattle are of the very same stuff as that once sophisticated viewpoint known as New York. The road is no more and no less critical than Broadway.

But, if the big bad wolf of show-business is being changed into Grandmother, where are the new voices among playwrights? The crime record shows that most of our young playwrights have been, and not too unwillingly, seduced by a thousand dollars a week to scribble for an entirely different art form which is manufactured efficiently under the warm, but sterile rays of the California sun. How can we stop this tragic outflow of writing talents? We might keep them in theatre with eleven hundred dollars a week although we couldn't offer the swimming pool. But the quantity of new plays is not the crux of the matter. Our symphonies have not stopped playing just because we haven't discovered any Beethovens this season.

The most conservative estimate is that there were at least 30,000 productions of plays in the non-professional theatre last year as opposed to some 70 on the island of Manhattan. We reach this figure if we credit the 25,000 high-schools which have drama departments, with less than a play a year, and average the 1000 community playhouses and 700 college theatres at four plays each. Any intelligent director can plan exciting and worthy schedules of four or five plays per year using only the dramatic literature of the last twenty-four centuries. If no plays were written after 1941 the non-professional theatre could go on fulfilling its destiny for decades to come. I'm afraid the real frenzy for new plays comes from the boys who want to bet on a winner. I believe they'd have fewer headaches and perhaps more fun if they'd spend their time at Hialeah Park.

Still, what of the oft-declaimed gospel that drama must voice protests of current problems and that regional drama must be written to

preserve a picture of our age? Most playgoers prefer their lectures straight and resent discovering them made up to look like theatre. The play of protest too often suffers because the art of playwriting does not take wings when the basic reason behind a play is that somebody's "mad" at something. And the chief reason behind the frequent failure of the Mud In the Toes type of regional drama is that the average theatre attendant doesn't like to spend his money at the House of Magic to look at a thing whose only virtue is its ugliness.

Plays written solely to record a civilization soon wither into museum mummies; only the eternal forces keep life burning in a manuscript. Not many of us live through a play by Shakespeare to learn details of Elizabethan England. After all, the mirror was to be held up to Nature!

Of course the non-professional theatre should encourage the art of playwriting, and it does. Each year sees scores of "original" plays staged this side of Broadway. The happiest of these are done as laboratory productions set apart from the regular season. The majority rightfully take place in university playhouses where space and staff are plentiful. Soundest first productions are those to which interested parties are invited and are asked to pay only a written criticism. When new manuscripts are inserted into regular programs which have been sold to members under promise that they would receive the best season possible, then we often find dissatisfaction. The usual theatre patron does not want to pay his money to help a toddling author. He wants to buy emotional experience and he wants the best that can be had.

Until the economic structure of the professional theatre is freed from the fungi that smother it, the civilized man who does not enjoy the mixed benefits of living in our six biggest cities will have to buy most of his theatre experience from a theatre he helps to make. The rate at which the quality of his own playmaking has increased is one more tribute to America's talent for tempo. The good plays of the ages are his to do. The literary calibre must be determined by the average denominator of each particular audience. To gauge that average is a difficult task, but a Director should notice that a symphony conductor is required, for the most part, to play selections his auditors can understand.

The long range program should follow an ascending line. Audiences can gain in technique and that rate of gain determines the real progress of a playhouse. Fall behind them and they stray to more intelligent pastures; get too far ahead, and you bore them right out

of the orchestra seats. A difficult task? Yes, surely, but one that must and is being constantly achieved.

The body of dramatic literature is elliptical in shape. And, providentially, between the lower end, where lie the cheap and shoddy manuscripts, and the narrowing upper point, where soar the most aesthetic masterpieces, there is the mass of sound plays from which to build programs. We are almost adult enough in these United States to begin to see that newness has no important value *per se*. We've recognized that this truth applied to the other arts but few see that it also pertains to theatre. The day may come when "Latest Hit" will seem as incongruous on a marquee as would a sign on the Metropolitan Museum which neoned, "Don't Miss It! See The Latest Picture Painted!"

Already some of the more mature non-professional theatres have with pleasant surprise discovered that they can turn back in their production records and re-play sound manuscripts. And they have often found themselves on the verge of a great secret; that developed theatre-goers find rich pleasure in re-living a play they have known before. Playgoing can become as intelligent an expression of self as listening to music. To decide which of the new plays belong in the unpaid theatre requires taste and judgment. In recent years we have had to beware the movie scenario which played a short stand on Broadway just to make it loom larger in Hollywood.

This same corpulent West Coast cousin has had his influence on the scenic demands of recent plays. Subconsciously perhaps, our playwrights have let the roving camera eye induce them to ask for more and more miracles of stagecraft. The younger non-professional theatres are wont to complain that scenic problems too often rule out coveted plays. It does happen, but there are good plays to fit any stage.

Once the second *cause célèbre* of the Art Theatre, the right of good design to a place on stage is no longer questioned. With the huge money at their command, the New York producers can, at times, handle production problems beyond the range of all but a few non-professional theatres. However, as the needed leadership slowly develops, technical problems begin to recede to their proper values. Twenty years ago beginning theatres often found that their greatest achievements were in the matter of settings. They became exuberant when they found they could master canvas, wood, and paint. Of many a frightful performance the only cheerful note in the obituary was, "The setting was excellent." Proper housing and qualified leadership are

the best roads to solution of technical problems. An audience does not come to the theatre to look at sets but to experience what happens in front of them. I fear we have streamlined the cause of design quite beyond our own good in this age. The credo of Craig has been eaten and assimilated.

But the real problem of theatre always needs solution. Since a play is not a play till the actors live it with an audience, the constant and vital task is that it shall be played well. Since our two mechanical arts, the talking pictures and the radio, show us unceasingly how actors look or tell us how they sound, the actor's problem today is more difficult than ever before. When Grandfather went to the Opera House to see a play he carried with him no scale of acting standards. True, he could recall the other evenings when he had watched the exhibition of the virtuoso talent of a star or when a starless troupe ranted through Boucicault, but he had not listened to a radio play as he drove an automobile to the theatre and he had not the visual impressions left by years of movie-going. Warm in the glow of his dinner wine, Grandfather went to theatre unconcerned with such matters as speech standards, design principles, or directing styles. But today the swingiest Sophomore has, because of the amazing environmental changes of the twentieth century, more acquired background in the elements of theatre than ninety-eight per cent of playgoers had before 1890.

How then can a player cursed with the besmirched name of "amateur" make theatre for a modern, critical audience? That the miracle does happen with great frequency will be admitted from Bangor to San Diego. It is possible, first, because Americans have found that the art of acting is not much more difficult than the art of music. It takes talent, hard work, and good teaching. Even if we grant the old truism that one must act to learn to act, we find today that the unpaid player after ten years is often further along in technique and far richer in the experience of playing sound roles than is his Broadway contemporary who has spent most of his ten years making the rounds. Lacking the blazing talent of a star in the cast, the non-professional theatre can devote its entire attention to striving for an accurate ensemble playing of the manuscript.

Rightfully the finest acting talents belong in the expensive show windows of Broadway, but the acting level in the non-professional theatre has risen with impressive steadiness. There are thousands of unpaid actors who have been developing their talent for ten, twelve,

fifteen years. It would be a very low-bracket I. Q. indeed that could not master some basic principles in that time. And the amateur actor brings to his work a subtle, but stimulating factor; the will to enjoy. Acting is not a job but a fascinating hobby which bears rich returns for himself and for others. With proper leadership, he will work intensely toward voice improvement, creation of accurate emotional values, and the other elements of the actor's art. But, and this has caused many a rifted lute, he must be well taught.

The emergence of the Director as the dominating factor in modern theatre has coincided so amazingly with the rise of the pon-professional theatre that we must credit it to the Great Dramatist as part of his plot for the theatre of our time. Without the leadership of an expert Director the non-professional theatre is only a body without bones. The mind in the middle of a theatre organization must be first class. There is the flame that lights the way toward mastery of acting, stagecraft, theatre management.

It is not surprising that we have so few good directors; the surprise is that we have as many as we do. In the *dramatis personae* of theatre the Director is a new and hardly yet defined character.

The evolution of American theatre from here out depends almost entirely on the rate at which we can produce Directors worthy of the name. It will take time; it will take thought and work. For, and devoutly may I say it, a Director must possess all talents, all abilities. He must be a man of vision. It is he who has to see and help others to understand that theatre is a basic part of the life pattern of the truly civilized. Since Thespis signaled that a glorious dawn was breaking in the minds of men the art of play-making has suffered various fortunes. Many are the centuries in which it could not support those who made it, but still it has endured.

Today the American theatre is on the verge of realizing a new unity. Paid and unpaid actors are working toward the same objective. The one may think he does it for a pay check; the other may regard it as a community service. But, I do believe, that the fundamental reason is a happy determination to practice man's most human art. Homo sapiens could prowl the wastes without music, painting, intelligence, love. But in most of those who hold that a life worth keeping must have some goodness in it there is inbred a hunger for beauty, for soul refreshment. And for them the ancient art of theatre offers the most widespread enjoyment. The American people can have a finer theatre than the world has ever seen. The curtain is up!

THE COLLEGE THEATRE

As a Community Theatre

TYPICAL of the university theatre's role as an educational and community center are the activities at the University of Washington, Cornell University, and the University of North Carolina. Professor Glenn Hughes's description of his department's work at Seattle may be one guide-post to the student:

My belief is that the American National Theatre, which has been talked about so long, is apt to be composed of the college and community theatres. Some of these (that is, some of the community theatres) will be at least semi-professional, but few of them, I think, will be thoroughly professional. I doubt that we will see much expansion of the professional theatre. If I am right, then it falls upon the college and community theatres to keep the legitimate drama alive in all but a few cities of the country. It is obvious that well managed and partially subsidized community theatres (Cleveland, Dallas, Pasadena, etc.) can furnish their communities with enjoyable productions at modest prices and on a regular schedule. On the other hand, there are few who believe (and a short while ago no one seemed to believe) that a college could do the same thing. During the past few years we have made an effort to prove that a college can.

So far as I know, we are the only university offering dramatic performances every week of the year and practically every night of the week. We do not play on Sundays, of course, and occasionally we have a dark night during the week, but seldom except every sixth week in each theatre's schedule, when a half-week is dark for dress rehearsals.

We operate two small theatres—the Showboat Theatre (seating 223) and the Penthouse Theatre (seating 172). Both houses were constructed according to our own designs on the campus with W.P.A. labor and with materials furnished by us. The labor cost for the two buildings was approxi-

mately $85,000. Our expense for materials and equipment was approximately $47,500. We borrowed money for this, and we are paying it back from the profits on the operation of the theatres. There is a considerable profit because the University takes care of the upkeep of the buildings (light, heat, and janitor service). Our expenses are royalties, printing, scene construction, costumes, properties, and student help in box-office and backstage. We have no large salaries because all the directors are paid as teachers in the Division of Drama, and directing plays is simply a part of that job.

We have three dramatic directors (who teach acting) and who handle all casting and rehearsals. We have an art director (who teaches design, etc.) and he has two assistants, one for costuming and another for scene painting. We have a technical director (who teaches construction and lighting) and he has several assistants, including student stage managers, electricians, etc. As executive director, I am a co-ordinator, and of course I am responsible for choice of plays and for all matters of theatre policy. I am, in effect, the producer.

In both our theatres each production runs for six weeks. The average number of performances for each production is thirty. We have an enormous club business. That is, on four nights of the week (Monday to Thursday) the house is taken over by an organization (charities, fraternities, women's clubs, etc.). Friday and Saturday night performances are always open to the general public. Our club business is so great that we are often booked up six months ahead. We have developed a devoted following from the entire city and its suburbs (approximately half a million people). An average of five thousand people attend each of our productions. Our prices of admission are 55c including tax. On each Friday night we reserve half of each house for university students at 25c.

We have a complete curriculum of dramatic courses, and a student is permitted to major in drama, and to earn an A.B. degree in four years; an M.A. in five. Of his total university work, one-third is in drama subjects; the other two-thirds includes the general requirements in the College of Arts and Sciences [language, science, composition, etc.] and also the required courses for a minor in literature. Inasmuch as we are a division of the English Department, we require the literature minor. We have approximately 250 drama major students. In addition to these we have at least another 100 students minoring in drama or taking drama courses as electives. Our students attain an unusually high standard of acting because of the long runs and because of the necessity of meeting with public approval.

A question that is frequently asked, and that is a natural one, is: How can college students play six nights a week in the theatre and keep up with their studies? The only reply is that they can and do. It is true, though, that we take measures to guard against academic failure. First, we encourage those who are active in the theatres to carry rather light curricular loads. Then, we insist that during the run of a play the actors give up all social activities in order to save their free hours for study. Finally, we try to cast the plays in such a way as to avoid having most of the actors in two successive productions. This gives them breathing spells in which to catch up with their class work. We watch this particularly in the case of lower division (freshman and sophomore) students. Upper division and graduate students we are less careful of because they are better able to look after themselves and to budget their time efficiently.

Nearly all rehearsals are held from four to six in the afternoon. The rehearsal period normally is four weeks. During the period of rehearsals the student has his evenings for study. During the six-week run of the play, he usually has his afternoons free—as well as Sundays.

When an administrative officer raised the question as to the academic standing of our actors a few years ago, we made a survey of the facts and found the grade average of all our actors for the season was higher than the grade average for the entire student body of the university. And, interestingly enough, the students who were our leading actors had the highest grade averages. In other words, they were capable in more than one way.

It is one of my ardent beliefs that the legitimate theatre nowadays must be small in order to compete with the vividness of the motion pictures. Audiences are conditioned to easy sight and hearing in the picture houses, and if they are to enjoy legitimate productions they must be close to the actor. That is one reason we made our theatres small.

Another belief of mine is that legitimate theatres will do well to dramatize themselves. That is, the playhouse itself should be interesting and attractive. They can be novel without being silly. A legitimate theatre, to compete with the film houses, needs to be different. It cannot be more luxurious; therefore it must count on uniqueness of character. Following that principle, I conceived two playhouses different from any others in the country. Realizing that we had on the University of Washington campus a beautiful waterfront on a lake, I conceived a theatre set on the water, capitalizing on the showboat tradition without creating an actual mobile vessel. It is built on piling and does not float, but it sits on the water and is charming. It has atmosphere.

To both our houses hundreds of people come regularly because of the attractiveness of the theatres themselves—regardless of what play is running. This would certainly not be true in a conventional legitimate theatre.

We have solved most of our problems. One that cannot ever be solved permanently, of course, is the matter of suitable plays. In the Penthouse Theatre we need plays with drawing-room settings or at least with simple interior settings, preferably though not necessarily without change of scene. We have in that theatre a tradition of drawing-room farce and comedy. The number of ideal Penthouse plays is extremely small. Among such ideal plays are *Hay Fever, First Lady, Spring Dance, The Perfect Alibi, Holiday, Right You Are—If You Think So, Fresh Fields, Ladies of the Jury, Accent on Youth,* and *Personal Appearance.* But playwrights aren't writing many good drawing-room comedies these days. And some that are written are too talky (Behrman); others are too risqué. Being a State University we need to avoid public productions which will annoy groups of conventional taxpayers. And college students are actually more startling in risqué plays than professional actors.

Already we are being forced to present revivals of Penthouse plays done by us four or five seasons ago. New ones are not coming our way. If we get a few good drawing-room comedies a year from Broadway we are lucky. This is our most serious problem.

At the Showboat Theatre we have less trouble finding plays because we use a greater variety of types. But even there we occasionally find ourselves lacking the sort of play we want. Our audiences prefer fairly new plays, consequently we don't produce many classics—some Shakespeare, Shaw, Ibsen, etc., but not too frequently. Most classics won't hold up for six weeks, and a shorter run would mean a dark theatre for a while, and we don't believe in dark theatres. We believe that the theatre should be lighted all the time in order to keep the public in the habit of attending it.

One reason why road shows have not done well lately in cities like Seattle (except when Cornell or Hayes or Lunt and Fontanne are the attractions) is that they are so infrequent. Lately we have averaged only two or three road shows a year. And whereas they used to play here a week, they now play usually only three days. The public is completely out of the habit of seeing professional productions. If a show came through every week, business would of course be better. Our policy is to revive the habit that died out with the death of the stock companies and regular road shows. Our regularity of performance also has the advantage of eliminating most of the need for advertising. The public doesn't have to be told that

we are running a show this week. They have learned that we run shows *every* week. And one of our theatres feeds the other. People can see a new production of ours every three weeks by attending the two houses alternately. And a number of people do. (Because of student interest in acting, we are able to play right through vacation periods.)

We have several reasons for setting a six-week limit on each production. One is that clubs hesitate to sponsor a performance of a production that has run longer than that because so many people have seen it that tickets are hard to sell. Another reason is that six weeks is long enough for one group of actors to be performing every night. A shorter run would not provide adequate time for the preparation of a new production. We must have a fixed length of run for each play in order that our schedule may be prepared for the entire season. Clubs engage dates in the theatre six months or more ahead, and they must be told whether their date occurs in the second or fourth or fifth week of a production. They want to know. We do not guarantee what play they will see, but we do guarantee what week of the production it will be.

The only criticism we get on our policy is that because of our long runs and our club business we are impelled to present popular plays. Occasionally someone thinks we should present more classics; again someone thinks we should present social propaganda plays. But it is obviously impossible to please everyone, and we believe our policy is the best in the long run. We present the best plays that we think the majority of our audiences will enjoy.

It seems to me that it is a mistake to expect all university theatres to follow the same policy. There are great differences among them—differences of personnel, physical equipment, nature and size of the community, etc. The main thing for each of us, I think, is to adopt a policy based on the above factors and then make it work. For instance, it is right that Fred Koch should develop the folk-drama at Chapel Hill, North Carolina. And it is no doubt sensible for E. C. Mabie to experiment with unproduced plays by well-known playwrights at Iowa City, Iowa. With our present policy we haven't time to do those things. And they haven't the time or the right conditions or perhaps even the inclination, to do the thing we do. But this is all to the good. Each university can make itself distinctive and can attract a special kind of student. The tendency to imitate each other and do a lot of things badly would get us nowhere.

We do not pretend to try out original plays, for instance, although we do offer a course in playwriting. This may seem a lack on our part, but

we cannot help it. Our best energies go into the successful operation of our public theatres. And we can always send an original play to someone who *will* try it out if the play is worth it.

Although we give students wonderful training and experience in acting, we do not encourage them to attempt careers as actors in the professional theatre because we know the risks involved. Occasionally we send someone to Hollywood at the request of a studio scout, and a few of our former students are making a living in motion pictures. A few others have gone to New York (nearly always against our advice) and two or three are earning their living in the legitimate theatre. But the thing we do encourage is a career as a teacher of drama and a director of amateur plays. We hope that many of our graduates put their training to use in the educational and community theatres of the country. A good many of them are teaching in secondary schools, a few in colleges, and a few more have found employment in community theatricals.

But whether or not our courses and activities lead to theatrical careers, we feel that they are fully justified as a part of university undergraduate life. They develop the individual in a desirable way, and they provide a vital interest for many students who otherwise would drift through four years of college without an enthusiasm. A major in drama not only animates the study of literature for the student, but it also provides a much-needed type of discipline. Our students must inevitably acquire habits of promptness, attention to detail, care for personal appearance, physical bearing, diction, and many others which improve them for the business of life, and which contribute not only to their personal culture but to their character. Meeting the test of regular public performances over a period of several weeks is in this connection extremely important. The combination of excitement and confusion which frequently attends amateur productions where there are only one or two performances disappears under a long-run policy. Our students must be business-like even in their acting. And of course we give a good many of them actual business experience in connection with ushering, box-office work, etc. Our motto, as yet unofficial, but one which we are thinking of adopting, is ARS IN THEATRO ET OECONOMIA. And by this I mean that our ideal is to create art in the theatre but also to see that the theatre is well managed—using Economy in its original sense of efficient household management.

As Regional Theatre

If the Washington University theatre under Professor Hughes can be described as a municipal center, the University of North Carolina

may be properly called a regional center. It is the brain-child of the leading exponent of regional theatre, Professor Frederick H. Koch, who started his work as far back as 1905 at the University of North Dakota. His work and that of North Carolina are so intimately associated that the one cannot be described without the other. The following abbreviation of a report prepared by one of Professor Koch's colleagues, Mr. Robert Finch, outlines the scope and approach of this enterprise:

The original contribution of Professor Koch and his colleagues was the folk-play, with its communal authorship and presentation, under the leadership of a director who controlled and harmonized the contributions of the various participants. There in North Dakota the folk-plays portrayed scenes from ranch life, the adversities of pioneer settlers, and incidents along the cowboy trails. The folk-players toured the state, enacting upon a simple portable stage their "Prairie Plays." The stimulating activities and definite accomplishments of Professor Koch in establishing American folk-plays in rural sections made him of note in the literary and theatrical world as the pioneer of a new dramatic school.

At the University of North Carolina, Koch has greatly extended the field of his activities. Here he introduced the idea of cooperative authorship of the rural community drama. Since 1918 he has been head of The Carolina Playmakers, organized by him in that year for the local production of folk-plays. One of his first steps, after arrival in Chapel Hill, was to organize the Bureau of Community Drama as a unit of the Extension Division of the University. In 1923 he was the prime mover in organizing the Carolina Dramatic Association, holding in each year a Dramatic Festival and State Tournament for the purpose of cultivating dramatic endeavor in communities throughout the state and laying securely the foundations for a real people's theatre in North Carolina. In 1920 The Carolina Playmakers made their first tour of the state. Since that time they have toured from the Canadian border as far south as southern Georgia; they have traveled west to St. Louis and to Dallas; and they have appeared in every sort of theatre and auditorium and hall in North Carolina.

Professor Koch has edited the seven volumes of original plays written by his students, selected from hundreds.[1] He also founded *The Carolina Play-*

[1] *Carolina Folk Plays, First, Second,* and *Third Series* (Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1922, 1924, 1928, respectively), *Carolina Folk Comedies* (Samuel French, New York, 1931), *Mexican Folk Plays,* by Josephina Niggli (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1938), *American Folk Plays* (D. Appleton-Century Company, New York, 1939), and *Folk Plays of Eastern Carolina,* by Bernice Kelly Harris (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1940).

Book, a quarterly dramatic periodical, published since 1923. Perhaps the most significant of Koch's work has been the emergence from The Carolina Playmakers of the noted American playwright Paul Green, author of *In Abraham's Bosom* (Pulitzer Prize, 1927), *The Field God, The House of Connelly, Roll Sweet Chariot, Tread the Green Grass,* and many other plays. During the era of The Carolina Playmakers, three other native North Carolinians, Lulu Vollmer, Hatcher Hughes, and Ann Bridgers, have made significant contributions to American folk drama in *Sun-Up*, *Hell Bent for Heaven,* and *Coquette.*

The Carolina Playmakers of 1940 have modern buildings for their work, including The Playmakers Theatre, the Forest Theatre in Battle Park, a Scene Shop and Costume Shop, a radio broadcasting studio, in addition to offices and the Dramatic Museum in Murphey Hall. Because they have been acquired one at a time over a period of twenty-two years, as the needs of an ever-spreading organization grew, the buildings are scattered, causing some inconvenience and making unification of the various departments difficult. They are also lacking in sufficient space for rehearsals and other activities. Nevertheless, they symbolize the constant and healthy growth of The Carolina Playmakers, for they have risen out of nowhere.

The frequent production by The Carolina Playmakers of outstanding plays by professional playwrights, plays which are representative of nearly every style and period of theatre history, gives the student a background and knowledge of the best in the drama of all ages, as well as an opportunity for practical training and experience in the various arts of the theatre. A glance at the record reveals that among the productions have been included plays by Aeschylus, Euripides, Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Sheridan, Goldsmith, Molière, Beaumarchais, Ibsen, Chekhov, Strindberg, Shaw, Gilbert and Sullivan, Wilde, Milne, Coward, Priestley, Maeterlinck, Toller, Quintero, Sierra, Capek, and others. In American drama, productions have been staged of the plays of Paul Green, Sidney Howard, Augustus Thomas, Maxwell Anderson, Percival Wilde, Boothe Tarkington, Percy MacKaye, Philip Barry, George S. Kaufman, George Kelly, Samuel and Bella Spewack, William Saroyan, among others. The Carolina Playmakers' productions are staged in The Playmakers Theatre, with the exception of extremely large productions which require the ampler stage space of Memorial Hall; the plays are open to students and public by season subscription or by single admission, and run from two to five performances.

The most elaborate production of each season is the annual Forest Theatre play, staged in May when the forest surrounding Chapel Hill is at

its loveliest. Here, in a woodland setting, have appeared the characters of Shakespeare, Sheridan, Rostand, MacKaye, Shaw, Euripides, Aristophanes, and others. The plays chosen for production are classics in the theatre. The settings are invariably of great beauty; special music and dances are composed; no pains are spared in the design and execution of costumes. All these, enhanced by the forest and the night, combine to make of a Forest Theatre production a spectacle which attracts thousands of Carolina people every Spring. The most talented of student actors combine with members of The Playmakers staff to give the play a stellar cast. In directing the productions Professor Koch combines beauty of spectacle, movement, composition, and sound. Lighting effects take the place of curtains, and when the overture is done a setting will begin to glow from the darkness of the forest and the night; characters will appear out of the darkness and seem to come to life there for the first time. The beauty and naturalness of settings in the heart of the forest lend a great air of reality, and when the play is done and the setting fades away into the past, one has the feeling that if a light were struck some of the characters who have briefly lived through the scenes of *Twelfth Night*, or *Androcles and the Lion*, or *Noah*, must still be about. As an example of the care that is taken in staging the annual Forest Theatre productions, the performance of *Hamlet* several years ago was staged with the co-operation of several faculty members who took the important roles, including Professor Koch in the title role; the play was staged by Professor Selden, who designed the memorable settings; Sir George Henschel's music for *Hamlet* was played by the University Symphony Orchestra, with additional music by the glee clubs of the University. The version of the play which was used here was that of Booth's prompt book, with some modification, shorter than the reading version by some thousand lines. The play was staged with but one intermission, no divisions into acts and scenes, giving the play a continuous movement and a celerity in playing.

In addition, it is customary to stage experimental productions submitted to criticism by the audience. The spectator's participation in the Playmakers' new experimental theatre is reasoned, articulate, and constructive. Every member of the audience is a critic. After a play, anyone out front may get to his feet and say, as plainly as he pleases, what he thinks of it and wherein it might be improved. This participation by the audience makes for a lively theatre. Knowing that he will have a chance to have his say, or, if he himself prefers to remain silent, that he will want to weigh the

criticisms of others, the spectator watches the play keenly. He is alert to a false note, quick to respond to a telling point.

The plays presented are ideally suited to this special theatre. First, they are the work of students in playwriting; therefore, the plays usually are susceptible of improvement. Second, they are new; the spectator-critic has had no opportunity to be swayed by opinions previously read. Third, the four one-act plays on the bill are each not more than thirty minutes in length; four periods of criticism are possible.

The playwright will not accept all the suggestions made, of course. Should he do so, the final play likely would be a hodge-podge. But pertinent suggestions for changes, or those overwhelmingly insisted upon by the audience, may be adopted in his revised script. This last—to provide an opportunity for the student playwright to see his play upon the stage and to get an immediate audience reaction—is the primary purpose of the experimental theatre. Eighteen years ago, when Paul Green and Thomas Wolfe were student playwrights, the writers merely read their scripts to a small audience and a faculty committee of five retired to vote upon the best play. Later, the plan advanced to the point that actors walked through the motions of the play, reading the lines. Only recently, with the decision to present four superior plays completely produced, Professor Koch hit upon the idea of inviting the audience to participate.

Whether or not a similar venture elsewhere might thrive commercially —say, on Sunday evenings—is speculative. But the budding New York enterprise, Experimental Theatre, Inc., may note that the success of the plan at North Carolina makes it appear that audiences are hungry to do more in the theatre than applaud if pleased, remain silent if displeased, and depend solely on their representative, the professional critic, to express their views in next day's newspaper.

The most important aspect of the work at the University of North Carolina is its effort to create a people's theatre through the development of folk drama. Professor Koch defines this as drama that is "concerned with folk subject matter: with the legends, superstitions, environmental differences, and the vernacular of the common people. For the most part they are realistic and human; sometimes they are imaginative and poetic. The chief concern of the folk dramatist is man's conflict with the forces of nature and his simple pleasure in being alive. The conflict may not be apparent on the surface in the immediate action on the stage. But the ultimate cause of all dramatic

action we classify as 'folk,' whether it be physical or spiritual, may be found in man's desperate struggle for existence and in his enjoyment of the world of nature. The term 'folk' with us applies to that form of drama which is earth-rooted in the life of our common humanity."[2]

In pursuance of this policy North Carolina has encouraged not only drama about the South, including Negro life, but plays about other regions, even Mexico and Canada. Nor has this literature confined itself to local color; much of it is social drama, concerning itself with Negro and tenant farmer problems which are of vital importance below the Mason and Dixon line. The program consequently involves the writing of communal plays, and providing opportunities for the staging of work that is better suited to local rather than metropolitan audiences. Inevitably, however, this activity has enriched the professional theatre with such folk pieces as Dorothy and DuBose Heyward's *Porgy* (later turned into the opera *Porgy and Bess*, both produced by the Theatre Guild), and with the notable work of Paul Green—*In Abraham's Bosom, The Field God, The House of Connelly,* and many remarkable one-act plays, one of which, the chain-gang drama *Hymn to the Rising Sun* was performed in many cities, including New York. Out of this work has also come that notable theatre festival on Roanoke Island which presented Paul Green's historical pageant on the first English settlement in America, *The Lost Colony,* for three summers.

Another important activity is touring the region. The Carolina Playmakers travel in a "Show-Bus," "with three sets of homemade scenery atop, portable lighting equipment, costumes, and stage properties." They have played in mountain villages and seaboard towns, housing their productions in "school auditoriums, old-time opera-houses, and outlived town-halls." Thus far they have made about thirty-five tours and have covered over 125 different towns and cities, playing to a total audience of more than 300,000 people. Simplified staging is the main requirement. Although many universities are now better equipped for production than Broadway, the worker in the community theatre must be able to get along with a minimum of equipment when necessary.

Another noteworthy example of regional enterprise is afforded by the comprehensive work of Professor E. C. Mabie's theatre at the

[2] *Drama in the South,* an address delivered at the Southern Regional Festival, April 5, 1940.

University of Iowa. Here, in addition to necessary revival performances in its community scenes, the emphasis is naturally on the life of the West, and on the experimental production of new plays that possess local flavor and significance. Although the experiments have included non-local work like Paul Green's fantasy *Tread the Green Grass,* for which it was necessary to create a delicate and expressive wedding of drama and music, the University of Iowa's most substantial contribution has been the encouragement and staging of such folk plays as E. P. Conkle's folk dramas (like his Paul Bunyan saga *Paul and the Blue Ox,* and the two plays that were produced on Broadway—the Lincoln story *Prologue to Glory* and the Alaska settlement drama *Two Hundred Were Chosen*). Here, too, productions have not been limited to local color. Conkle's last two mentioned pieces and Richard Maibaum's study of provincial intolerance *Middletown Mural* have touched upon broad social problems; and even "living newspapers" have been attempted.

The production problem appears to be largely a matter of imparting reality or at least local flavor to the performances in the décor and in the acting. The other important project is the composition of plays and experimentation with them. This work is organized as a graduate seminar, "in the interest of playwrights who are in what might be termed 'an apprenticeship period' of their development." It enables them "to revise and rewrite imperfect manuscripts under the conditions of a producing theatre and to test their plays before an audience." The university does not, however, limit its program of new work to its own students. It is one of thirty or more organizations that cooperate with the American Educational Theatre Organization, headed by Professor George Savage, in experimental work with original plays by playwrights outside Iowa.

On a smaller scale other universities are serving as regional centers. This is the case at the University of Delaware, which in addition to reviving many notable plays, under its director Professor C. R. Kase, gives technical assistance to dramatic groups throughout the state; runs a Play Lending library; issues monthly news and technical service bulletins; and sponsors annual dramatic conferences attended by representatives from as many as fifty-five organizations which presented about a hundred plays in 1938-1939 to some 30,000 people and involved participation by more than 1500 persons.

There are, moreover, occasions when the university theatre finds

itself serving many needs—those pertaining to the university as an educational community and training ground for theatre workers, to a municipal theatrical center, and to the rural sections adjacent to it. This is most amply illustrated by the work of one of the leading university theatres of the country at Cornell under the direction of Professor A. M. Drummond.

Its graduate studies in drama and theatre, which were started some five or six years before George Pierce Baker's workshop 47 at Harvard, are an important part of its activities. Its graduates, who number between 20 and 30 annually and about 50 during summer sessions, will be found in every part of the country. Its undergraduate work involves from 300 to 400 students annually. But these educational activities are only a part of a larger field which includes campus, civic, and state-wide work by the Cornell Dramatic Club and the Cornell University Theatre, now housed in the fine Willard Straight Theatre and boasting costume collections estimated at $40,000. The history of this relation between university and community theatre, as of 1940, is given in the following report:

The Cornell Dramatic Club was organized in 1909 under the sponsorship of Professor James Albert Winans, then Head of the Department of Public Speaking at Cornell, since 1920 at Dartmouth College. To give students of the Department opportunities for self-expression in the drama Professor Winans had brought from the Curry School in Boston, Smiley D. Blanton, under whose able direction on April 15, 1908, a well-received farce, *Between the Acts,* was presented in Sibley Dome by the students in Public Speaking. On March 5, 1909, *An Enemy of the People* was presented under Mr. Blanton's direction at the old Lyceum Theatre: and on March 22, 1909, the students engaged in this production formed the Cornell Dramatic Club to present future plays sponsored by the Department of Public Speaking. In the fall of 1912, A. M. Drummond, who had assisted Mr. Blanton with *An Enemy of the People*, became Director.

The original policy of the Club was to present important European plays, seldom or never produced by the professional theatre in America. An annual play at the Lyceum Theatre was the rule till January 12, 1917, when the Campus Theatre in Goldwin Smith Hall, Room B, became the Club's Theatre. The equipment for the Campus Theatre was purchased by personal donations from Club members. During the War an adequate Club program was effectively carried on by the women of the Club. The

first long play presented in the Campus Theatre was Lennox Robinson's *The Whiteheaded Boy*, March 21, 1923. From 1919 to 1923, in co-operation with the State College of Agriculture and the New York State Department of Agriculture, the Club conducted at Syracuse the New York State Fair Little Country Theatre which had nation-wide publicity. The Club's Senior Week productions began in June, 1924, with Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.

The Summer Theatre was organized as a feature of the 1924 Summer Session; and during the years since has continued to serve as a laboratory for the summer students in dramatic art and as the chief entertainment of the Summer Session. The present general and varied scale of production was reached in the last season in the Campus Theatre, 1924-25, and through the fall of 1925.

The Dramatic Club was the first Cornell activity organized with a complete recognition of the equality of men and women, but a separate Women's Dramatic Club continued to be active till 1925. In June of that year the Women's Dramatic Club effected a consolidation with the Cornell Dramatic Club, and the *Alice in Wonderland* given every fourth year by the Freshmen Women is in recognition of this consolidation.

The Club has supplemented its program by directing and staging the Kermis plays of the State College of Agriculture dramatic group, by co-operating with the Department of Physical Education for Women in a number of dance recitals, by staging the Rural Dramatic Festivals of Farm and Home Week, and by sponsoring a long series of visiting attractions —chiefly lectures, marionettes, and artists of the dance.

In the fall of 1938, the New York State Drama Project was added to the activities of the University Theatre program. This project, under the supervision of Robert E. Gard, aims to secure plays suitable for rural and small town dramatic societies, schools, and colleges, which would present themes and stories of local New York State flavor. In the spring of 1939 the first program of plays developed by the project was presented. Following this was an original full-length New York State Show, *The Cardiff Giant*, by A. M. Drummond and Robert E. Gard; another regional play, *The Lake Guns of Seneca and Cayuga*, is planned for this summer. To date about twenty original York State plays have been presented, with numerous productions of some of these about the State. The Radio Workshop of the Theatre has presented monthly through the year radio plays on regional historical themes and folk tales.

On October 4, 1930, the Trustees of the University officially approved the integration of the Cornell Dramatic Club, The Laboratory Theatre, the

Summer Theatre and the Stage Laboratory into The Cornell University Theatre to function under the supervision of the Department of Public Speaking and the present Directorship.

(The academic courses in Dramatic Production have been based on the successful practical work of the Theatre; the first courses for credit were given in the Summer Session of 1922 and in the academic year 1923-24 by A. M. Drummond (there had previously been courses without credit); the degree of Master of Arts in Dramatic Production was first offered in 1925-26, and that of Doctor of Philosophy in Drama and the Theatre in 1929-30. The Stage Laboratory in Morse Hall was opened in 1926; and the first courses in Stagecraft were given in the summer of that year by Walter H. Stainton. Cornell now offers for students of the drama an undergraduate major, and the graduate degree of M.A., M.F.A., Ph.D., and in the Summer Session conducts an active Summer Theatre in conjunction with academic courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels.)

In 1940 Cornell produced four Cornell original full-length plays, three of them regional in interest; many radio plays, including four "New York State" radio plays; and, as part of the New York State project for rural drama,[3] 25 original "state" one-acters, first presented at Cornell and then given about 200 presentations throughout the state by local groups. Its summer theatre, now in its eighteenth season, is the best established of all summer theatres.

As Municipal Centers

Community theatre is also served in smaller communities, as at Amherst by the Amherst "Masquers" at the splendid new Kirby Memorial Theatre, and in cities. This is the case, for instance, at Los Angeles, where the department of drama at Los Angeles City College under Professor Jerry Blunt maintains a program of from eighteen to twenty-four plays annually in order to assure its students an intensive training period and multiple role activities. Additional "training in repertory," which has resulted in programs like this theatre's alternation of three O'Neill plays *(Beyond the Horizon, Ah, Wilderness,* and *Emperor Jones)* for three weeks in 1940, can provide the commu-

[3] This project, begun in 1938, has aimed particularly at securing for rural or small-town dramatic societies, as well as for schools, colleges, and little theatres, one-act plays which present themes, stories, and situations of regional interest and New York State "flavor." Its latest play *Wild Hills* by Robert E. Gard and A. M. Drummond, based on research at the Cornell College of Agriculture, and on the buying up of "sub-marginal" farms, has had the endorsement of the State Land-Use Committee.

nity with a much needed revival theatre. The Wisconsin Union of the University of Wisconsin, directed by Professor J. Russell Lane, makes special use of its magnificent theatre which has been described as the most beautiful in the world. (It is outfitted with the latest equipment, forestage elevator, sound projection room, movie projection booths, and broadcasting studios.) In addition to staging student productions and five or six plays directed by the faculty, it presents musicals and accommodates road shows like the Lunts' *Taming of the Shrew* and *There Shall Be No Night* and the Ballet Russe.

Perhaps the most interesting example of a university theatre that serves a city is the Civic University Theatre of Syracuse University. Its aims were defined in 1937 by its director Professor Sawyer Falk as follows:

Something over a year ago the Civic University Theatre was opened by the dramatic activities of Syracuse University. In a word, the University took upon itself the custodianship of the drama in its particular community. Such a step was posited on the belief that the theatre is essentially communal and that a university drama department must step beyond its own campus and its strictly academic audience if it is to contribute to the development of a concept for an American theatre. We believed that the nearer this new enterprise approached the conditions of the actual theatre, the more completely would it realize this concept, and we aimed as a true function of a university to establish a laboratory for the study, in an adult way, of a definite social institution.

Our first job was twofold: to outline a program of activities and to insure financial stability to the project while these activities were taking shape. This resulted in a five-point program designed to meet the situation "realistically", because operating a theatre somewhat in competition with other theatres offers a vastly different problem from conducting campus dramatics.

Our five-point program, briefly stated, concerned itself with the following objectives:

1. University productions must be the backbone of the entire concept Plays to be offered must have significance and dimension and be illustrative of current trends, particularly in American drama. Presentations must be in line with the best professional standards.

2. Such a theatre idea must afford civic groups the opportunity for dramatic expression. Our theatre should be made available to them at a

low rental. It was incumbent upon us to encourage community drama; it was necessary to enlist good will as well as financial support through the rentals involved.

3. The word "theatre" must, and without any condescension, be widened to include the cinema, for both financial and artistic reasons.

4. A children's theatre must be made a part of the whole scheme and be integrated in its plans and programs with the main purposes of the adult theatre. The audience of the future needs to be trained; here, also, may be the artists of the day after tomorrow.

5. Periodically, a professional company with players of distinction in plays of merit must be offered to the community. Otherwise, it would be impossible to sustain a high level of audience appreciation. (This policy was discontinued owing to competition from one of the local playhouses. Difficulties with the stage-hands' union brought an additional complication.)

Although at the start we had the University's credit to rely upon, the whole experiment must ultimately be self-supporting, the budget balanced by revenue garnered from rentals to local groups, box-office returns from plays, motion pictures, and road shows.

Our project had been functioning less than two months when we sublet the theatre for the last three days in each week to the Federal Theatre Players. After a time, however, the government theatre and its representatives unwittingly, but nonetheless actually, made it seem that our work was merely a subsidiary part of this much larger scheme. The rental derived from this source helped to put us on a sound footing; but the move caused a distorted notion of our plans. Furthermore, by alloting half our time weekly to another group, we curtailed our own program to such an extent that had not such curtailment been checked, we would soon have been totally submerged.

Here, then, was a new problem general in its scope: the relationship of a national or a subsidized theatre to a community or university project.

From the joint tenancy arose an interesting artistic conclusion. It was assumed that an enterprise about to produce forty plays to our four or five would, by the preponderance of its program, influence directly our fundamental principles; the contrary has been true: our idea of theatre has prevailed and our standard has been adopted.

The Federal Theatre Project was set up in Syracuse on a "stock" basis. We viewed stock as an obsolete theatre form. We, therefore, did our few carefully selected and well rehearsed plays like Anderson's *Sea Wife* and Turney's *Daughters of Atreus;* the Federal Theatre presented every type

of good or claptrap stock play under stock conditions. In consequence of such comparisons, our theatre had, in truth, become the laboratory we hoped it might be, offering excellent material for a comparative study of audiences and plays.

Other important deductions have resulted from these tests. We now question definitely the possibility of a "people's theatre" in communities like our own. The lower middle-class, untutored and unimaginative, which made up the bulk of the Federal stock audience is not "the people" that will save the American theatre. Nor do we think a "workers' theatre" is yet possible, even in a city that has its Remington-Rand strikes. At best a proletarian theatre in a community like this can be a branch of theatre.

For our theatre we must select plays that establish the theatre in its own right, not plays that offer pallid substitutes for motion pictures, not merely domestic drama. The plays must be expansive and panoramic: plays of verbal beauty; with imagination. We must return to the theatre of Shakespeare and Sophocles, to the O'Neill of *Lazarus Laughed* rather than of *Beyond the Horizon;* to the Anderson of *High Tor* and *Sea Wife* rather than of *Saturday's Children. Three Men on a Horse* and *Personal Appearance* can be more satisfactorily done in the movies. Our presentations must be "occasions" and not "occurrences"; events, not happenings; the spirit of fiesta must prevail. Otherwise the public will prefer the movies.

The interesting thing about the Civic University idea is that it is organic—subject to change and growth—not irrevocably "set." Part of its vitality is its capacity to shift its ground; to accept new ideas; to re-shape or reject old ones. But at no time should it relinquish its belief that *the theatre is at its best only when it is a social manifestation which makes clear the aspirations and ideals of the better part of the community of which it is a member.*

Professor Falk's schedule calls for from ten to twelve productions annually, and is hospitable to new plays by new authors and experiments. "We do not try to ape New York," he writes. "Sometimes New York failures, or partial failures, like *Love's Old Sweet Song* or *Daughters of Atreus* or *The Kingdom of God* are our big successes. Frequently plays that have never seen New York (and perhaps never will), like Anderson's *Sea Wife* or Dan Totheroh's *Live Life Again* are well received. But we are not reluctant to show popular pieces if they seem to fit into our scheme of things." Perhaps most instructive, however, is Professor Falk's response to the interests of a large

industrial center like Syracuse. His recent production *It's Always Fair Weather,* conceived and written by him, dramatized one of its important industries (the Carrier Corporation—its birth, work, and part in National Defense) in a form which he has described as a combination of "living newspaper" and musical revue. Its objectives were "to afford entertainment to five thousand factory and office workers and their friends; to make clear the place of this new industry in the modern world and the individual worker's relation to the industry." The cast was made up of "white collar and blue denim" workers. A companion piece, strictly documentary, was acted out by executives and officials of the industry. Concerning the enterprises of this nature, Professor Falk writes, "I believe that Industry may someday be one of the chief sponsors of the theatre. This at present is the chief line we are following in our community relations. We think it is more exciting, more far-reaching than the average 'community theatre.' If stenographers and mechanics and bosses—big and little—won't come to the theatre, then we'll make theatre out of their doings."

As a Training Ground

The community theatre, however, is served not merely by actual production for a particular locality but by education for its purposes. Much of the work of Cornell has this aim, and Northwestern University gives it primacy. Professor Theodore Fuchs, director of Northwestern University Theatre, situated near Chicago, which gets all important professional productions, describes the function of his department as basically a training ground:

> We conceive of our work as being in the field of the educational theatre rather than of theatrical theatre, and we make no effort to bridge across and include both. Each university theatre has its own problems growing out of its own peculiar situation; proximity to large cities, degree of drama-consciousness and social-consciousness of the community, the place of theatre work in the prevailing educational structure, and so on. Our main function is not to provide dramatic fare for the community or even for the campus here, but to do a thorough job of training people to conduct theatre work in other educational institutions and other communities. And one indication of our success is that our own graduates are our own most active competitors.

> Our staff is a large one, highly specialized and experienced, and well organized as the outgrowth of almost fourteen years of active operation. Our physical facilities are not commodious or luxurious, but they are well and efficiently organized, and our equipment is modern and adequate. We deliberately maintain not too large a gap between the plant in which our people are trained and those in which they will later have to work.

This does not mean that Northwestern productions are few in number. On the contrary, the University has staged 158 plays between the fall of 1928 and the spring of 1941 (an average of 12 each year), and its studio theatre has accounted for 62 additional productions since 1932. Its seasonal and summer session programs provide opportunities for familiarization with staging problems of considerable diversity, including revivals in older styles like *The Knavery of Scapin* and *The Taming of the Shrew;* for a recent production of *Fashion,* presented in the manner of the period, use was made of old-fashioned wing and drop settings, interpolated songs, and shielded oil-lamp footlights. Professor Lee Mitchell's study and use of the technique of "space stage" is well known. Professor Fuchs's contributions to the mastery of lighting technique have long been important; and his teaching of the design and construction of home-built lighting and control equipment for use where limited budgets preclude the use of commercial equipment is invaluable for work in the amateur theatre. (See his Home-built Lighting Equipment for the Small Stage. Samuel French. N. Y.) Supported by extensive study of dramatic literature under Professor Walter Scott, Northwestern's program is a focus for community theatre, which it promotes primarily as a strategically situated educational institution rather than as a producing organization.

The Yale University Theatre was primarily set up as a training ground for the professional stage. Its work consists of intensive training in acting under Miss Constance Welch, and in playwriting under Professor Walter Prichard Eaton. Some of the student plays have invited Broadway production. Yale also gave the first American production of T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral,* directed by Alexander Dean, later enthusiastically received in New York. However, it has been found more feasible to prepare the student for the little, community, and college theatres as directors and teachers. For this purpose the students have been acquainted with various types of

experimental staging such as was entailed in the presentation of Auden's and Isherwood's *The Ascent of F6* and of Cocteau's "surréaliste" *Orphée*. Training for the production of revivals led to the designing of an "Elizabethan stage," on which *Richard II*, Jonson's *The Silent Woman*, Middleton's *The Changeling*, and Marlowe's *Edward II* have been produced. (See p. 557.) In the past academic year the emphasis in revivals has been on the transition period of the end of the 19th century (*Rosmersholm*, *Margaret Fleming*, Strindberg's *The Father*, Jones's *Michael and His Lost Angel*). Student producers stage several one-act plays—old and new—every week without scenery and costumes. Yale, however, also provides community theatre with its major productions (like *Murder in the Cathedral* and *The Cherry Orchard*) which are open to the public, and through its student radio plays.

Vassar College, noted for its interesting staging experiments which increased awareness of production possibilities in the non-professional (and by osmosis, we hope, in the professional) field, thinks of the function of theatre in relation to community problems. Recently a group of students toured the region with a dramatization of Carl Carmer's *The Hudson*, playing in town squares and on the steps of schools. Vassar's experiments in theatric form are closely related to making the theatre a means of expressing vital social interests, as well as promoting the free expressiveness of the people. For this purpose undeviating adherence to realistic forms of dramaturgy and stagecraft is insufficient. This approach accords with Professor Hallie Flanagan's belief that "our schools, colleges and universities . . . should develop the arts, not as decorations, but as activities vital to the growth of people fit to build—and preserve—their own culture."

The College as a Try-Out Theatre

These pages may serve as a cross-section of the field with which the student of play production must familiarize himself, and for which he must train himself, if he is to achieve any measure of success. To this may be added an activity about which few are informed—the university or college as a try-out theatre for the professional stage. A reason for ignorance concerning this enterprise is the fact that often, through no fault at the point of origin, a play thus tried out will not reach Broadway. This does not mean that there is no interest in such try-outs on the part of the university directors. We may note

among notable try-outs, Noel Houston's *Marauder* (Univ. of North Carolina), E. P. Conkle's *Paul and the Blue Ox,* Richard Maibaum's *Middletown Mural* (Univ. of Iowa), Thomas Job's *Barchester Towers* (Yale) which was seen on Broadway with Ina Claire in the leading role, and Max Wylie's and Milton Geiger's topical *Bed-Rock* at Amherst. Concerning the latter, Professor Curtis Canfield, who directed the play, writes:

> My experiment with *Bed Rock* is in line with a general idea I have of doing something, however small, to break down the barrier between the commercial and the amateur theatre. If only producers could be made to realize the strength and competence of many of our College Theaters, they would soon discover that there exist no better proving grounds for new plays, new production methods, new talent. I suspect they do take cognizance of the latter, but the idea of letting a well-organized and financed producing unit such as exists in almost all our better known universities try out their plays for them hasn't penetrated very far, as yet. Of course, from the point of view of the playwright it is a highly desirable procedure. Messrs. Wylie and Geiger certainly discovered much about their play while it was in process here and will be able to revise it and tighten it in the light of its actual production before our audiences. From the economic standpoint alone, producers stand to gain much and lose nothing by taking advantage of what we can offer them. I hope that the several producers who saw our presentation came away with a clearer understanding of the way we may be able to serve them profitably.

To attract producers such as Professor Canfield has in mind, however, considerable expertness is required. Playwrights like to indict productions for their own mistakes, and producers may blame their own bad judgment on the alleged or real inefficiency of the particular college production. (Of course, the try-out is a service to the playwright even when his script is not snatched up by Broadway managements, as he may profit greatly from his discovery of what revisions are needed.)

The case for the college try-out is stated most fully by Professor N. Bryllion Fagin, director of the Johns Hopkins University Theatre,

whose spring 1941 production *City Called Heaven* by Richard Rohman was recently bought for New York production:

American playwrights are beginning to realize that the college theatre is essential to them. The dwindling activity on Broadway has left them with practically no opportunity for experimentation. Playwrights must see their work in production: they must learn by hearing their lines spoken; they must have the opportunity to behold their character creations come to life before an audience; they need a laboratory. Broadway in its present state of organization cannot supply that need. The college theatre can and does.

It is logical, of course, that the average American playwright, both new and established, should view the college theatre with suspicion. In the past it has often been merely an amateur club of rah-rah boys having a good time. The director and the stage technicians, as well as the actors, were ignorant and arrogant exhibitionists. A play entrusted to them emerged as a dull, creaking thing. This is still true, alas, in many cases, but such cases are no longer typical. Most college theatres today are connected with the educational work of the institution, either as separate departments or as integral parts of English or Speech Departments. The active staff generally consists of experienced theatre workers as well as scholars. While a play entrusted to such a theatre cannot be expected to receive, by Broadway standards, a professional production, it does nearly always receive competent and intelligent treatment.

Only a small number of our college theatres are magnificently equipped and generously endowed. The rest are obliged to improvise spots and dimmers, to save scraps of lumber, to repair uncomfortable chairs, and to save on royalties. Yet even these step-children in our institutions of higher learning are eager to encourage the new playwright and are experimenting with new forms of theatrical production. They are hospitable to ideas and are helping to build an audience for a vital and imaginative theatre.

A few years ago Claire and Paul Sifton, who had had plays produced by such organizations as the Theatre Guild and the Group Theatre, found themselves with an unpopular script. They had had the temerity to advocate socialized medicine. The Johns Hopkins Playshop threw it in production and it ran eight performances. Baltimore being a medical center, the play drew hundreds of physicians, who stood around long after the final curtain went down and indulged in controversy. "The Doctors"

received national publicity and was subsequently performed in cities as far apart as Boston and Chicago.

This season the Playshop has completed five performances of a play by Hedwig Elizabeth Rossi, an Austrian lady now residing in this country. "Who fights for Calais?" had been produced successfully in Vienna in 1937. Thomas Mann had read the play and felt that it was "important." We thought it advisable to change the title to "No Final Defeat" and invited the author to watch the production for possible other changes that might be necessary for effective presentation before an American audience. Mrs. Rossi found in our little college theatre her first American laboratory.

One service of the college theatre is its willingness to produce one-act plays. The professional theatre has no place for them, even though some of the greatest pieces of dramatic literature are one-acters. Where else can the new generation of playgoer hope to see the shorter plays of Synge, Schnitzler, Chekhov, O'Neill, etc.? And where else can a new playwright hope to have his one-act play—perhaps a fledgling effort—produced? Many college theatres have a system of studio production, minor evenings intended for training and experiment. One-acters are the standard material for these evenings.

The importance to the aspiring playwright of seeing his first brief efforts tried out needs no emphasis. For the first time he watches his characters walk on and off the stage, and he begins to realize the value of proper timing, of sound motivation, of good business. The phrase "good theatre" acquires meaning. Some years ago Elmer Greensfelder, a Hopkins Alumnus, won the Drama League, Longmans, Green Playwriting Prize and had his play, "Broomsticks, Amen," produced in New York. But long before that he had his one-act fledglings on the boards of our little Playshop.

There is no need to exaggerate the claims of the college theatre. It seldom or never presents ensemble work comparable to that of the Moscow Art Theatre, or performances comparable to those of Katharine Cornell or Maurice Evans; nor does it often achieve the smoothness of direction of Guthrie McClintic or Herman Shumlin. But perfection, professional "clicking," is not essential to the projection of the inner qualities of a good script. Intelligence, understanding, integrity of purpose—these are characteristics of the best of our academic theatre workers. And there is always the miracle of the inspired amateur, without whom no art has a future.

PROBLEMS OF NON-PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTION

a. Limitations and Difficulties. From the above examples of university and college theatrical activities it will be seen that their requirements (and those of schools, in modified form) exceed those encountered in the professional field, and that they involve more than application of one's knowledge of production. Educational and sociological purposes jostle purely theatrical ones. The worker in this domain must acquire broad cultural interests, must develop executive ability, and must possess capacities for vision and social service. The strain of producing so many plays annually (the most active producing organization on Broadway has rarely found it possible to produce more than six plays in any one season) involves the utmost harvesting of time and energy, and poses the difficult problem of distributing the work among associates and students. Moreover, only a fraction of approximately fourteen hundred colleges in the country possesses adequate facilities, assistance, and personnel to carry out any work in the easiest and the most efficacious manner, and local attitudes and tastes complicate the situation. (Schools have even greater handicaps.) In many colleges, theatre is still much poorly organized student activity. All told, few colleges and universities are as fortunate as Cornell, North Carolina, Iowa, Yale, Northwestern, Texas, Indiana, Minnesota, and a handful of others.

The following abbreviation of Professor Boyd Martin's rueful account of valiant work at Louisville, Kentucky, may be illustrative:

I didn't want it, but they turned it over to me for a theatre. Being an engineer by profession—I still practiced my profession while directing the players—it was a comparatively simple matter for me to turn this church into a theater. The university architects were very co-operative but I hit my first snag when the then-president of the University saw the superstructure which was to carry the gridiron floor sticking some 56 feet from

the top of the foundation. "What are you building?" he exclaimed in tones which I still can hear. "Theatre," I timidly but proudly declared in all the enthusiasm of my youth. "It looks like a grain elevator," he shouted. "Cut it down." Protests followed, but I cut it down 20 feet and so it remains to this day, a shame to me, with a gridiron floor but 36′ from the stage floor! We opened that theatre, The Playhouse, November 13, 1925, with *The Swan,* and since then we have been producing from 5 to 10 plays yearly in it—generally 9 now.

During the season of 1927-28 we formed Alumni Players because many graduates did not want to join The Players Club of Louisville, which was a social-dramatic club. They did good work and finally succeeded in building their audience until they practically bankrupted the Players Club of Louisville, which had no theatre of its own and no permanent director. An amalgamation was suggested and perfected, both the names of The Players Club of Louisville and Alumni Players dropped and the new organization opened at The Playhouse during the season of 1932-33 under the title of The Little Theatre Colony, which it uses today. In order to provide better facilities for this new audience the new organization immediately went into debt. This debt was quickly paid, I am glad to say, for The Little Theatre Company has been able to meet all obligations as it has gone along.

Perhaps our method will not be approved by the majority who work in little theatre organizations, but it has been serviceable for us. I have always felt that a subsidized theatre is not worth its salt. I insist that our theatre pay its way and both the U. of L. Players and The Little Theatre Company have done this. We work, necessarily, on a limited budget, but we present our plays as well as we can. Louisville is a conservative city. It found sacrilege in *Family Portrait* and it objected to the profanity in *The Front Page.* It took Noel Coward's *Fumed Oak* on a bill with *Ways and Means* and *Family Album* in its stride, although most of us expected a different reaction. It thought *All the Living* marvelous but didn't like *Excursion.* It will not permit us to be experimental and I am afraid we couldn't make it like some of the things we would like to do. But every now and then we slip one over for ourselves at meetings which are held in the nature of tryouts for our major productions.

Our greatest difficulty is space. Our basement is spacious but we need room to build and paint which is now done on the stage while the rehearsals are conducted, sometimes under difficulties, in the foyer.

Our greatest need is a Technical Director. I am no scenic artist but have

to design the settings, which are built by volunteer labor under the direction of a young man whom I have been able to employ during the last three years. Perhaps some day we shall be able to afford such a man. In the meantime we are doing our best to keep audiences intact and I think we have succeeded in doing this to a remarkable degree. The reception given Gertrude Lawrence and Katharine Hepburn here will, I think, attest to this statement.

Even where the standards of production are high, educational necessities may understandably subordinate esthetic to training interests where there is likely to be a conflict between the two. Professor Lester Raines, whose work at the University of Alabama enjoys a high reputation, explains this:

University productions with university students differ widely from Broadway productions in that the intent of the director in a university is not to secure financial success at all times but primarily to educate his actors, playwrights, and stage crew. In our productions of Blackfriars at the University of Alabama, we have followed the policy of using as large a number of students as possible rather than concentrating acting, writing, or stage assignments in the hands of the few who might have special talent. Whatever is lost of technical expertness is, we feel, more than compensated for by the greater participation in dramatic activity.

Within recent years we have secured a fair degree of continuity of effort through majors in the field of speech. Of course, sometimes we have to start all over again each four years of a new college generation. And at the present time, of course, it is impossible to plan a fall schedule until we know which of our students can return.

In planning a yearly schedule of plays we try to keep a balance between various types of productions. A recent Broadway release may be succeeded by a frankly experimental play of high literary quality and little commercial pull; that in turn by a student written play. We feel that this plan better fits the need not only of our actors and technicians but of our University and town audience.

In casting, we try to avoid the rise of stardom; a lead in one play is more apt than not to scrub the stage for the next play. A cast usually consists of part experienced, part inexperienced actors. Some of the group have been enrolled in the courses in acting and production, but this is not a prerequisite. We agree with the dictum of learning by doing. Train-

ing is incidental but is given privately by a more experienced student serving in the role of student director or stage manager.

And, of course, in many places where production is decidedly casual dramatics is merely a means to an end—to the development of confidence on a platform, of a pleasant speaking voice, and of good habits. Production becomes an exercise, rather than an art. (Naturally, in schools, the limitations are even greater.)

b. Organization. Among the ways of coping with a manifestly difficult situation is proper organization of theatrical work. Professor Robert Gates Dawes, who contributed the interesting chart of organization at Ohio University, (See p. 185) poses the problem forcefully.

The relatively new self-termed science called Semantics, or Significs, or Semasiology, has stimulated the interest of many in the meanings of words. In the non-professional theatre the misunderstandings and bitter controversies which have arisen from unbridled subjectivity in the use of theatrical terms and concepts have been legion.

The non-professional theatre, in contradistinction to the professional stage, is concerned as much with the *process* of dramatic production as well as with its *product.* Because the non-professional theatre endeavors to benefit its workers, whether actors or ushers, it at times has sought to formulate some philosophical tenets, or ethical principles, which its devotees can espouse and promulgate, in the hope that the relationship of the workers to the group may be clarified and codified.

The difficulties attendant to this effort are intensified by the fact that in the non-professional theatre there can be found individuals for whom self-exploitation is the factor which chiefly motivates theatrical activities. Diametrically opposed to this small but vociferous element is that significant but inhibited group who would give much to be able to so much as lift their voices with an off-stage mob, but are prevented from such coveted activity by prohibiting feelings of inferiority.

Those who compose this second group *need* the theatre, and the helpful social and emotional life it can bring to them. They require a sense of self-confidence, a spirit of belonging *in* and *to* a group which is making a real and evident contribution to the cultural life of a community. To effect this magical therapy of readjustment, these people must be made to feel that they are "essential" to the welfare of the group to which they would claim allegiance. They must be made to realize that no matter whether they are ticket sellers or poster painters, members of the lighting

crew or humble "grips," the complete success of the production can be achieved only through group participation, in which the contribution of each individual is an essential factor.

To the contrary, the members of the first group represent attitudes which are antithetical to those just mentioned. These persons consider themselves "indispensable" to the welfare of the group with which they deign to align themselves. Unintentionally, but too frequently, they provide the Scyllas and Charibidises between which not a few theatre groups have foundered and sunk. Too many organizations have dissolved because such people were permitted to "get away with it." They were pampered; they were treated as stars, and referred to as privileged characters. Hence persons who might have been valuable additions to the group proved, instead, to be the source of its downfall. And the group itself was to blame for the disaster.

As everyone is theoretically equal before the law, so in the non-professional theatre the maintenance of a profitable *esprit de corps* depends on the institution and the preservation of a dynamic democratic relationship among everyone who participates in the production process. So long as every member realizes that he is not indispensable to the group's success, and that no matter what demonstration of temperament he may threaten and even carry out, the play can, and will, "go on" just the same, if the director himself has to appear on the stage and read a part from the script, just so long are chances for success assured.

It is a constructive philosophic concept that everyone in a non-professional theatre organization is *essential* to the welfare of the group, but to that end no one should be *indispensable.*

c. Simplifications. Another important recourse involves efficient and, of course, esthetically justified use of simplifications in staging. These may call for the use of substitutes for unavailable equipment; especially in amateur staging or when touring rural districts. For instance, tall *screens* may be used for interior settings, as well as for some exteriors. Painted like ordinary walls or to create the illusion of panels, they may be serviceable for make-shift box sets. Windows and doors may be indicated or may be set in the screens. Even more effectively, *draperies,* made of muslin and even cheaper materials, can be used instead of sets; or they can supplement sets, being used *in combination with flats and screens,* saving the labor and expense of added constructions. Practical windows, doors, fireplaces, stairways, etc., can

be inserted between drapes. Within a *drapery cyclorama,* it is also possible to place screen settings, with pieces of furniture defining the acting areas. This device was recently used by Cornell in its state project for rural drama. Properly dyed, illuminated, and hung, draperies can create considerable illusion and allow for easy scene changes. It is necessary only to arrange stage-business, movement, and playing areas with a view to preventing the actor from disturbing the draperies when they are illusionistically used as substitutes for constructed scenery.

Even *lighting* can be achieved, wherever necessary, with elementary substitutes, such as candles, lamps, and lanterns. Sometimes they can provide an effect of naturalness and an atmosphere such as would be otherwise effected only by much labor and electrical equipment. The proper color of light can be achieved by using colored shades. These simple sources of illumination can be so placed as to light suitable zones of the stage area, or to blend with light from another source. Dimming is also possible without requiring any complicated devices; lanterns and kerosene lamps can be turned down quite simply, and they can be shifted easily and naturally both on and off stage. Reflectors can direct and extend the light. Plays about rural life can be effectively lit in this manner. This procedure may also be effective for impressions of bleakness, desolation, isolation, loneliness, etc.—on docks or boats, alleys, cottages, etc.; for garden scenes, for which Chinese lanterns can be used effectively; for formal dinner parties, with candles on the table; for period plays set in the days before electric illumination was used, and so on. It is important only to make the illumination realistically appropriate or suitably suggestive, to avoid mishaps such as overturning lamps and candles, and to accustom the actor to make the best possible use of this type of lighting. Flashlights can also be used on occasion for picking out acting areas; this can be quite effective when it creates a mysterious and intense space stage for brief scenes. Far from dreading the presence of shadows on the stage as a result of elementary equipment, the director will find that they can become a virtue.

Where much equipment is not available or specially needed, no one need be disconcerted if it is not the latest article to which he has become accustomed by the latest equipped university theatre. Show-window floodlights may be used as a substitute for expensive equipment. The lack of sufficient spotlights can be compensated by select-

ing the most essential acting areas and focussing only on those, and by using other lights in lieu of "spots." If the best control-board is unavailable and a panel-board has to be used, its switches can be connected with master switches for different groups, and dimmers can be attached. With ingenuity, a variety of connections can be made. The poetry of dramatic production is not the monopoly of the most recent mechanics. Understanding, imagination, and feeling are still the primary requisites of production.

It is not difficult, moreover, for audiences to accept almost any convention of staging, provided they are engrossed in the play. If it is difficult to manage scene changes on a particular stage, *shifting* sets in the presence of an audience in Chinese fashion is possible where this is appropriate to the spirit of the play (whether the play be oriental, skittish, or disarmingly fanciful).

Settings for certain productions can also be fragmentary, and the *space stage* principle can be applied. By using light to define acting areas for *Julius Caesar,* the Mercury Theatre was able to dispense with constructed settings. In the case of multiple-scened presentational plays which would require elaborate sets, ramps and arches can be employed to good effect. At the Guignol Theatre of Lexington, for instance, *Macbeth* was staged against a series of seven arches arranged in a semi-circle, each arch giving off to a different hall, the whole creating the effect of a castle with the playing area representing its central hall. These Gothic arches, with their deep shadows and suggestion of unseen passages, used primarily with the object of simplifying stage problems, conveyed "the regal feeling, the darker emotions and supernatural elements that dominate the mood and spirit of the play."[1]

Simple means even exist for converting contemporary into Elizabethan theatres. An example is the Elizabethan Stage designed by Mary Elizabeth Plehn to create in the Yale University theatre the elements of Shakespeare's playhouse. The forestage is built over the front row seats. A suggestion of Elizabethan architecture is produced by extending painted scenery over the sidewalls of the theatre beyond the proscenium. Lighting simulates daylight, and a sky-drop provides the impression of out-of-doors above and behind the top of the set. Inner stage, curtained balconies, and proscenium doors duplicate Elizabethan entrances and playing areas. This stage can be set up and

[1] Frank Fowler, *Theatre Arts Monthly,* July 1936, p. 552.

struck in a few hours. Extensions of the stage to create a forestage or apron can, in most cases, be easily and inexpensively built.

The problem of *producing without a modern theatre* is also not insuperable, and ingenious compensations for this disadvantage can actually prove stimulating. A platform can be set up anywhere in a room, hall, or barn. The lack of a curtain and proscenium makes scene-shifting difficult. It may be performed conventionally in sight of the audience where this can be justified by mood and style, or the problem can be avoided entirely by selecting one-set plays for such a stage. Blackouts may be used instead of curtains to indicate lapse of time or the end of a scene or act. At the beginning of the play or the scene, the actors can take their positions in the darkness when this is necessary, provided they have learned to find their way about; or the lights can go on and the actors can come on, when this can be dramatically justified. The informality achieved by this elimination of the picture frame can be appealing and stimulating. A particularly attractive variant of this type of staging is the placing of the stage in the center of the auditorium, a device used professionally in some instances in Europe.

The model for *the central or circus-type stage* in America is the Penthouse Theatre of the University of Washington. Professor Glenn Hughes, director of the dramatic department, describes it as follows:[2]

> The penthouse style was first employed by us in the autumn of 1932, when, dissatisfied with our play production program—a typical one involving the presentation of each play for two performances in a huge auditorium—we decided to experiment with various types of intimate theater.
>
> It seemed to us that there were a number of excellent plays that did not depend upon scenic background for their effectiveness and that if these plays were to be presented in "circus" style, with the audience seated on all four sides of the action, the novelty might prove successful. We felt that such a method would give the audience a closeup effect similar to that achieved by the motion picture and at the same time would eliminate entirely the problem of competing with the motion picture in the matter of realistic stage settings. There also would be an academic interest attached to the experiment, for, after all, the Greek drama started with a

[2] Condensed from *The Nation's Schools*, November 1940.

circular stage surrounded by the audience and the Shakespearean and Chinese stages, were only a slight modification of that principle.

Finding no available room in a campus building, we obtained permission to conduct our experiment in the large drawing room of a penthouse occupied by a friend and situated atop a hotel near the campus. Here, with an audience limited to 60, we offered a series of productions, the first of which were bills of one act plays, the latter ones, full length pieces. The audience response was excellent and after a season in the penthouse (during which we acquired the name that has followed us wherever we have gone) we moved downstairs to the ballroom of the hotel. Here our seating capacity was increased to 150 and here we performed at regular intervals for two seasons, giving five or six performances of each play.

Our audiences continued to grow and in the spring of 1935 we took a lease on some lodge rooms near the campus, which we transformed to suit our purpose, providing raised seats for 140 persons arranged around four sides of the auditorium, with a carpeted acting area in the center, a specially designed lighting unit concealed in a beam forming a rectangle above the "stage."

For three years this theater played to capacity houses every week (usually six nights a week). Each play ran for six weeks. So extraordinary was its popularity that when our lease expired in 1938 we made immediate plans for the construction of a Penthouse Theatre on the campus, to serve as a permanent home for our circus drawing room plays.

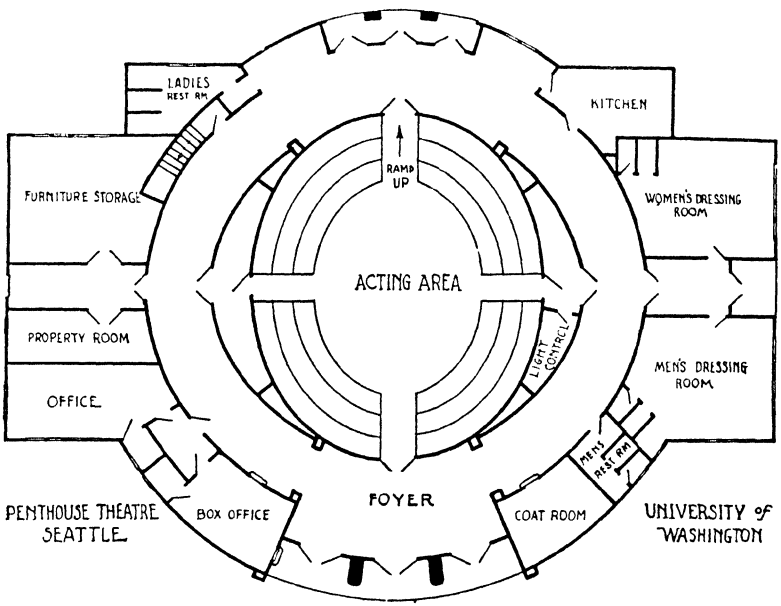
Our new Penthouse Theatre seats 172. There are only three rows of seats and these are arranged in the form of an ellipse (the shape of a symmetrical egg) around a carpeted acting area 24 feet wide and 30 feet long. There are four entrances to the auditorium and any of these may be used by the actors, though most of the entrances and exits are made by the side doors, which lead to small waiting rooms concealed in the double walls. The ceiling is domed, supported by laminated wood trusses, and the lighting for the entire room is supplied by 32 spotlights with special lenses concealed above the dome, with beams of light focused through small holes in the ceiling. Thus, no lighting fixtures are visible in the auditorium.

1. Modern comedy and farce, preferably with a single interior setting, are the most successful plays for a penthouse theatre. The furniture, however, may be changed during the intermission in full sight of the audience, to indicate a change of scene.

2. Complete blackouts take the place of a curtain. The actors rehearse

regularly with these blackouts and become accustomed to finding their way quietly and accurately to their stage positions or to the exits.

3. The furniture must be chosen carefully for height. We construct most of the furniture for our prodctions, designing low backed chairs and sofas, incapable of obstructing the vision. It is also necessary to use furniture that is finished on all sides, as an unfinished back will offend one portion of the audience.



4. Actors must be taught to ignore the audience, even though they are always facing one portion of it and are frequently within 3 or 4 feet of the front row.

5. The director must carefully adapt the action of the play to a room with four walls, remembering that the audience completely surrounds the "stage," and must not allow an actor to face in one direction for too long a time. It is obvious that the penthouse style requires naturalness in movement and speech.

6. There must be a concentration of light on the "stage" without a glare in the eyes of the audience.

7. The auditorium should have a theatrical atmosphere but it must be

simple and intimate. The classroom atmosphere is not ideal. All seats (or at least all except those in the first row) should be raised. A total of three rows is ideal.

I can truthfully say that I have never seen greater audience enjoyment in any theatre than I have seen in our Penthouse Theatre, nor have I seen actors develop more wonderfully than here. There is no good reason, I think, why this enjoyment and this development should not be nation-wide. Yet it is not accomplished easily. Without the aid of scenic background and conventional stage atmosphere (including distance from the audience), the ordinary amateur is not an effective instrument and in penthouse productions he must be effective. He is thrown into the arena with nothing but his art and the words of the play. To survive that ordeal he must develop unusual physical ease as well as unusual powers of concentration.

d. Production in Little Theatres. Although a few like The Cleveland Playhouse and Gilmore Brown's Pasadena Playhouse enjoy special advantages, the problems faced by the average college theatre apply, more or less, to this field.The little theatres cannot be reviewed here in all their diversity, although the student of play production must familiarize himself with them in some detail. He may, however, find some instruction in the following report on the Little Theatre of Dallas by its director, Mr. Lester E. Lang, formerly of the faculty of Vassar College:

I might say that I regard the director's approach to commercial and non-commercial theatre as one and the same; that is, the real purpose—the translation of ideas and emotions in terms of the stage—is the same wherever a director works. Ever existing in the arts (in all human endeavor for that matter) is the reality of limitation exemplified in the theatre, you might say, by a director's liabilities and assets.

In the civic or community theatre field one becomes identified with the plays he produces more than does the professional producer in New York. Moreover, the resident director is confronted with another major problem, that of play-program planning. The degree of remoteness from a large theatrical center is a factor with which one must reckon. In Dallas, for instance, which sees only a fraction of New York's plays through road company productions, it seems logical that its resident theatre present the outstanding works of recent seasons.

In twenty years of play production the Little Theatre of Dallas has pre-

sented over 170 plays. Thirty-six have been plays of classical literary quality, seven are Pulitzer Prize winners (one-third of the twenty-one awards to date), fifty-five are Burns Mantle's selections of Ten Best Plays.

It is even more important, however, that we should continue to present and even increase the number of new productions. It is my feeling that a theatre producing unit is only as good as its ability to form or find new ideas and translate them (through premiere performances) into living and effective theatre. Whereas in the 1939-40 season it was necessary to re-create an audience in Dallas for a theatre conceded to be dead in the previous spring, and for this reason six standard plays were presented, the most outstanding of which were Wilder's *Our Town,* Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar,* and O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!,* it is significant that in the 1940-41 season we are doing three heretofore unproduced plays—devoting half of our subscription season to new works. Nor is this policy of producing new plays unrelated to a future clearly foreshadowed by the rapidly diminishing supply of available New York material. It becomes increasingly limited, this supply, so it forces, in a sense, theatres elsewhere to make their own plays.

Here in Dallas we ourselves must organize latent and developed talent through *a careful try-out system* in which we photograph all actors at the time of interviews, so that our voluminous files look like pages cut from Hollywood's "Players Directory." In this sense we are our own agents even though our talent is not paid. Actors are cast not for reasons of occupational therapy but for outstanding qualifications for the part in question for the play at hand. It is true that we train people, and that they desire an avocational pleasure, but our first objective is to achieve performances of the highest calibre—performances which must bear the scrutiny of a definitely discerning audience.

With our regular small staff, our own theatre, stage, and technical plant we are able to control a play through all stages of production preparation. The "custom-building" process is an advantage, in certain respects, over the Broadway shopped-out system. Our aims are the same, however, to achieve for a play the best possible casting, mounting, and performance.

Non-professionals, I find, respond more effectively to the seriousness of a professional point of view than to the "arty" or dilettante attitude. Unable to offer contract and salary, greatest of the non-commercial director's problems is that of his being at the mercy, more or less, of personnel. However, the things most to be learned are to use limitations as springboards and to convert liabilities.

This appears to be the case when Mr. Lang undertakes a production like his modern staging of *Julius Caesar* and applies to it the virtuosity he acquired from his experience as a technical director. For this he used a single constructed setting. So completely in use was the stage floor, with the rapidly moving pattern of group movement, that he erected and suspended light bridges running twenty-five feet along the sides of the stage at a twelve-foot level from which the numerous units used for side lighting were operated. In this way he secured maximum efficiency, achieved superior lighting effects, and expedited the performance to the end that the numerous scenes of the play, which was divided into two parts, should follow in almost unbroken continuity.

Mr. Bernard Szold's *simultaneous casting system* for the *Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré* in New Orleans represents a particularly interesting attempt to solve what is one of the community little theatre's most persistent problems—namely, producing with volunteers who have other occupations. Mr. Szold's injunctions and description of the procedure he has found useful since 1922 follow:

Do not wait until the run of one production is over before casting new shows. Some of the larger Civic Theatres have as many as six shows in rehearsal simultaneously.

1. Dates for open tryouts are announced for the first two productions of the year. (No theatre has a right to call itself a Community or Civic Theatre that does not employ open tryouts for parts.)

2. At this first reading and tryout, the director gives his prospective actors the "feel of the show" and the characters they are to portray. He then not only casts his first play, but also with the aid of his talent committee, catalogs all promising material for his second production, and for future productions. A second open tryout is announced for the same week, or the first of the following week. The first show is put into active rehearsal; then at the second open tryout, the next production is immediately cast and a reliable book-holder appointed. This second cast is called for its first rehearsal on one of the week-end nights when the cast of the first show is free.

3. At this first rehearsal the players and director again read the play, and discuss and set individual and ensemble approach and attack. They are also informed, in no uncertain terms, that they are to start setting lines at once:

(a) that they are required to have two acts letter-perfect by the time they go into active rehearsal two weeks hence;

(b) that they will report for line rehearsal three times a week with the book-holder;

(c) that they will be called for one rehearsal each week with the director.

4. At the second rehearsal with the director, positions and general business are indicated so that they can be associated and synchronized with the lines as they are memorized.

This procedure

(a) enables actor to think in terms of situation and characterization, rather than in terms of lines and cues;

(b) frees actor, director, and audience from the paralyzing "bogey" of the cast going dry or "taking to the air";

(c) enables cast to use hand props from their first active rehearsals on stage.

Most non-professionals do not handle hand props with conviction. Intelligent and rhythmic use of hand props can help point dialog most effectively.

5. The directors can make use of the time that is usually utterly wasted in rehearsals by the actors fighting lines and the book-holder fading them—in polishing and giving his production a visual and auditory unity and interest.

Additional Active Rehearsal Notes:

1. Use footlights throughout rehearsals. This has a tendency to do away with opening-night fright. By the time dress rehearsal rolls around, the inexperienced actor has come to depend on the lights as his protecting friend, and learned how to use them to his advantage.

2. Rehearse all love scenes and very intimate scenes by themselves for the first few times. The actual mechanics of these scenes should be set and rehearsed realistically, as early as possible. (Note: "No ad libbing in the clinches.") Also keep the actor's hands busy with perfectly timed business with hand props. An actor who is pouring himself a drink or packing a pipe as he shoots his lines, has no time to think about his hands.

3. Invite a few people in to each rehearsal after the first week. Instruct them that all you expect them to do is not to talk during rehearsal, that you would appreciate their audience reactions to both the tragedy and

comedy of the script, and that you would also welcome any criticism they wished to offer at the close of the rehearsal.

In spite of the fact that this is contrary to accepted professional and even Civic Theatre procedure, I have found the practice most helpful: It places the actor on the defensive as regards his personal pride in the job at hand. He hates to feel that there may be friends out in the audience that are watching him stumble about and retard the rehearsal by not knowing his lines. It gives the inexperienced actor the benefit of audience reaction early in rehearsal, rather than having to cope with its frightening vagaries for the first time at dress rehearsal. By this rehearsal method the apprentice can at least approximate the timing of his laughs and pauses well before the dress rehearsal periods commence.

Mr. Szold, like other little theatre directors, knows above all that his problem is acting, and rightly places his main stress on his actors' work. Indeed, one of the director's prime tasks is training his performers or supplementing what little training they have had.

Among the difficulties that beset amateurs is their inability to know what to do with their *hands,* which the director tries to overcome by keeping them occupied with a cigarette, a fan, a handbag, and other easily handled props, or allowing them to rest on some piece of furniture. *Feet* also complicate the amateur's life on the stage; the director must make certain that they are kept still, unless the motivation justifies restlessness, and must see to it that all movements or crosses are definite and motivated. *Entrances* and *exits* must also have definiteness, unless the role requires the actor to sidle in or slink out, care being taken only not to stage an old-fashioned grand entrance. Exits and lines must be co-ordinated, so that a portion of his sentence is delivered at the door. *Movement* must be regulated; it must not distract attention while someone else is talking, and it must not detract from the force of the actor's words. Nor must it block other characters or obstruct vision. The amateur also has trouble *sitting down* and *rising;* for this reason care must be taken to familiarize him with the furniture he is using.

Other aspects of the amateur's performance which need the utmost watching are:

1. *Inability to co-ordinate speech and stage business.*

2. A tendency *not to listen* to what other characters are saying and to keep one's ears attuned only to one's cues.

3. *To respond only with words, instead of with the entire body.*

4. To *overact*; to overdo facial play, to gesticulate unnecessarily for emphasis, and to breathe, sniff, or sniffle too loudly.

5. To *pose*, instead of live, on the stage.

6. To be *unaware* of the reality of the objects he is seeing or using.

7. To *enter neutrally*—that is, without having stepped completely into his character before coming on the stage.

8. To *anticipate*, without justification, what the other character will say or do.

9. To be inexpertly oriented toward the audience. For instance, to look at the spectators because he is unsure of himself; to speak while the audience is laughing, or to wait too long after it subsides instead of continuing the flow of his speech; to speak inaudibly or too loudly, too carelessly or with too much articulation (that is, giving equal time to each syllable).

10. To fail to co-operate with his fellow actors, by "upstaging" them (standing upstage so far as to force his interlocutor to turn his back on the audience in order to be able to look at him). To avoid cohesion and design in mob scenes; for this reason all mass movement must be carefully set by the director, and each member of the mob must receive individual business and lines instead of being allowed to move and *ad lib* as he lists.

11. On the one hand, to make-up too heavily; on the other, to neglect consistency by failing to make-up hands, arms (when exposed), and the back of the neck and ears.

Items 1 to 10, however, cannot be managed mechanically or corrected by mere admonitions and instructions. They involve the whole essence of acting as described on pp. 121-162.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

GEORGE BEISWANGER: Dance critic and assistant editor of *Theatre Arts*, writer on esthetics, and former instructor in esthetics and the philosophy of art at Ohio Wesleyan University and Monticello College.

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CHERYL CRAWFORD: Casting director for the Theatre Guild, a founder and director of the Group Theatre, and independent producer on Broadway and in summer theatres.

HAROLD CLURMAN: After education at Columbia University and the University of Paris, studied and worked with Jacques Copeau. Associated with the Theatre Guild as an actor, stage manager, and play-reader until 1931 when he founded the Group Theatre. Director of the Group Theatre and of many of its plays including *Awake and Sing!*, *Golden Boy*, *Rocket to the Moon*, and *The Gentle People*.

ALFRED DE LIAGRE: Producer of comedies and director of many plays, including *Yes, My Darling Daughter*.

A. FEDER: Leading expert on lighting in the professional theatre; noted for his lighting for *Murder in the Cathedral*, *Power*, *One-third of a Nation*; *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler* for Nazimova, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, *I'd*

Rather Be Right, Here Come the Clowns, Doctor Faustus; lighted the "Show Window of the Future" at the San Francisco World's Fair.

ERNST T. FERAND: Formerly director of Hellerau-Luxemburg College of Eurythmics, Music and Dance (Vienna), professor at Fodor Conservatory of Music (Budapest), director of operas and of classical festivals in the ancient Greek theatres of Sicily. At present instructor at the Dramatic Workshop.

CHARLES FRIEDMAN: Best known as director of the musical revues *Pins and Needles* and *Sing Out the News*, and at present specialist on musicals in Hollywood.

MORDECAI GORELIK: Noted scenic designer; responsible for the sets of *Sailors of Cattaro, Men in White, Awake and Sing!, Golden Boy, Rocket to the Moon,* etc.

JOHN HAGGOTT: Stage manager and assistant in production at the Theatre Guild.

JOHN HOUSEMAN: After association with the notable Federal Theatre revivals of *Doctor Faustus* and *Macbeth* as producer, became founder and director, with Orson Welles, of the Mercury Theatre, devoted to revivals, among them *Julius Caesar* and *The Shoemaker's Holiday.*

ROBERT LEWIS: Actor and director for the Group Theatre, founder of the Dollar Top Theatre, and especially noted for his direction of Saroyan's *My Heart's in the Highlands.*

WORTHINGTON MINER: After study at Yale and Cambridge, England, assistant director for Guthrie McClintic. Then director for the Theatre Guild and other producers. Director of many Broadway plays, including *Five-Star Final, Reunion in Vienna, Both Your Houses, Blind Alley, Bury the Dead,* the Rodgers and Hart musical comedy *On Your Toes, Two Hundred Were Chosen,* and *Dame Nature.*

GUTHRIE McCLINTIC: The director of numerous Katherine Cornell plays, *The Doctor's Dilemma, Saint Joan, Romeo and Juliet;* director of the John Gielgud *Hamlet,* and of many of Maxwell Anderson's poetic plays, among them *Winterset* and *High Tor.*

EARLE McGILL: Casting director for the Columbia Broadcasting Company and director of many of its productions.

ERWIN PISCATOR: Famous European director of plays and films, founder of the "Epic Style," and director of many plays in that and other styles. At present director of The Dramatic Workshop and of the Studio Theatre of the New School for Social Research.

MARIAN RICH: After graduation from Radcliffe, studied acting under Ouspenskaya, dancing under Martha Graham, singing. Author of articles on speech, and instructor in speech at the Dramatic Workshop.

LEE STRASBERG: A founder and director of the Group Theatre, director of Group and Theatre Guild productions, including *Men in White*, *Johnny Johnson*, and *The Fifth Column*, and trainer of Group Theatre actors and of other professional and non-professional acting groups.

MARGARET WEBSTER: Famous for her Shakespearian productions in America and England, among them the Maurice Evans *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, the unabridged *Hamlet*, and the Helen Hayes-Maurice Evans *Twelfth Night*.

JOHN WRAY YOUNG: Director of several little theatres; at present of the Little Theatre of Shreveport (Louisiana) and president of the Louisiana Non-Professional Theatre Conference.

The New Scene Technician's Handbook

By PHILIP BARBER

I. Introduction to Scene and Property Construction

II. Materials for Scene and Property Construction

III. Good Practice in Scene and Property Construction

IV. Determination of Strain in Weight-bearing Structures

V. The Problem of Sound Effects

VI. Methods of Producing Sound Effects

VII. The Fundamentals of Scene Painting

VIII. Costuming the Production

IX. Stage Lighting for the Technician

X. Standard Lighting Equipment and Its Use

XI. Good Practice in Rigging and Handling Scenery on Stage With a Glossary of Terms

XII. Sources of Supply for Theatre Equipment

I. AN INTRODUCTION TO SCENE AND PROPERTY CONSTRUCTION

Although most arts have a continuity of growth, the living theatre has never been much affected by its own history. Its craftsmen have seldom bothered to describe their techniques, and scholars have been forced to use Sherlock Holmes methods of deduction to get any sort of picture of the past. Fortunately the theatre does not depend on its history. Creative intelligence, dramatic emotion, and practical experience can recreate the living theatre at any time. But in the fragmentary evidence of the past, there are valuable hints as to how the artists of the theatre accomplished their magic. We are concerned here with the methods developed by scene technicians.

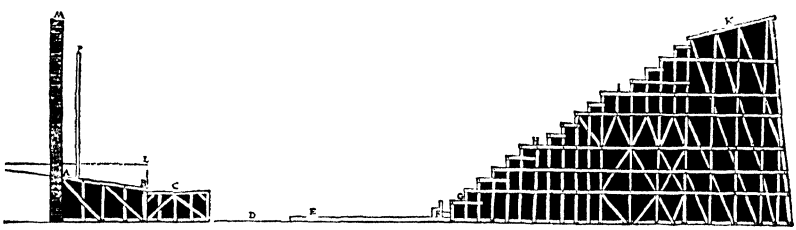
Aristotle credits Sophocles with adding painted scenery to the Greek stage, but we have absolutely no contemporary source describing either the appearance or the structure of the scenery used. Whole chapters of speculation and conjecture have been written, based largely on the brief stage directions in Greek plays, but our first and chief source of information is the Roman architect and engineer, Vitruvius, active during the reign of Augustus. In his *Ten Books on Architecture* there are just two paragraphs on the scenery used in the Greek and Roman theatres of that time. It must be kept in mind that there was a permanent architectural background on the stage in addition to the stage decoration mentioned in these paragraphs.

> "The 'scaena' itself displays the following scheme. In the centre are double doors, decorated like those of a royal palace. At the right and left are doors of the guest chambers. Beyond are spaces provided for decoration—places that the Greeks call 'periaktoi', because in these places are triangular pieces of machinery (△, △) which revolve, each having three decorated faces. When the play is to be changed, or when the gods enter to the accompaniment of sudden claps of thunder, these may be revolved and present a face differently decorated. Beyond these places are the projecting wings which afford entrances to the stage, one from the forum, one from abroad.
>
> "There are three kinds of scenes, one called the tragic, second the comic, third satyric. Their decorations are different and unlike each other in scheme. Tragic scenes are delineated with columns, pediments, statues, and other objects suited to kings; comic scenes exhibit private dwellings; satyric scenes are decorated with trees, caverns, mountains, and other rustic objects, delineated in landscape style."
>
> (From the translation of Professor Morris Hickey Morgan, Harvard University Press, 1926.)

We do not know how these "decorations" were constructed, but since Greek and Roman painting was done on solid panels of wood (or on masory), it is likely that their scenery was also painted on heavy wooden panels. The only scene shift during a performance would have been the turning of the "periaktoi." It is possible that painted curtains were used; we know the Romans had a front curtain rising through a slot in the floor, but we have few other actual facts about the construction of Greek or Roman scenery.

The Renaissance began as a revival of the culture and art of Greece and Rome; but as there was practically no record of the theatrical techniques beyond the plays themselves, the scene technicians of the Renaissance were forced to develop their own ideas. The "Scene Technician's Handbook" of the Italian Renaissance Theatre was published in 1551 by Sebastian Serlio, an architect and painter, as part of his larger work on architecture. The book was translated into English in 1611, and we can assume it had some influence on the use of scenery on the English stage. It is too long to quote in full, but all that has to do with scene construction and properties is reprinted here.

A TREATISE OF SCENES, OR PLACES TO PLAY IN
(Spelling modernized)



Serlio's Cross Section of a Theatre Built in a Hall

"Among all the things that may be made by men's hands, thereby to yield admiration, pleasure to sight, and to content the fantasies of men, I think it is the placing of a scene, as it is showed to your sight, where a man in a small place may see, built by carpenters or masons skillful in perspective work, great palaces, large

> temples, and divers houses, both near and far off; . . . and a thousand fair things and buildings adorned with innumerable lights . . ."

Serlio discusses his method of converting a hall into a theatre, and then continues with the first definite reference in history of methods of scene construction.

> "All such houses I always made of spars, or rafters, or laths, covered with linen cloth . . . making doors and windows as occasion fell out. I have also made some things of half planks of wood, which were great help to the painters to set out things at life . . . I have always made a small model of wood and paper . . . and by this same model, let it be done in the large, from piece to piece . . .
>
> . . . Some cornices cut out at the ends, and accompanied with some others that are painted, show well in work . . . the windows which stand before were good to be made of glass or paper, with light behind them . . .
>
> . . . I have made all my scenes of laths, covered with linen, yet sometimes it is necessary to make some things rising or bossing out; which are to be made of wood . . . all that you make above the roof sticking out, as chimneys, towers, pyramids, obelisks, and other such like things or images, you must make them all of thin boards, cut out round and well colored . . ."

Serlio's use of cloth-covered frames for scenery was probably suggested to him by its use for oil paintings. The Italian painter, Vasari, writing in 1551, says that—"in order to carry pictures from one place to another, men have invented the convenient idea of painting on canvas, which, weighing very little, can be rolled up, and easily transported from place to place."

There is no clear evidence as to when and where this type of lightweight construction was first used for *portable* scene units. Certainly by 1630 Inigo Jones in England had developed the unit cloth-covered frame, or "flat," as we know it today. Is it too much to say that the whole character of the theatre of the last three hundred years has been given its particular form by that simple invention of a cheap, light, flexible scene unit? Certainly from Inigo Jones to the end of the nineteenth century, the new visual element, scenery, increasingly dominated the stage.

Theory. The theory of modern scene construction can be summed up in four principles which express ideal practice.

1. Scenery must fully represent the concepts of the playwright, the director, and the designer, however unusual or difficult. The horizon of

the theatre is expanded whenever a technician successfully solves a new scenic problem.

2. Scenery must be inexpensive, both as to labor and materials. The continued operation of any theatre depends on economical production.

3. Scenery must be portable. The degree varies with the type of theatre and the production, but all present-day theatre productions demand some flexibility. The factors determining the degree of portability are: (a) the relation of the scene shop to the stage, (b) the number of scene changes within the play, (c) possible use in repertory, or trouping on the road, (d) and any expected use of the elements of the set in future productions. In order to be portable, each scenic unit must be limited in size and light in weight.

4. Scenery must be strong enough to keep its exact form in spite of continual scene shifting, transportation, and other destructive forces.

Types of Scenery. Alaskan meadows, Park Avenue apartments, Florida everglades, the post office in Mason City, Iowa, a houseboat on the Nile—the scene technician reproduces all possible settings in the world, using only five basic types of scenery.

1. *Weight-bearing construction* for platforms, balconies, ramps, stairs, practical rocks, etc.

2. *Fabrics,* usually hung from the flies, for sky backgrounds, mist effects, moonlight effects, act curtains, and occasionally for interiors.

3. *Canvas-covered frames, called flats,* for all flat surfaces, room interiors, exterior walls of buildings, cabins, barns, hallways, ceilings, etc.

4. *Realistic three-dimensional detail,* such as cornices, moldings, beams, porch and stair railings, doors and doorframes, windows and window frames, etc. These are fastened to flats or weight-bearing structures.

5. *Special surfaces,* such as rough stone walls, log cabin walls, tree trunks, background rocks, shrubbery, grass, etc. These are classified as properties, and are usually manufactured on a special background of fabric, or wood and wire framework.

Usually several of these five types of scenery are used together in a set. If the scene is the front porch of a village house, the porch and steps are of the *weight-bearing* type of construction; the sky drop or blue cyclorama background is of hung *fabric*; the exterior walls of the house *flats* with clapboards painted on them; the porch railing, front door and door frame and windows *realistic three-dimensional copies* of those items, and the shrubbery, the front yard grass, and the tree-trunks, *special surfaces*. But in most settings the canvas-covered frame, or flat is chiefly used. Therefore we must thoroughly understand, first of all, how the frame of a simple flat is constructed and covered.

THE SIMPLE FLAT.

Materials for construction of flat 12′ high, 5′9″ wide.

1 top rail, 5′9″ long, 2¾″ wide, and ¾″ thick.
1 bottom rail, 5′9″ long, 2¾″ wide, and ¾″ thick.
2 stiles, 11′6½″ long, 2¾″ wide, and ¾″ thick.
2 toggle-bars, 5′3½″ long, 2¾″ wide, and ¾″ thick.
2 corner braces, length to fit, 1¾″ wide, and ¾″ thick.
4 plywood corner-blocks, 7/32″ thick.
4 plywood keystones, 7/37″ thick.
4 half keystones, 3/16″ thick.

96 clout nails, 1¼″ long.
1 box #9, ¾″ long, flathead screws.
1 lash eye (optional).
6 lash cleats.
12 feet of #8 sash.
1 brace cleat.

4 yds. flame-proofed canvas, 2 yds. wide, linen or duck. (Unbleached muslin is much less satisfactory)
½ lb. flame-proofing chemical.
½ lb. paste flour.
½ lb. flake glue

Specifications.

1. All lumber Idaho white pine, grade "B or better."

2. Rails, stiles, and toggle-bars cut to fit at true right angles.

3. Cut braces so as to form a 3-4-5 triangle in flat. (4 units of length along stile, 3 units along rail, brace 5 units long.) Place both braces on same side of flat frame.

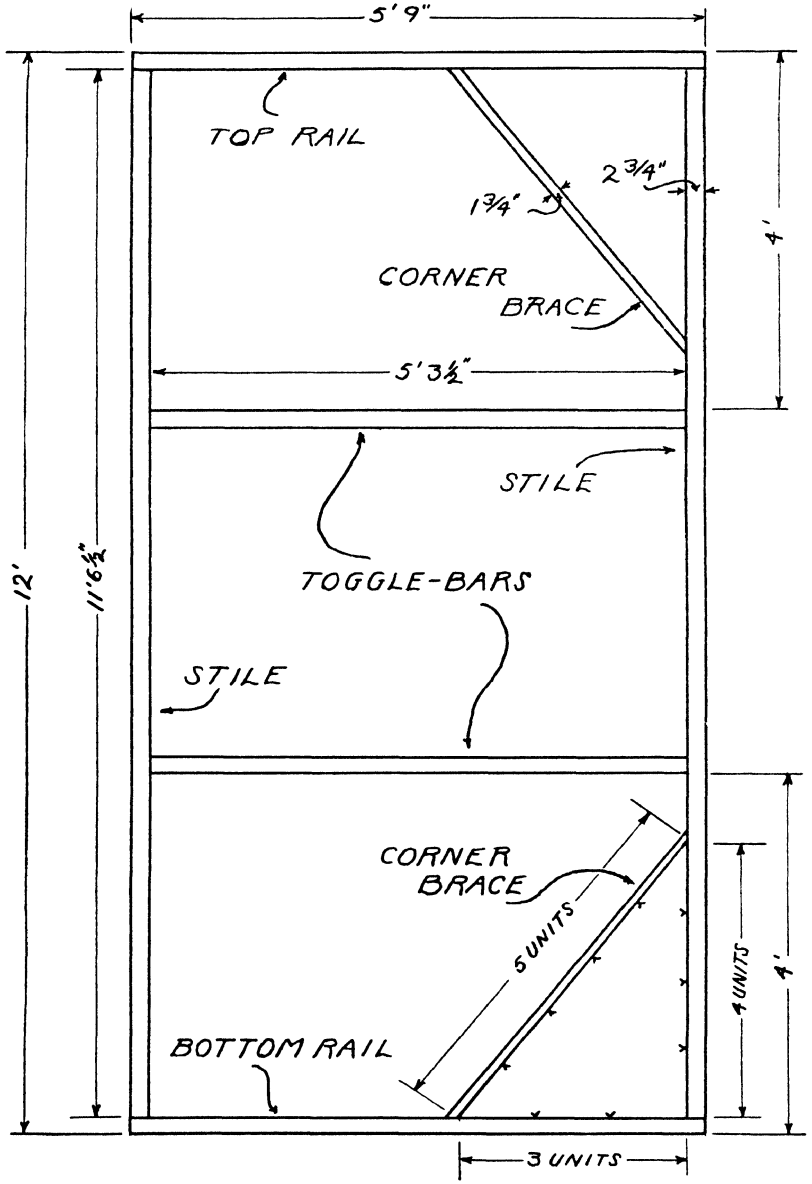
4. All joints are to be simple butt joints, fastened with keystones and corner-blocks, held back ¼″ from outer edge. Exposed grain of keystones and corner-blocks must run at right angles to joints.

5. Nail corner blocks and keystones with 1¼″ clout nails, placed as in drawing. Put iron plate under joints while nailing, so that clout nails will clinch themselves against the iron plate.

6. Paint frame with flame-proofing mixture before covering. Use solution of 1 lb. of chemical to 3 qts. of water. Or substitute solution of 1 lb. borax, 1 lb. salammoniac, in 3 qts. of water.

7. Apply lashing hardware and lash line according to drawing, before canvasing.

8. Cover with linen canvas or canvas duck, glued and tacked to rails and stiles.



SIMPLE FLAT

FRAME LAID OUT READY FOR JOINING

Method of Covering Flat. Lay out canvas on face of frame with edge along outer edge of one stile. Stretch evenly at each corner with a ten lb. pull, and tack inside corners. Next stretch canvas halfway between corners, two men working on opposite sides and tack at nine inch intervals, all the way round the flat. Keep tacks about ¼" from inside edges of rails and stiles. *Do not fasten to toggle-bars or to braces.* The flat is now ready to have the edge flaps glued to stiles and rails. The paste mixture used is prepared as follows:

> Cover flake glue with water and soak over night. Mix paste flour with water to the consistency of thin cream. Heat glue and mix 1/3 hot glue and 2/3 paste. Use while hot. This mixture turns to a firm rubbery consistency when cold, but will become fluid again when heated with the addition of a slight amount of water.

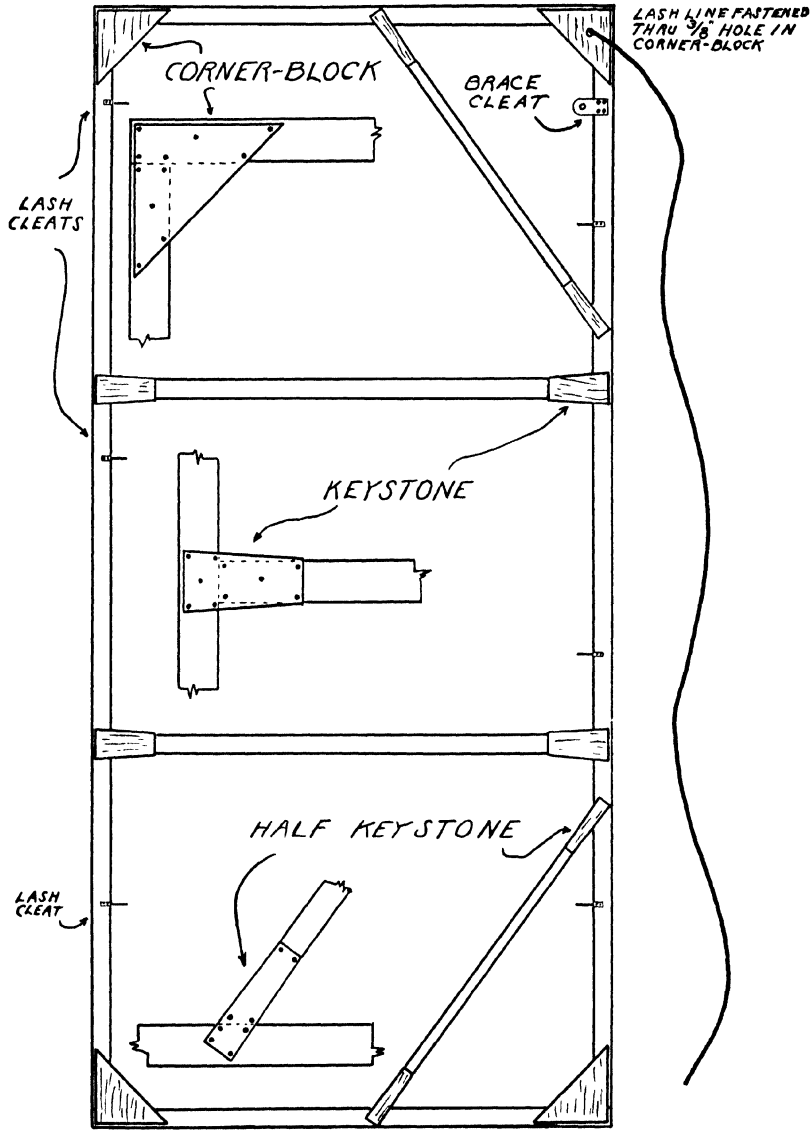
Apply this mixture to the rails and stiles, and to the canvas edges to be glued down. Be careful not to spill glue on the face of the canvas, as this will spoil the painted surface. Press the canvas smoothly down, and pat with small block of wood. Then tack canvas along outside edges at two or three foot intervals, reinforcing the outer corners with three tacks. After it is thoroughly dry, trim away extra canvas with very sharp knife or razor blade. Trim with slicing rather than sawing stroke, to prevent frayed edges. The flat is now ready for the painter.

Notes. The rails of a flat always run through, the stiles butting against the rails. This provides a smooth runner for the flat, as it is slid across the floor.

The number of toggle-bars used varies with the height of the flat. The distance between toggle-bars, or between toggle-bars and rails should not be greater than 6′ nor less than 4′. Thus a 12′ flat may have either one or two toggle bars.

If the actual width of lumber used is different from that given here, the length of stiles and toggle-bars will be increased or decreased by twice the increase or decrease in the width of the lumber. While the lumber used is called 1" by 3" stock, *the actual width and thickness is* always less than that.

In the 19th century, it was customary to make all joints mortise and tenon joints, and professional scene builders still do so. It is entirely unnecessary, however, for ordinary college or little theatre use. Information on mortise and tenon joints will be found on page 624.



SIMPLE FLAT

REAR VIEW

SHOWING KEYSTONES & CORNER-BLOCKS, PLACING OF NAILS, LASH CLEATS, & BRACE CLEAT

INTERIOR SCENES.

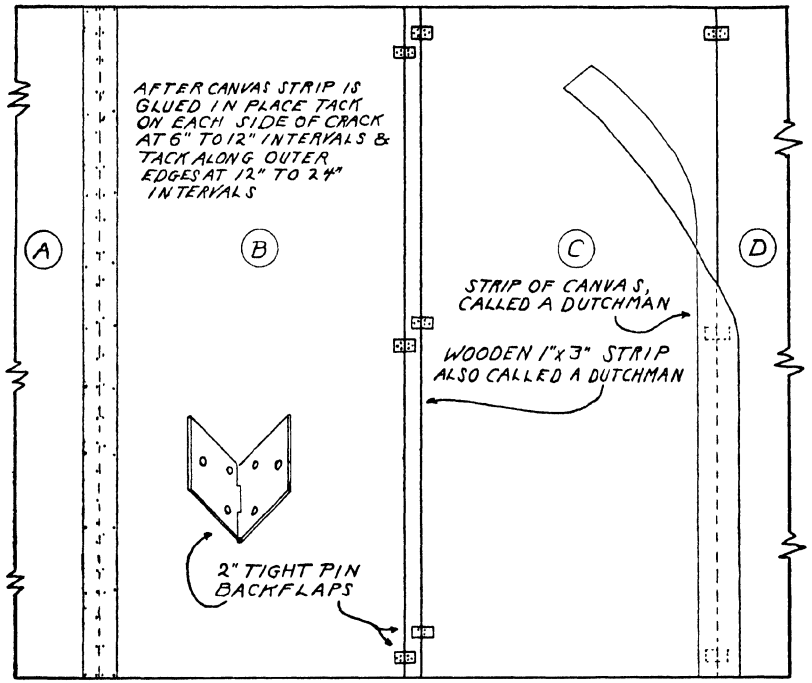
When the curtain goes up on an interior scene, the audience sees what is apparently part of a real room; two or three walls with doors and windows, perhaps even a cornice and a stairway, and a ceiling overhead. From the front we can admire the wall-paper, the pictures on the walls, and the decorations, but there is nothing to indicate how this imitation room is constructed. Between the acts, the room disappears and another takes its place, and we are so familiar with this magic of the theatre that we are not even very curious as to how it happens. Certainly there is nothing visible to indicate that the simple flat is the basic unit of the construction.

If we go backstage, however, we see that the apparently solid walls are actually made of ten to fourteen flats, some of which have doors and windows in them. The greatest width of any of these flats will be 5′ 9″. Few people realize the actual reasons for this traditional limitation of width. These are the width of a baggage-car door, which is six feet, the possible grasp of a man's outstretched arms, which is about six feet, and the maximum width in which canvas is readily available—also six feet (or a few inches less after fire-proofing). The 5′ 9″ width is comfortably inside these measurements.

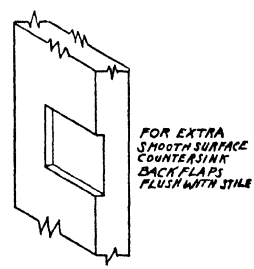
In order to create a smooth wall surface from a number of flats it is necessary to hinge them together on the face, and then cover the hinges and the crack with a glued and tacked strip of canvas called a "dutchman." However, four units are as many as are usually hinged together because the weight becomes too heavy. If the width of the backwall is greater than four 5′ 9″ units, one crack will be visible to the audience where two hinged groups of flats are lashed together. This crack may be partially or wholly concealed by a door casing, or a vertical beam or jog. Groups of hinged flats are referred to as "two-folds," "three-folds," or "four-folds," according to the number of flats in them. If a particularly neat surface is desired, the hinges are countersunk into the wood of the stile the amount of their thickness, so as to give a flush surface under the canvas "dutchman."

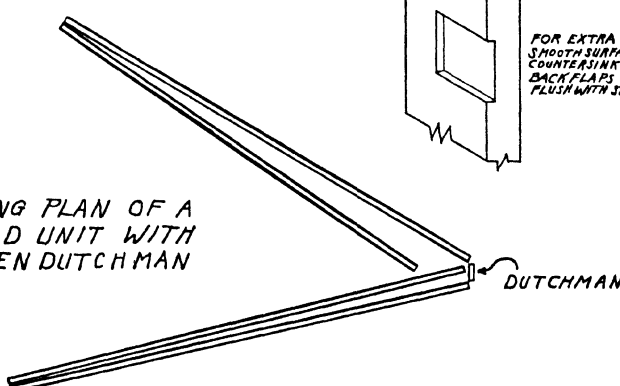
"Three-folds" or "four-folds" of 5′ 9″ flats require a 1″ by 3″ strip of wood to be hinged between one of the folds. This 1″ by 3″ strip is also called a "dutchman."

The ceiling is built as a separate unit, and lowered onto the top of the set. See Part III for methods of constructing ceilings, doorflats and doors, window flats and windows, fireplaces, and fireplace flats, cornices, stairs, and all other special detail.



FRONT VIEW OF 4-FOLD UNIT





HINGING PLAN OF A 4-FOLD UNIT WITH WOODEN DUTCHMAN

METHOD OF HINGING FLATS TOGETHER WITH CONCEALED JOINTS

EXTERIOR SCENES.

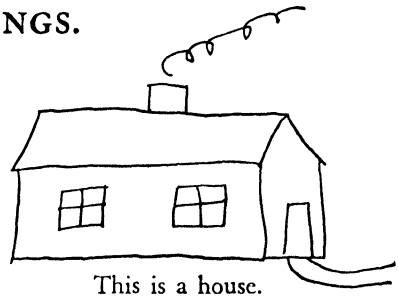
"Only God can make a tree."

The best representations of nature on the modern stage are those that have the least light on them. In the glare of the stage electrician's noon-day sun, the best modern scenic examples of nature are tawdry and unconvincing. The basic trouble is that the amount of detail in nature is staggering. A tree, counting separate bark surfaces, branches, twigs and leaves, has thousands of parts. The cost of realistic reproduction is prohibitive. A growth of wheat, a row of potato vines, a clover field, a corner of jungle all baffle the best efforts of the technician to reproduce realistically. Textures, as of a glacier, or black mud, or red clay, cannot be imitated. Bushels of coarse salt may give a fair illusion of granular snow, but how represent after-effects of an ice-storm? Therefore, the skilful designer, aware of this limitation, tries to use the simpler elements of nature: the trunk of a huge tree, with the leafy top cut off from view by the proscenium frame, a flower garden, half concealed by small shrubs (which are much easier to imitate). But preferably he introduces a man-made element, the corner of a house, the end of a barn, a shed, a rail fence, etc., so that the eye is taken to these easily executed and convincing objects, and does not tend to examine the surrounding natural detail. Best of all, the director may set the time of day so that general lighting can be dim and vague. Moonlight, twilight, dawn, all help the illusion of the exterior scene.

There is a second difficulty about most natural exteriors that can be avoided. Scene designers and technicians rarely have bucolic tastes. They may distinguish with marvellous accuracy between different orders of architecture, they are sometimes masters of period decoration, but they too often lack a keen eye for characteristic differences in trees and rocks. Of course there is no such thing as "a tree." There are oak trees, pine trees, Norway spruces, catalpas, Siberian elms, buttonball trees, and so on—and each is as different from the other as can be in habit of growth, shape, size, and general mood quality. Rocks, too, are completely different in shape, size, texture, and general quality. The scene designer and technician can add enormously to the essential conviction of an outdoor setting by a shrewd use of these individual characteristics of nature.

The construction of all bulky exterior objects such as tree trunks or large background rocks is a light wooden framework which roughly outlines the object, given final shape by wire netting (¾" chicken wire) stretched over the wooden frame, and then covered with cloth or papier mâché, or some special material, to give the surface texture desired. Further information on these types of constructions see Part III.

WORKING DRAWINGS.



This is a house.

At one time or another everyone has used a drawing as a means of presenting a visual idea. A *working drawing* is one which shows how an object is built, in such a clear and unmistakable way that from the drawing a workman can build the object. It is the simplest method of conveying exact information about the construction of an object.

A perspective drawing attempts to show the three dimensional shape of an object in one picture. Working drawings show only one side or view of an object at a time. Interior or hidden construction is shown as it would appear if the object were cut through, and this is called a sectional view.

All lines in working drawings are drawn to scale, unless otherwise noted, so that exact dimensions may be taken from the drawings; however it is customary also to give dimensions.

Theoretically working drawings show all possible views of an object, i.e.—front view, rear view, right side view, left side view, top view, bottom view or plan, and vertical and cross sections, but actually only those views necessary to make clear the construction of the object are shown. Thus a simple flat is clearly revealed in a rear view, but a number of views are necessary to show the construction of a door frame. Working drawings must show:

The size and form of the whole object.
The size and form of the separate members.
How the members are joined together.
The materials used.

The only essential materials for making working drawings are paper, a ruler, and a sharp pencil, but the equipment listed below will make drafting much easier.

Paper, a place to put it, and tacks to hold it in place.

Tracing paper is used when blueprints are to be made, but if copies are not needed, buff or white drawing paper may be substituted. Squared paper is useful for rough working sketches.

The drawing board should be 20″ by 30″.

Thumb tacks are used to fasten the paper to the board. Some draftsmen prefer "Scotch tape," an adhesive tape that may be used over and over.

Instruments for drawing straight lines.

The T-square is used for ruling horizontal lines. Vertical—and other straight lines—are ruled with a triangle, nine or ten inches long. The draftsman's triangle is a right-triangle, either forty-five degrees, or thirty-sixty degrees, and usually transparent.

Instruments for measuring.

The scale rule is a form of ruler but the edges are marked off with different units, as ¼″, ½″, ¾″, and 1″. If the scale chosen for a drawing is ½″ equal to 1′, the edge of the scale rule marked off in ½″ units is used.

Dividers are used for transferring measurements from the scale rule to the drawing, or from one part of the drawing to another, the measurement being marked by pricking the points of the dividers slightly into the paper.

To draw with.

A 3 H pencil is used for preliminary drawing. It makes a light line, easily erased, and not likely to smudge. An H B pencil is used for final work. It gives a bold definite line.

A knife or razor blade is used to sharpen pencils. A small block of sandpaper is used for keeping a fine point. The sole of the shoe will serve the same purpose less efficiently.

To correct mistakes—an art gum eraser.

Rules to Observe.

1. Be sure each separate view is clearly titled.

2. Use a scale large enough to show construction clearly. ½″ equals 1′ is the customary scale for working drawings of scenery, but smaller, more complicated objects than flats should be shown at a larger scale, such as 1″ equals 1′, or even 1½″ equals 1′.

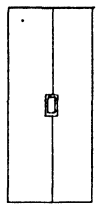
3. Dimension lines should be lighter than construction lines, and must never actually touch the construction.

4. Give dimensions for all important distances, as a check on the accuracy of your scale drawing.

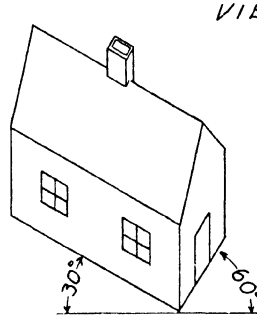
5. Always state the scale used. If two scales are used on the same sheet, make it very clear which drawings the scales refer to.

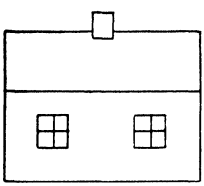
6. Place the drawings on the sheet so their relation to each other will be clear. Do not crowd drawings too closely together.

30°-60° ISOMETRIC PERSPECTIVE VIEW

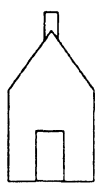


TOP VIEW

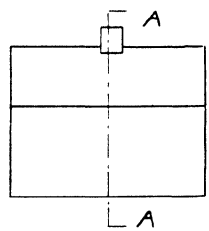




LEFT SIDE VIEW

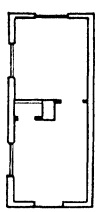


FRONT VIEW

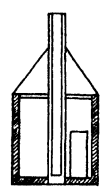


RIGHT SIDE VIEW

REAR VIEW



PLAN



SECTION THRU A-A

TYPES OF VIEWS
USED IN WORKING DRAWINGS

7. Print all titles and other information. Use only capital letters throughout, as they are easier to print and easier to read. Give each flat or scene unit in each set a designation for easy reference, as (Act) I—A, B, C, D, etc. (Act) II, A, B, C, D, etc.

8. All dimensions and lettering that do not run horizontally across the sheet should be placed to read from bottom to top. Never make lettering or dimensions to be read upside down.

9. Make construction lines bold and definite.

10. Parts revealed by a section are shaded with a series of light, diagonal lines.

11. Keep the working drawing neat.

12. Make it *clear.*

Specifications. A working drawing should be accompanied by a list of specifications, which state as clearly and briefly as possible exactly what kind and quality of materials are to be used, any particular methods to be followed during construction, and a statement as to standards of accuracy and finish required.

THE WORKSHOP AND ITS EQUIPMENT.

An outstanding difference between the experienced technician and the novice is that the experienced technician doesn't try to hammer and saw in his lap, use a chisel for a screw driver, nor try to drive nails with a pair of pliers. The skilled scene technician finds adequate room to lay out his work, gets the proper tools to work with, and uses each tool for the purpose for which it is intended.

Basic Tools for Scene Building—(Equipment for 4 men.)

1 crosscut saw for cutting across the grain.
1 ripsaw for cutting with the grain.
1 compass or key-hole saw for circular cuts.
4 hammers.
2 ordinary heavy screwdrivers.
2 spiral ratchet screwdrivers for rapid driving of screws.
1 smoothing plane, 6" long.
2 chisels (¾" and 1").
1 shoemaker's knife for trimming canvas.
1 brace and set of bits, 3/16" to 1" diameter for boring holes.
1 set of steel cutting bits (⅛" to 5/16" diameter).
1 steel and wood cutting countersink.
1 hand or "egg beater" drill with set of bits for quick drilling of small holes in wood.
1 oilstone for sharpening cutting tools.
1 wood rasp, for filing wood.
1 steel file.

1 large steel carpenter's square.
2 small try-squares.
2 six foot folding rules.
1 marking gauge.
Several iron plates, about ten inches square, and 3/16" thick, for clinching clout nails.
1 brush, 2½" wide for canvasing.
1 brush, 3" wide for flame-proofing.

OTHER BASIC EQUIPMENT:

2 "horses" or trestles, 36" high and 6' wide, for supporting flats while covering.
1 small carpenter's work bench with wood and metal vices. (Not essential but very useful.)

OPTIONAL:

1 "template bench" for framing flats. This work may be done on the floor, and in the shop of limited size such a large piece of equipment will be in the way. The "template bench" is a heavy open topped frame, 3' high, 5'9" wide, and as long as the flats most usually turned out in the shop. Iron plates are mounted at each corner and at the points where toggle-bar joints will be nailed. The outer edges are slightly raised on three sides, so that the frame of the flat may be held square during joining.

The Workshop. The shop itself should be several times as long as it is wide. Such a space is much more useful than a square area. The length should be sufficient to allow one flat to be framed and one flat to be covered at the same time. Great height is not essential, as the flats may be kept on their side, but there should be some nearby space where the finished set may be given a trial set-up before it is painted.

There should be a rack along the wall for lumber storage, and shelves for other materials, including hardware.

Tools may be racked away in a cabinet, or on a wall. It is customary to paint the shape of the tool on the wall so that it will be easy to see where it belongs, and easy to check up on missing tools.

The workshop should include a sink and gas-plate, if those in the paintshop are not near enough to be used.

Labor-Saving Devices. (Useful but not essential)
Electric drill.
Electric screwdriver.
Combination rip and cross-cut power saw, mounted on rollers.
Band-saw, power driven, mounted on rollers with at least a 2' diameter wheel.

PROPERTIES.

Blood from Julius Caesar's wounds, the handkerchief of Desdemona, the skulls dug up by the grave-digger in *Hamlet*, the storm that opens *The Tempest*—all these are properties. Take away stage machinery, lighting instruments, scenery and costumes, and the remaining elements of a stage production belong in the catch-all classification of properties.

Properties are classified under four heads.

Scene-props include all those things used to complete, or "dress" the stage set. Examples are the pictures on the wall, furniture, books and bookshelves, window curtains, rugs, flowers, shrubbery, grass, barrels, boxes, garbage cans, etc.

Hand-props are those items handled by the actor, or carried on or off stage by him. Telegrams, letters, cigars, cigarettes, matches, articles of clothing (carried and not worn), food, dishes, etc.

Sound-effects, whether representing fish, fowl or flesh, are considered properties. Noises of machines, creaking doors, tolling bells, gun-fire—every sound of nature or man are problems for the property technician.

Visual-effects, not caused by light, are classified as properties. The rain falling outside the window, the snow or water on the coat of an actor entering the scene, smoke and steam, are examples.

Because of the great variety of items included, it is difficult to give general instructions for their execution. The ingenuity of the technician in this field must be without limit.

As the technician preparing properties is directly involved in bringing out the dramatic values of a play, he must have a close relationship to the play as it develops in rehearsal. The task of making the property plot—an organized list of the different kinds of properties and their use in the play, may fall to the stage manager, but the technician must cooperate and check this list constantly. The actual gathering together of the needed properties may seem a work of drudgery, but selecting the proper items so as to fit the needs of the actors' business, and correctly carry out the scene designer's concept, is one of the technician's most important responsibilities.

Organization. From property plot to performance. The duties of the technician supervising properties are as listed below. Some of these steps may be carried out by the stage-manager, but should be carefully checked by the technician.

1. Read the play, and list by Act and Scene the four classifications of properties; scene-props, hand-props, sound effects, and visual effects. This is the *technician's* prop plot. See p. 194 for stage manager's prop plot.

2. Check this property plot with the director, for changes, additions, and particular specifications. The information may be supplied by the stage manager, as the director's representative. Find out the date when the director wants hand-props for rehearsal, a date for the first sound-effect rehearsal, and if possible the date of the first scene-rehearsal.

3. Check the list of scene-props with the designer, for additions and exact descriptions of drawings of each article. Get the director's okay on the scene designer's specifications. This is best done in a meeting with the director and designer.

4. Start construction of built props.

5. Locate the purchase or rental props, then take the designer to okay the articles selected, and arrange for delivery for first scene rehearsal.

6. Attend rehearsal when hand-props are first used, to obtain first hand information on any changes desired. Observe the actors in the business given them by the director to see if all props as built and selected will actually work. More often than not the director will fail to anticipate actual size or shape of scene and hand-props, and the actor's business or the properties will have to be changed in some details. The stage-manager takes responsibility for hand-props during rehearsal period.

7. Complete the construction of properties, and turn them over to the painter.

8. Operate sound effects for the director at a sound-effect rehearsal. If the effects are at all complicated, this should be done without actors present. It is sometimes difficult to secure a busy director's cooperation, but it is essential that this sound-effect rehearsal take place well in advance of the first dress rehearsal, as the first sound-effects will seldom coincide with the director's ideas.

9. Prepare corrected property plot and a cue sheet for sound and visual effects, both neatly typed for ready reference by the property master during dress rehearsal and performance.

10. Technical rehearsal.

11. Dress rehearsals.

12. Performance.

Construction of Properties. The most useful technique for making various objects, such as statues, bowls, coats of arms, ornamental carvings, bottles, etc.—is that of papier mâché, which is paper pulp mixed with some sort of binder, such as glue. In most cases, the papier mâché pulp is pressed into a plaster of paris mold. Therefore the method of making a plaster of paris mold will be described first.

Plaster of Paris Molds. With modeling clay mold the object on a

drawing board or a reinforced profile board base. In the case of an object such as a bottle or jug, model *half* the object. If the article is very large, a wooden frame may be constructed roughly to shape, and the clay used on top of the frame to give the exact form. Grease well—the cheapest sort of mechanic's grease will serve. Be sure that the entire surface is covered.

In a large open pan, such as a dishpan, place one to two inches of water. Sift plaster of paris through cheese cloth into water, stirring steadily, preferably with bare hand, well greased. Continue adding plaster of paris until mixture begins to become hot through chemical action. The consistency of the mixture will at the same time rather suddenly change from thick cream to a soft dough. *At that moment the plaster of paris is ready to pour.* Cover the clay model with at least ½" of plaster of paris. A framework of 1" by 2" around the mold is useful to keep the plaster of paris from running off the mold. Allow to dry completely. The clay may then be removed and the cast is ready for the papier mâché.

Papier Maché. Method 1. Tear or cut soft paper such as newspaper into small pieces. Soak in water, and then boil in double boiler, mashing and stirring the paper until a wet pulp is formed. Drain excess water from pulp and mix with 2 parts thin hot flour paste, and 1 part hot liquid glue. This is similar to mixture used for canvasing flats. (See p. 578.) Mix and knead thoroughly. The final paper, glue and paste product should have the consistency of thick paste. Grease the inside of the plaster of paris mold evenly, and press the papier mâché mixture into the mold, making sure that all crevices and hollows are filled. The papier mâché should be about ¼" thick. Last of all, press buckram or coarse muslin against the papier mâché as a reinforcement. When dry the product will be the exact shape of the mold, light in weight and fairly strong. To make a jug or bottle, fit two halves together, binding the joining crack with strips of paper and glue.

Method 2. Tear or cut paper into strips or squares. Make a glue-paste mixture, of 1/3 hot liquid glue, to 2/3 flour-and-water paste of the consistency of cream, as described before. Wet paper with water, and drain; then dip each square of paper in the glue-paste mixture and cover the greased surface of the mold, slightly overlapping pieces of paper. When completed, do a second layer, a third, and then a fourth. Finish with buckram or coarse muslin as in Method 1. This second method is easier for inexperienced workers to handle. Paint the finished papier-mâché objects with shellac.

Method 2 may be used directly on canvas or chickenwire surfaces, to give special textures, as rocks, bark of trees, etc.

Furniture Construction. While most types of furniture may be most easily rented or purchased, certain styles, as Chinese or Medieval, may be hard to find. Technicians with some slight skill in carpentry can easily make satisfactory stage furniture, applying papier mâché ornaments for the carved detail, on a simple basic structure. The joints of furniture should be mortised and tenoned.

Upholstering may be done also. A strong wooden frame work is constructed, outlining the general shape of chair or couch, and covered with canvas. Hair or felt stuffing is placed on top of this, and muslin stretched firmly over the stuffing and tacked with carpet tacks to the wooden frame. The selected fabric is applied over this. This technique will be mainly useful in re-upholstering worn or second-hand pieces of furniture.

Trees, Shrubs, and Vines. (The construction of tree trunks is described in Part III.) Leaves of trees, shrubs and vines, may be purchased from dealers of artificial flowers, artificially preserved and mounted on wire stems, but they are fairly expensive and a great many are required to make a showing. Substitute leaves may be made by cutting dyed muslin to the proper shape, which can then be given stiffness by dipping in a strong glue size, or by painting the back of the leaf with size. Fine, covered wire, obtained from artificial flower dealers, is glued to the back of each leaf to make the stem. The ends of these stem wires are then twisted about the heavier wire, or actual piece of tree that forms the branch. Vine branches may be made by dipping pieces of brown or black cord in strong size.

Shrubs are frequently built up on a light wooden framework, covered with ¾″ mesh chicken wire to form the general shape of the shrub or hedge, and leaves woven into this wire, so as to form a completely covered surface. The least expensive artificial leaves, and those generally use for formal shrubs and hedges are ruscas, similar to a barberry. This muslin and size method of making leaves is also effective for sword grass, rushes, etc. For larger leaves, a heavier material than muslin may be used—such as canvas.

Actual trunks and branches of small trees can be used effectively on stage, either bare, for winter scenes, or in combination with leaves. Small cedar trees may be used for limited runs. The trunk surfaces must be painted, and the leaves spattered to blend with the rest of the set.

Grass. Stage lawn grass comes in mats one yard wide, usually two yards long. A number of grass mats may be stitched together as needed. They are made of green raffia grass, sewed onto burlap backing. Usual

price is $3.75 a square yard, and they may be obtained from most theatrical supply houses. The effect is only fairly realistic, but better than most exterior detail.

A substitute grass may be made inexpensively by cutting flameproofed green crepe paper into fine strips, crumpling it up, and pressing it onto a brown canvas surface, which has been freshly painted with hot glue. After the glue is dry, the loose and broken pieces of paper may be brushed off. This type of grass mat will not last more than a week or two, however. Dried grass may be simulated by using dun-colored crepe paper.

A Hedge. The process of pressing strips of crepe-paper onto glue-covered canvas can be used to represent a hedge. While by no means realistic in bright light, the effect is better than painted canvas.

The Floor Covering. A stage floor is more often than not a rough, splintered, slightly uneven surface of warped boards, marred by stage screws. Some covering is necessary during performance, for appearance' sake, to give the actor a smoother playing surface, and to reduce the sound of footsteps.

The best covering is dark brown or dark green "battleship" linoleum, cemented permanently to the stage floor, and this is the covering used in many New York theatres. However if the stage floor is of the movable trap sort, designed so that the entire acting area or any part of it may be taken up in a 3′ by 6′ trap, the linoleum covering is impractical. In the absence of linoleum the usual stage floor covering is a heavy dark brown canvas duck, made of a number of strips sewed together. This "floor cloth" or "ground cloth" should be obtained already made up to size from a Theatrical Supply house. Size should be five feet wider than the proscenium opening, and about five feet deeper than the maximum set depth used. It should be specified that outer edges of the floor cloth be hemmed and reinforced with 2″ webbing, and that it be fitted with grōmmets (small brass eyes) at 1′ intervals at the sides and back.

The floor cloth should preferably be laid over a ¾″ felt or hair rug padding to equalize uneven floor surfaces, and deaden footsteps. If padding used is of the type which has one squared surface, this should be laid face down, as otherwise the waffle-like pattern on the padding will show through the cloth. Area covered by padding should be 6″ less than the floor cloth. The padding need not be nailed down.

A floor cloth must be correctly laid or it will wrinkle and become dangerous to walk over. The process is as follows: Lay the floor cloth out on the stage floor, with the un-grommeted edge parallel to the footlights, and just back of the line of the act curtain. Stretch it tightly as

possible at the four corners. Just beyond the corners, drive 1¼" roofing nails, with heads small enough for the grommets to slip over them. Let the nails project about 5/16" from the stage floor. Now stretch the floor cloth until the grommets can be slipped over the nails. Similarly drive nails just beyond each grommet and stretch the canvas to slip the grommet over the nail. After the two sides and the rear edge are so fastened, tack down the front edge of the floor cloth with #6 carpet tacks, at 9" intervals, stretching the cloth tightly as possible in a straight line across the front of the stage. Customary professional technique for stretching the front edge is to face upstage and, while standing just in front of the cloth, to kick the cloth smartly with the heel, toward the footlights, at each place a tack is to be put in. Floor cloths put down this way may easily be removed by ripping up tacks and lifting grommets off the nails. Floor cloths should be swept, or preferably vacuumed before each performance. A tear may be temporarily repaired by simply tacking down the cloth all around the hole. When the floor cloth is taken up, the tear should be patched with canvas.

Special floor cloths are frequently used, as white for snow scenes, or a cloth painted with a pattern, representing a particular floor surface. Dye must be used for painting the floor cloth, as dry color will scuff off.

Summary. These instructions cover only a few of the many properties used in the theatre. Other information will be found under specific headings, alphabetically listed in Part III, and information on sound effects in Parts IV and V. It is impossible to even suggest the exact method of manufacture for all stage properties. A clever technician will use the techniques described as a starting point for the development of his own methods.

FROM THE DESIGNER'S SKETCH TO THE FINISHED SET.

As should be evident by now, the art of the theatre is a tremendously complex one. The theatre technician must have skill as a carpenter, mechanic, metal worker, painter, cabinet-maker, rope worker, draftsman, electrician, model-maker, naturalist, interior decorator, chemist, tailor, and diplomat. He must know how to imitate a lion's roar, build a bridge, upholster furniture, manufacture grass, make an avalanche, and shift and set up complete sets of scenery in one minute. Because of the unequalled complexity of the technician's work, which must be done under great pressure, working against time, and with tem-

peramental people, the theatre technician must above all else be a good organizer and executive. The first step towards good organization is to get a clear picture of all the elements of scene building, and their functional relationships. This may best be done through a practical check list.

1. The Designer's Plans. The scene designer will furnish the technician with complete plans showing the exact size, appearance and finish of the entire set and all its parts, including built properties. These will be drawn to scale, ½″ equals 1′. These plans will not attempt to show how any part of the set is built—simply what its appearance is to be. There will be a floor plan of each set (and all its parts) as it will appear set up on stage. There will be two or more views of all three dimensional objects, such as stairs, balconies, etc. There will be drawings to a larger scale of all detail, (1½″ equals 1′ or lifesize), such as cornices, balustrades, bookcases, rocks, etc. All drawings will be properly dimensioned, special finishes will be indicated, geometric method of determining any curves used will be shown, the catalogue number of any moldings used will be given, and information as to material, fullness and drape of curtains used, will be fully noted. There will be information as to the floor covering desired, its size and finish. These drawings and specifications will be accompanied by color sketches, or preferably, a scale model of each set. It should be pointed out to the designer that the fuller the information he supplies, the more faithful will be the technician's construction of the set.

2. Planning the Breakdown into Scene Units. After obtaining the written okay of the director or producer on the designer's plans, the technician makes rough sketches in which he figures out how many scene units of what size and kind will be needed to carry out the designer's plans. The technician must remember that the designer's drawings are of the set as seen from the front, whereas the technician's drawings must be of the set as seen from the rear, showing the construction. Therefore even his view of the designer's plan will be "upside down," and his rough sketches will be of the set as seen from the back. On these rough sketches the technician will indicate how many flats will be needed, where the joints will come, the width of the various flats, the size of the ceiling, and the amount and position of bracing.

3. Properties. At this point the technician begins work on properties. Proceed according to organization plan on pp. 588, 589. Coordinate these steps with the preparation of the set.

4. Working Drawings of set and built properties should be executed

according to the instructions given on p. 583 ff. After the drawings are completed, the technician must be sure to check all dimensions carefully with the designer's plans. Note: Even though the scene technician is to do the building himself, it is important that he think out the exact construction of the set, and set down that information in full working drawings.

5. List of Materials and Cutting Lengths of Lumber. From the working drawings, make a list of all materials needed, including size, quality, and quantity. Check this list against materials on hand, and immediately order all additional supplies needed. Standard materials in reasonable quantities should be kept on hand at all times to prevent delay in building. Make up a list of cutting lengths of lumber. Example:

Stiles for flats A to H. Act I set.
16 pieces 1" by 3" stock, 11'6½" long.
Rails for flats A to E, Act I set.
10 pieces 1" by 3" stock, 5'9" long.
Rails for flat F, Act I set.
2 pieces 1" by 3" stock, 4' long.
Rails for flats G and H. Act I set.
4 pieces, 1" by 3" stock, 3' long.
And so forth.

6. Measuring and Marking Lumber. Lay out the stock to be used on trestles at a convenient height. Be sure that the end of stock is square; if not, mark a half-inch off at the end with try-square, and measure from that point. Mark all scrap pieces of lumber with a cross, and clearly label all stock to be used, with its dimension. Use the try-square to mark all cuts, and when measuring more than one piece of lumber from the same length of stock, be sure to allow for the width of the saw-cut: about 1/16" for a hand sawing, and about ⅛" for machine sawing. A carpenter usually prefers to indicate marks for cutting by scratching the lines with a stylus, or nail ground to a fine point. After all measurements have been made, check them carefully. Note: a steel tape will give greater accuracy in measurements than a folding rule. Never use cloth tapes, as they stretch. Try to mark stock so as to avoid waste. Example: If an 11' 6½" stile is cut from a 1' x 3", which is 16' long, the remainder may be used for a rail for a 4' wide flat.

7. Cutting Lumber. Be sure to make saw cuts square and on the mark. Slightly plane the edges of each piece of lumber to prevent splintering. After cutting, members of each unit should be bundled together until needed for assembly.

8. Assembling and Joining. Lay out the ready cut lumber on template-bench or floor, according to the working drawing. See pages 576 and 578 for assembly of simple flat. Check all right angle joints with steel square before joining, during nailing, and afterward. Be sure that all parts are snugly joined and nails well clinched. After rails, toggle-bars and stiles are joined, cut corner braces to fit and join. Apply hardware. Mark identifying letter on flat.

9. Flame-Proofing. Apply flame-proofing mixture to frame before covering with canvas. Use ready-prepared flame-proofing chemical obtained from a theatrical supply house, 1 lb. mixed with 3 qts. of water; or make your own solution by mixing 1 lb. borax and 1 lb. salammoniac with 3 qts. of water. Professional scene-builders sometimes mix the flame-proofing mixture with whiting and size, to give a neat appearance to the flat frames.

10. Marking Flats for Identification. Sometimes pencil indentifications are marked out by flame-proofing. Therefore stack flats in order after flame-proofing, and as soon as they are dry, mark plainly with black paint the name of the play, the act, and scene, and the indentifying letter given the flat on the working drawings. Thus a flat may be marked—ANNA CHRISTIE (or ANNA, or CHRISTIE) ACT I (flat B.) Or ANIMAL KINGDOM, ACT I—SC. 1. ACT II—SC. 1. ACT III (flat H.). Professional practice is to stencil this marking on the togglebar of the flat in neat black letters, using dry drop black or lamp black on a slightly moistened stencil brush. The brush must not be too wet or the letters will blur.

11. Covering. See p. 578 for covering technique. Note: Be sure to keep the surface of the canvas clean.

12. Hinging. After canvasing, flats may be hinged on the face, and wooden and canvas "dutchmen" applied. See p. 580 for information on this subject.

13. Trial Setup. As soon as set is completed, it should be set up exactly as it will appear on stage, with doors and windows in place. This is to make sure all parts fit together, and allows alterations to be made before painting.

With the turning over of completed properties and scenery to the painter, the construction tasks of the technician are finished.

II. MATERIALS FOR SCENE AND PROPERTY CONSTRUCTION

It is not the custom to buy butter by the dozen, or eggs by the pound: each commodity has its own characteristic description of quantity, quality, and size. This is true of lumber, hardware, theatrical hardware, fabrics and all the other materials used in scene building. The purpose of this section is to give the information about theatrical supplies that is essential to intelligent purchasing.

LUMBER.

Kinds of Wood. Lumber used for scene construction should be light in weight, easily worked, free from warping tendencies, relatively free from resin, and inexpensive. Idaho White Pine best fits this description.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WOODS SUITABLE FOR SCENE BUILDING

Idaho White Pine (Northern White Pine)	Easily worked, light in weight, straight-grained, fairly strong. The very best wood available.
Sugar Pine	Satisfactory, but has high "sugar" resin content, which gums up tools. Not as strong as Idaho White Pine.
Douglas Fir (Oregon Pine)	Fair; very straight pronounced grain, very strong, but splits and splinters easily; fairly heavy.
West Coast Cedar	Fair; light in weight, but brittle and sometimes soft.
California Redwood	Fair; light in weight, but brittle and soft; easily worked, but apt to split.
Basswood (Tulip-tree wood) (Whitewood)	Satisfactory, but not often available. Soft, straight-grained wood, very easy to work; light in weight.

Woods Unsuitable for Scene Building. Hemlock, fir, spruce, and cypress are unsuitable for scene building as they warp easily. The other varieties of pine such as California White Pine, Yellow Pine, Pondosa or Ponderosa Pine (also called Western White Pine), are not satisfactory for scene building because of their relatively heavy weight which is 50% to 75% greater than Idaho White Pine.

Grades of Lumber.

Select A. } Top grade actually available is "B or Better." This should be
B. } used for all framing, doors, windows, fireplaces, etc.
C. Grade C may be used if "B or Better" is too expensive. There is little actual difference between Grade C and #1 Common.

Common #1. About the same as Grade C.
#2. While structurally sound in larger sizes, #2 contains many knots, which prevents it from being used for flat framing. It is satisfactory for platform tops and rough construction.
#3. #3 is worthless for scene building purposes.

It is wise to inspect lumber at the yard before purchase. Do not accept warped, knotty, crooked-grained, or resinous lumber as "Grade B or Better."

The Unit of Measurement for lumber is the board foot, which is the amount of lumber contained in a square foot, one inch thick. Lumber measurements are frequently written as so many feet of such and such a size lumber, *BM.* (board measure). To determine the number of board feet in a given piece of lumber, use the following formula.

Thickness in inches equals T.
Width in inches equals W.
Length in feet equals L.

$$\frac{T \times W \times L}{12} = \text{Board feet.}$$

Example: to find the number of board feet in a 2″ by 4″ piece of lumber, 16′ long.

T = 2
W = 4
L = 16

$$\frac{2 \times 4 \times 16}{12} = \frac{128}{12} = 10\tfrac{2}{3} \text{ board feet.}$$

Prices of Lumber are usually quoted per thousand board feet. To obtain the price per board foot, move the decimal point three places to the left. Example: a price of $90.00 a thousand is $0.09 per board foot.

Stock Sizes of Lumber Used for Scene Building. When lumber is surfaced (planed to make it smooth) the width and thickness are decreased, but the lumber is still referred to and priced according to its original size. Thus 1″ by 3″ is actually 25/32″ by 2⅝″, 1¼″ by 3″ is actually 1 1/32″ by 2⅝″, etc. Surfaced lumber is referred to in ordering as "P4S" (planed on four sides). Standard lengths of lumber are 10′, 12′, 14′, and 16′, and unless otherwise specified, an order of lumber is filled with a random mixture of these lengths. Lengths over 16′ are special, and the cost per board foot is greater.

Sizes of lumber most frequently used in scene building are:

Grade B or Better, (or Grade C)	
1″ by 2″, in random lengths.	Braces in flats.
1″ by 3″ by 12′, 14′ & 16′.	Rails, stiles, and toggle-bars.
1″ by 4″ by 16′.	Drop battens; ceiling frames.

1¼" by 2", in random lengths.	Furniture; bracing tall flats.
1¼" by 3" by 12' & 16'.	Framing platforms; flats over 16'.
1" by 6", in random lengths.	Furniture, windowframes, doors.
1" by 12", in random lengths.	Furniture: sweeps for arches.
1¼" by 12" in random lengths.	Stair carriages.
#2 Common	
1" by 3", in random lengths.	Crate construction.
1" by 6", in random lengths. (Tongued and grooved)	Platform flooring.

Profile Board (Plywood). Basswood (or whitewood) profile board is superior for scene building, but fir plywood or panelboard may be substituted, although it is heavier than the basswood, is resinous and harder to work. The basswood profile board may be secured in 3/32" and 3/16" thickness; the thinnest fir plywood is ¼". Sizes of sheets are 4' wide, and 6', 7', 8', 9', or 10' long. Plywood in either the basswood or fir may be obtained in thicknesses up to ⅞". Profile board is used for realistic wall panelling, panels in doors, ground-row cut-outs, setpieces, and miscellaneous property construction.

Corner Blocks and Keystones. These are made from 3/16" profile board, and may be ordered from any theatrical supply house. The technician may manufacture them himself from 3/16" profile board, at a material cost about 2/3 less. The cornerblock should be cut in the form of a right-triangle, 10" on a side; the keystone should be cut 8" long, 4" wide at one end, and 2¾" at the other. Bevel the edges with a sharp plane.

Molding. Almost all lumber yards will supply illustrated catalogs of moldings carried in stock. The designer should make his selection from the catalog. Moldings are sold by the foot, and in many kinds of wood. White pine is the best for theatrical use.

Balsa Wood, familiar to airplane model makers, is a weak, easily worked wood, almost as light as cork. It is used in the theatre for carved beam posts, etc., but is so weak it must be reinforced by a strip of pine. It can be obtained in random size timbers.

HARDWARE.

Nails for Scene Construction.

Kind	Size	Length	Approximate No. of Nails per Lb.	Used for
Clout (square stem)		1″	709	Keystones and corner blocks; use ¼″ longer nail than total thickness of material nailed through, to clinch.
		1¼″	416	
		1½″	347	
Common	6 penny	2″	182	Used in small quantity for temporary fastening of frames, nailing together temporary scaffolds, etc.
	8 penny	2½″	105	
	10 penny	3″	68	
	12 penny	3¼″	63	
	16 penny	3½″	50	
	20 penny	4″	32	
Finish (slender stem, small head)	4 penny	1½″	583	Used for building up cornices, nailing, moldings, nailing flooring to semi-permanent platforms, and treads of steps.
	6 penny	2″	308	
	8 penny	2½″	187	
	10 penny	3″	120	
Box (slender stem, common head)	3 penny	1¼″	635	Used for building properties, nailing profile board, etc.
	4 penny	1½″	473	
	5 penny	1¾″	403	
Roofing (sturdy stem, large head)		¾″	259	Nailing padding. Stretching floor cloth
		1″	179	

The number of nails per pound will vary somewhat with different lots and the price of nails will vary from season to season. Prices are quoted per pound and per hundred pounds, hundred pound lots being much cheaper.

Tacks used are carpet tacks, and two sizes are regularly used:
#4 carpet tacks for canvasing flats.
#6 carpet tacks (larger) for fastening the front edge of the floor cloth.
Tacks are sold by the box or pound.

Screws Used in Scene Construction. The type of screw used is the "bright" finish, flat-head screw. Two sizes are used:
#9 ⅞″ long, for fastening backflaps, lash and brace cleats, etc.
#12 2″ long, for fastening pieces of wood together.
Screws are sold by the box, each box containing one gross (144).

Bolts.

Kind	Diameter	Length	Used for
Stove (Flat slotted head). Entire stem threaded.	5/16"	2"	Most theatrical hardware, where stronger fastening than screw is desired. Extra length clipped off with wire cutters.
Carriage (Round headed, with square shoulder under head)	3/8"	2"	Larger pieces of theatrical hardware drilled for this size bolt. Used with wing nut for quick taking apart. Used in ceiling assembly.
Machine (The common square headed bolt)	3/8"	1" to 2½"	Special construction; for joining all metal to metal. Use with washers.

Bolts are sold by the hundred, washers by the pound.

Hinges.

Kind	Size	Used for
Tight pin backflaps	1½" 2"	Hinging small flats together on face. Hinging larger flats together on face.
Loose pin backflaps	1½" 2"	Joining scenery units on back, for quick taking apart or joining. Substitute heavy wire for loose pin.
Strap hinges	5" 6"	Hinging doors opening off stage. Hinging traps. Clamping door and window frames in flats.

Hinges are sold by the pair.

Door Hardware used on stage doors is the same used on actual doors. It comes in a great variety of sizes and finishes. Ordinarily only the cheapest finishes are used on stage. The different parts of door hardware are:

Knobs.

Spindle. Connects the two knobs with the latch itself.

Rim latch. The type of latch which is screwed on the outside surface of a door; this is the simplest kind of door latch, and used on all doors opening off-stage. The latch alone is used, without a lock.

Mortise latch. The type of latch set into a mortise, in the edge of the door. This is the usual modern type of latch, and is used on stage doors which open on stage. The latch alone is used, without the lock, since stage doors are *never actually locked*, even when the business of the play seems to

demand it, due to the possibility of the lock becoming jammed during a performance.

Escutcheon. The metal plate surrounding the keyhole, or the large plate containing the keyhole on an exterior door.

Rose. The small circular plate where the spindle goes into the door. Absent when plate type of escutcheon is used.

Strike. The metal pocket, fastened to the door jamb, into which the latch catches.

Door butts. The ordinary door hinge; only used in stage sets for doors opening on stage.

Grommets are brass rings used to bind holes in the edges of canvas or other fabrics. They are sold by the dozen, and sizes run according to diameters. ⅜″ diameter is the most useful size for theatrical purposes.

Sill Irons or Floor Irons used as a tie across the bottom of a doorflat, are made of soft steel 3/16″ thick, and ¾″ wide. They may be cut to fit in the scene shop with a hacksaw, and drilled and countersunk for a #9 screw. See Part III, p. 616, for methods of fitting to flat.

Screen Cloth (ordinary screen wire) is frequently used to give the effect of window glass. Some designers prefer the black finish, some the galvanized. Its main virtue as an imitation of window glass is its cheapness, lightness, and durability. It is questionable whether even under the best lighting the effect can be considered more than a stage convention for glass. Screen cloth can be purchased in varying widths, from 24″ to 48″. A full roll contains 100 linear feet.

Wire Netting (chicken wire) is used over wooden frames, for building up irregular shapes and forms, before covering with canvas or papier mâché. It is galvanized, to prevent rusting. It comes in widths from 12″ to 72″. A full roll is 150′. The size of the mesh varies from ¾″ to 2″ opening. 1″ mesh is most useful for scene purposes, in the 36″ and 72″ widths.

THEATRICAL HARDWARE FOR SCENE CONSTRUCTION.

(For Rigging Hardware see PART XI.)

Special theatrical hardware is made to meet the needs of the scene builder. It is available only from theatrical supply companies. (See PART XII.) The items listed below are those most frequently used.

Brace cleat	2" by 4" (Metal plate)	Fastened to upper part of flat stile. Stage brace hooks into eye for bracing.
Ceiling plate	2½" by 7" (Metal plate)	For assembling ceilings. Has iron ring for hanging.
Carpet pin	Very heavy nail 2" to 3" long.	Inserted through floor-cloth grommets into holes in stage floor to stretch floor cloth.
Drapery hanger	Hangers 1", 1½" or 2" wide	These are hooks which screw to drapery pole, and fit into socket on flat. Allows quick set-up of draperies.
Foot iron, solid	Forged steel angle 8" by 3¼"	Screwed to base of scenery. Projecting foot has eye for stage screw.
Foot iron, hinged	Foot hinged.	Hinged foot drops down when scenery is flown, thus preventing fouling.
Lash cleat	Various types.	For lashing scenery together.
Lash eye		For tying lash line at top of flat.
Mending plates	Straight, L- or T-shaped steel plates	For mending broken battens, or reinforcing flats.
Picture hanger	¾" and 9/16" widths	Hook and socket, similar to drapery hanger, for hanging pictures.
Saddle iron		Type of sill iron with welded reinforcing angles.
Stop cleat	2¾" by ⅞" (Steel plate)	Used on edges of adjacent flats to prevent them from slipping past each other

FABRICS.

All fabrics for use on stage must be flame-proofed. They may be bought already flame-proofed from theatrical supply houses, or they may be dipped in a flame-proofing solution. There is always a danger of spoiling the color of dyed or painted fabrics by flame-proofing. Therefore it is best to make a test with a sample.

Linen Canvas, used for covering flats, for drops and cycloramas, comes in bolts of fifty linear yards, 72" wide before flame-proofing, 70" after. Weight used is 8 oz.

Canvas Duck, used as a substitute for covering flats, and almost as good, comes in the same sizes. Note: some merchants may not know that canvas duck may be obtained in the 72″ width, but it is standard. Canvas duck is used in heavier weights for making floor cloths. Considerably cheaper than linen canvas.

Muslin is a popular substitute for canvas duck in the amateur theatre, because the price is less than half, but it is not satisfactory for covering flats. It takes paint less well, is more easily stretched out of shape, and tears easily. It is useful for basic upholstery of furniture, and in larger widths (available up to 30′ wide), for projection screens.

Bobbinet (Gauze) is a large mesh (⅛″ by ¼″) fabric used to make semi-transparent drops, which when properly lighted give a mist effect, for night scenes, fog scenes, dream scenes, etc. It is available in white, light tan, navy blue, and black. Standard width is 30′, which is usually the height of the drop. A full bolt contains 66′, but it is best to order the exact size wanted, already mounted on top and bottom battens, as the material is extremely difficult to cut and handle. There are two types of weave available, the hexagonal, which has maximum transparency, and the rectangular, which is less transparent, but stronger, more durable, and easier to hang without wrinkles. Caution: greatest care must be taken not to allow the material to be snagged, even by finger nails, as the threads break easily.

Net is used as reinforcing for cut-out foliage borders, to support cut-out canvas leaves, branches, etc. which are mounted on the net by a special type of flexible glue, called ROSINE. Net comes in bolts 30′ wide, and 250′ long, but may be bought in any quantity. Price is usually quoted by the pound, and there are about thirty pounds to the bolt. The standard color is white, though it may be obtained from theatrical supply houses dyed any color.

Scrim, used frequently and incorrectly to refer to Bobbinette or gauze, is actually considerably less transparent. It is occasionally used for a front drop in transformation scenes. i.e., a scene is painted on the drop, which seems opaque. When light is taken off the scrim drop, and brought up behind, the scrim becomes semi-transparent. Scrim is also used for draperies. It is available in a vast number of colors in 36″ widths, and in natural linen color in 72″ widths.

Velour is a cotton pile fabric, available in many colors. It is used for front curtains, and sometimes for backdrops and curtain type settings.

Flannel is a cheap substitute for velour; grey flannel back and side drops make an effective and useful semi-permanent setting when used with door frames, and doors.

Burlap is particularly useful for obtaining special texture effects. The burlap is sometimes dipped in paint and molded onto wire framework to obtain rugged tree-trunk effects, certain types of stone finish, etc. Also useful for basic upholstering. It can be obtained in widths from 36″ to 72″.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Flame-proofing compound is sold by theatrical supply houses, by the ten pound pail. Sal ammoniac and borax, used as a substitute, can be obtained from any drug supply company.

Glue. Gelatin glue in flake form is used with paste for fastening canvas to flats. White flake glue is a possible substitute. It is purchased by the pound or by the 100-lb. barrel. Cabinet glue can be purchased in cans ready for use. It is expensive and should be used only for emergency repairs.

Mailing Tubes of various sizes are used to imitate many circular objects, such as steam pipes, or cut in half, for making up a tile roof.

Padding. The hair type of padding commonly used under rugs, is available at most furniture stores in rolls of 100′ in thicknesses of from ¼″ to 1″ and widths from 27″ to 108″. For general stage use under floor cloths, on steps, practical rocks, etc. the ½″ thickness is adequate. The 6′ width is recommended. The cost varies with the thickness.

Paste is used mixed with glue for papier mâché work and in covering flats. Cold water ready-mix paste is recommended.

Plaster of Paris, used for making casts; purchased at paint and hardware stores.

Rosine, a patented preparation, is a flexible type glue. It is sold by theatrical supply houses, in 5 and 10 lb. cans.

Sash Cord, #8 (¼″ diameter) is used for lash lines. It is sold by hardware stores, in hanks of fifty feet.

III. GOOD PRACTICE IN SCENE AND PROPERTY CONSTRUCTION

Arch. The construction of a simple arch-flat is similar to that of a door-flat, except for the curved sweeps that form the top of the opening. These sweeps are cut in two pieces from 1″ 12″ stock. The inside stiles are notched to receive the ends of the sweeps, which are screwed to the stiles and to the toggle-bar above with 2½″ screws. Holes should be drilled for the screws, to prevent splitting.

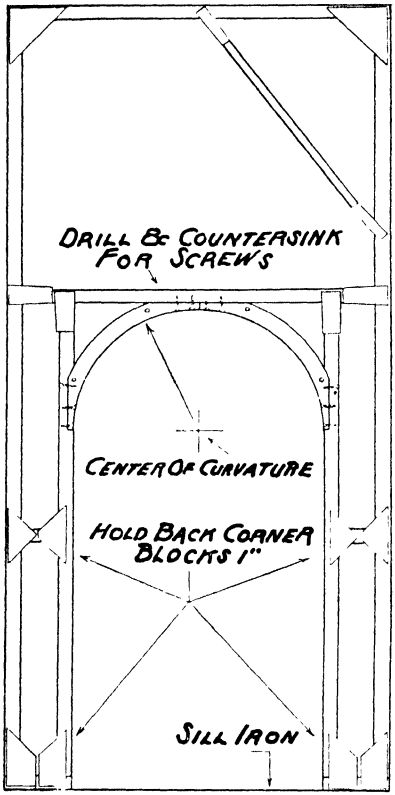
A reveal, or thickness piece, is generally specified by the designer to give the appearance of architectural reality to the arch. The curved-top reveal is generally made in two sections for ease in handling, and bolted together on stage.

To make a section of curved reveal, cut two sweeps similar to a sweep in the arch-flat, each 3″ wide. The two sweeps are fastened together at 10″ or 12″ intervals with "spreaders" of 1″ by 3″ stock, nailing or screwing through the sweeps into the ends of the spreaders, as shown in the drawing. The inside of the curve is then covered with 3/32″ profile board and canvased.

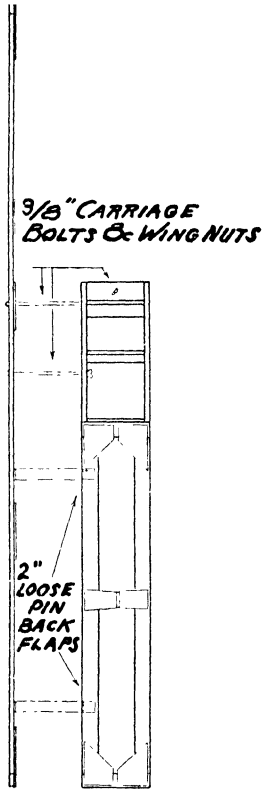
The reveals are bolted to the rear of the arch by four ⅜″ diameter 2½″ long carriage bolts and wing nuts. The head of the bolt is on the face of the flat, of course.

For information as to the construction and fastening of side reveals see "Reveals."

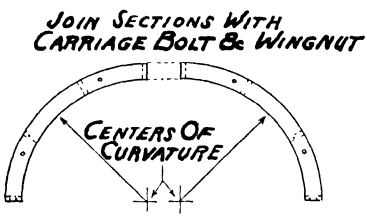
Backings. Backings for doorways and archways representing interiors are usually flats joined together in two-fold or three-fold sections. (See p. 580.) Backings representing exteriors are usually drops, although small window backings may be single flats.



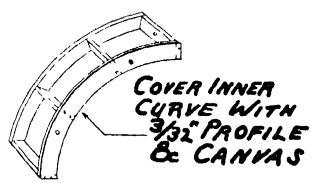
ARCH FLAT
REAR VIEW



ARCH FLAT
WITH REVEAL
SIDE VIEW



ARCH REVEAL
REAR VIEW



ONE SECTION
ARCH REVEAL
IN PERSPECTIVE

Balcony. A practical balcony, projecting on stage from a wall, is actually part of an offstage platform. For each foot of balcony projection, there should be a foot and a half of platform offstage. Thus a balcony projecting two feet, should be balanced by a three-foot platform.

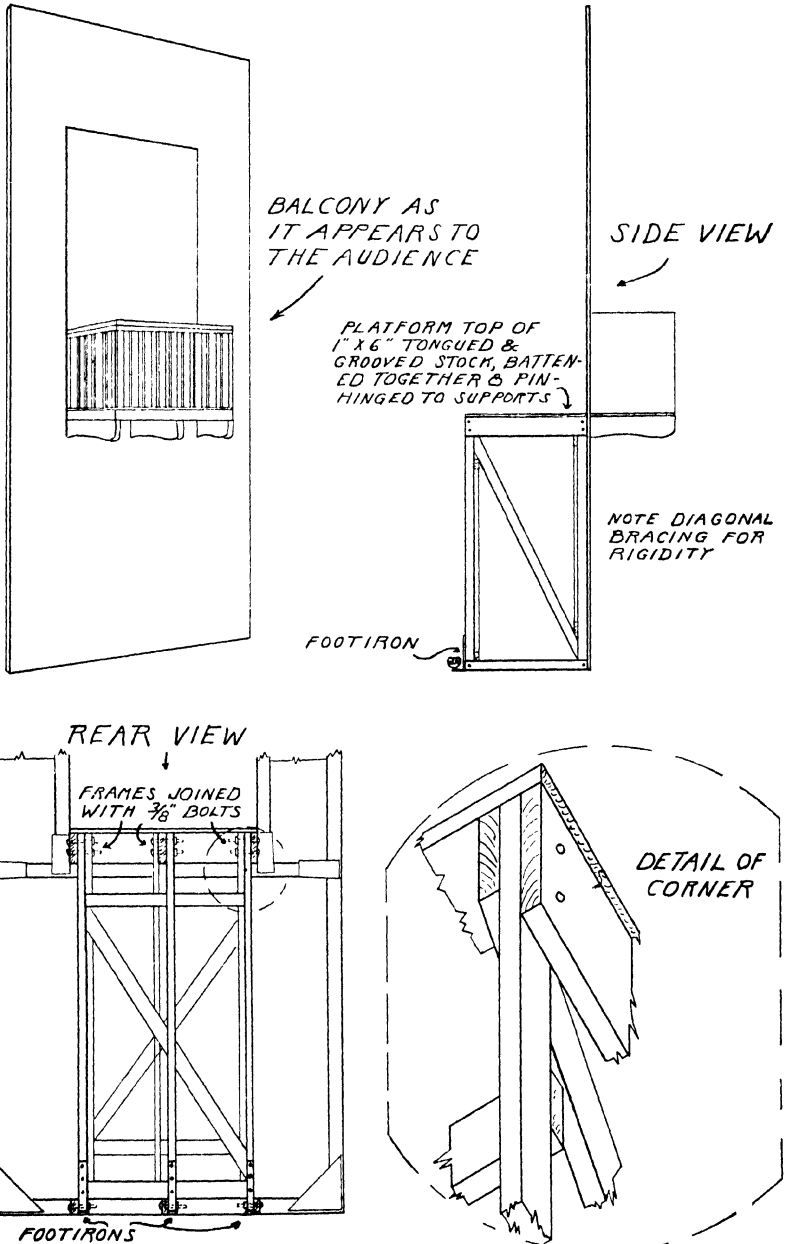
Frames should be made of 1¼″ stock, the top members, forming the support for balcony and platform flooring, 1¼″ by 6″; the rest of the frame 1¼″ by 3″ or 4″. These frames should not be more than 18″ apart. They are assembled with diagonal pieces of 1¼″ by 3″, bolted with carriage bolts.

Foot irons are bolted to the back members of the frames, at the bottom, so that the completed structure may be firmly stage-screwed to the floor, to prevent tipping forward.

The balustrade, or balcony railing, is made separately and fastened to the balcony with carriage bolts and wing nuts, or foot irons and stage screws, or with loose pin backflaps.

The entire balcony is built as a unit, used with a facing flat having an opening of proper size to allow the balcony to project through.

Backings may be fastened to the platform by bolting to the rear and side. A stair is provided to give access. For extra strength, fine cables, painted black to make them nearly invisible, may be hung from the front corners of the balcony to the grid.



A FREE STANDING BALCONY

Balustrades. These are sometimes made in outline for use in the background, in which case a flat frame is made, covered with 3/16″ profile and canvas, and the balusters then cut out of the profile with a keyhole saw. No corner braces are used in such flats and care must be taken to see that the toggle-bars are located behind balusters.

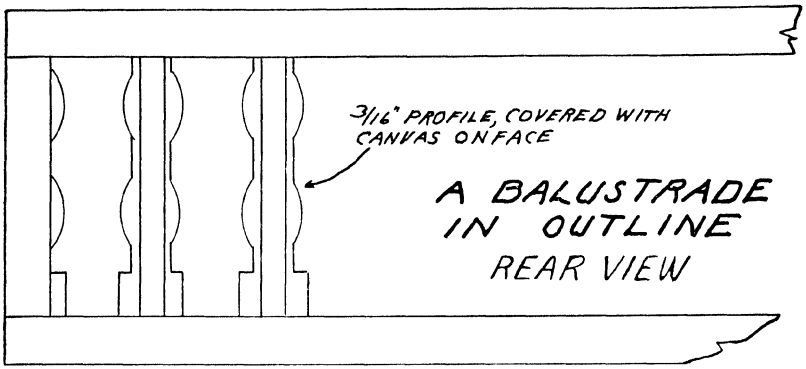
A three-dimensional balustrade, such as is used for a stair rail, may be made up from turned spindles, secured from a lumber yard, fastened to a bottom rail by a halved joint. The spindles may be fastened at the top between two pieces of 1″ by 2″ and a manufactured or made-up railing nailed onto the 1″ by 2″. Non-stage practice is to mortise the spindles at bottom and top. For elaborate, stone-type balustrades, the individual balusters may be of papier mâché, half-round only. A plaster paris cast is made from a clay model, and the half-balusters molded in this cast. If the balustrade is visible to the audience on both sides, it will be necessary to fasten two halves together. The papier mâché balustrade is reinforced by a cross or double cross of 1″ by 2″ and it is the 1″ by 2″ which is nailed to the top and bottom rail.

Baseboard. For realistic interiors, baseboards of 1″ stock with molding trim are applied to flats on stage, when the set is in place. Carriage bolts and wing nuts are generally used to fasten the baseboard to the flats.

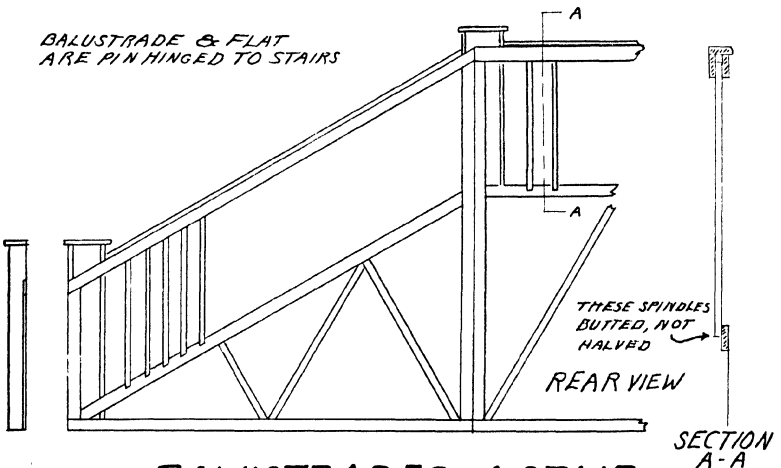
Batten. Battens are made up to necessary length from strips of 1″ by 4″, 1¼″ by 4″, or even 1″ by 2″ (used for bottom batten on gauze drops). The strips are spliced together, with an overlap of about 18″, with what is called a scarf joint.

Books. Books, in cases, on stage, not used by the actors, are made up in two ways. The best effect is secured by clamping and gluing together a whole row of books—obtained second hand at a few cents a piece—and then *sawing* away all but the back of the book and an inch or so of the body of the book. This false front can then be nailed and glued permanently in its place in the bookcase.

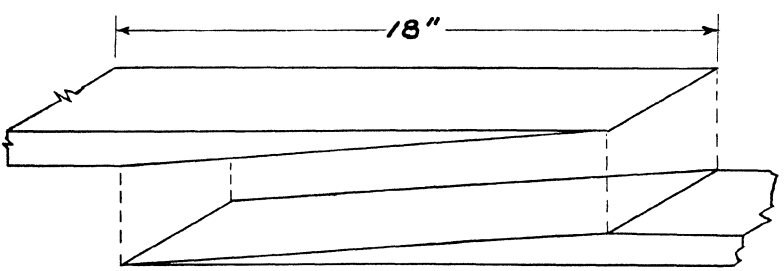
Another method is to glue and nail half-round, of varying widths and heights, to a strip of profile. After being painted, this row of book backs is fastened to a strip of 1″ by 2″ in the bookcase.



A BALUSTRADE IN OUTLINE
REAR VIEW



BALUSTRADES - A STAIR RAIL



SCARF JOINT
USED TO SPLICE A BATTEN

Borders. Borders are hung from the grid, above the set, to mask (conceal) the flies, and upper part of the stage-house from the audience. Made of canvas, velour, or flannel, fastened to a metal or wooden batten, they are rarely realistic in effect. They are most common in vaudeville, musical productions, and other conventionalized settings. Formerly used to mask the top of interior sets, they are now used realistically only in exterior scenes in the form of foliage borders. These are frequently cut out and given an irregular edge, and painted to imitate leaves and branches. The usual height of a border is six to nine feet.

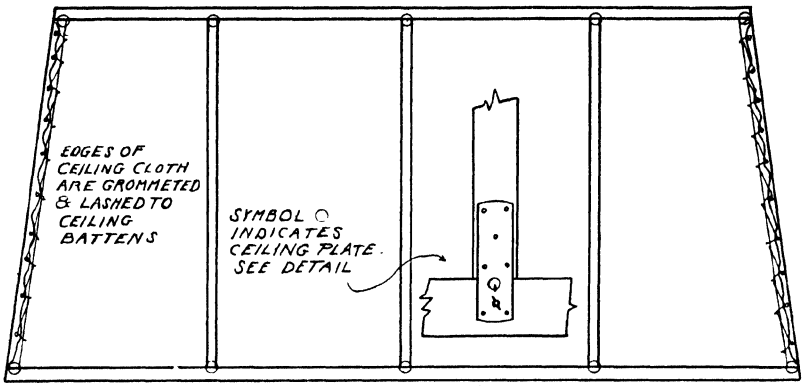
Bottles. Bottles, used in any quantity as in a bar, should be made of papier mâché, and glued and tacked to the shelf. Usually only a half bottle is necessary to give the audience the proper illusion. Real glass bottles are too heavy and the danger of breakage too great.

Ceilings. The simplest form of ceiling is the *roll ceiling*. It is simply a canvas drop, battened at the top and bottom, and fitted with stiffeners, 1″ by 4″ along the two outside edges, and 1″ by 3″ strips inside, at not more than six foot intervals. These stiffeners are then fitted to the top and bottom battens by special stage hardware called ceiling plates. The plates are screwed to the stiffeners, and bolted with short ⅜″ carriage bolts to the battens. The canvas edges are tacked to the outside stiffeners with small tacks, or they are sometimes hemmed and grommeted, and a #6 sash cord woven through the grommet holes, and hooked over nail heads on the inside edge of the stiffener. For transportation purposes the canvas is freed from the stiffeners, the ceiling plates unbolted, and the stiffeners removed, and the ceiling rolled up like a drop.

A *book ceiling* is a more rigid type. It is made up of two 5′ 9″ flats, each as long as the width of the entire set (perhaps thirty or thirty-five feet), hinged together on the face, and the crack covered with a canvas dutchman. Ceiling plates are fastened to the back in place of corner-blocks or Keystones.

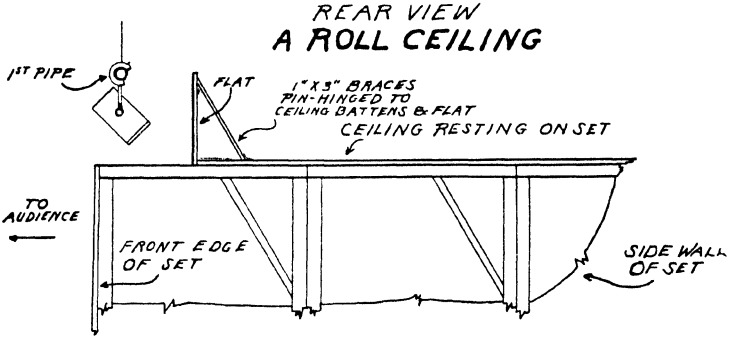
Ceilings should be made to overlap the set 6″ to 12″ on sides and back.

If the set is not very high, it is desirable to stop the ceiling about two feet from the front of the set, finishing off the front with a long flat. This space makes it possible to light the interior set from the first pipe. It is usual in such cases to make the first flat on each side of the set with a prong, or extension, which will mask off the ends of the ceiling piece. This prong is not shown on the drawing.

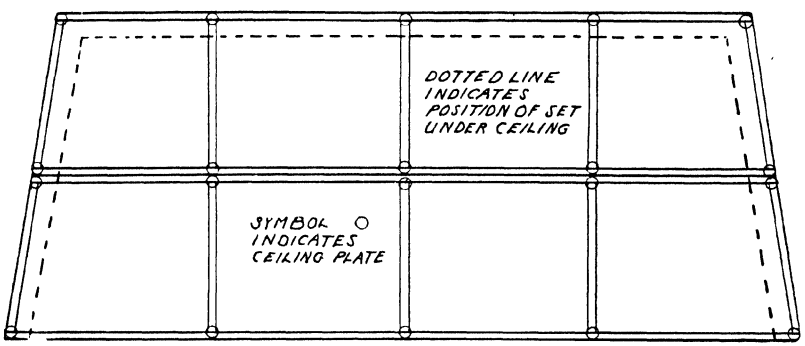


REAR VIEW

A ROLL CEILING



SIDE VIEW OF CEILING FINISHED OFF WITH FLAT TO ALLOW LIGHTING FROM 1ST PIPE



REAR VIEW

A BOOK CEILING

THE TWO HALVES ARE HINGED TOGETHER ON THE FACE & THE JOINT COVERED BY A DUTCHMAN.

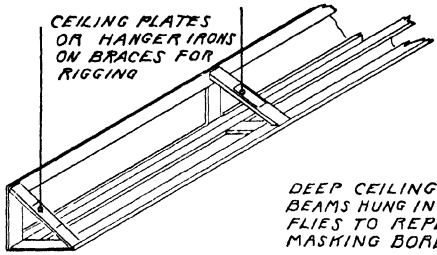
Ceiling Beams. The simplest ceiling beams are made up of two narrow flats hinged together to give the appearance of depth and thickness of a large beam, fitted with inside triangular braces. Such beams are hung from separate lines, which go through the ceiling cloth, and tie onto the beams. After the ceiling is in place, the beams are lifted to fit snug against the ceiling. Very large beams may be used in place of ceiling or border, being in effect borders with thickness pieces.

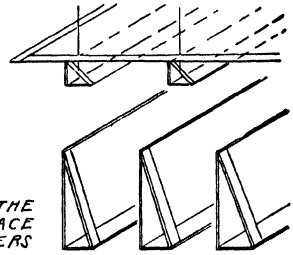
Column. A stage column is made by cutting a series of sweeps which are joined by three inside vertical 1″ by 3″ wooden strips. These horizontal sweeps should be placed not more than two feet apart. Thin profile is then bent around the sweeps, and nailed, and then covered with canvas.

The bottom sweep and vertical strips are nailed and bolted to the base, the top sweep and strips to the capital. Fluting can be represented by nailing small strips of wood to the shaft, before canvasing.

Cornice. A cornice is built up from a number of moldings and strips of wood, reinforced by a series of triangular blocks, nailed in back. It is made in sections as long as each section of unbroken wall, and bolted or fastened by loose-pin hinges to the flats.

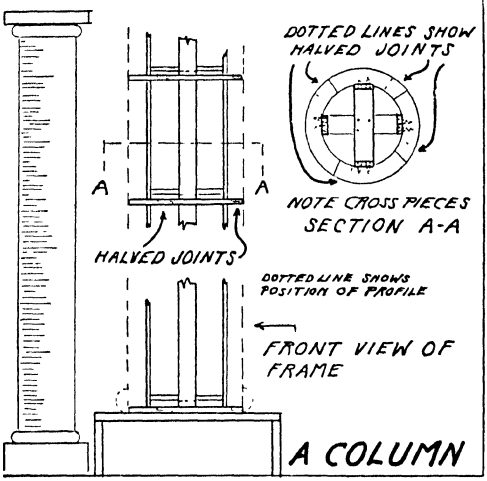
Cornice Flat. A small cornice may be bolted directly to the top rail of ordinary flats, but if the cornice is over a foot deep, a special toggle bar should be placed in the flat, so as to be even with the bottom edge of the cornice. The flats are canvased only to this cornice toggle-bar, and a batten nailed or screwed to the back of the cornice fits between toggle bar and rail on the flat and is usually pin-hinged to the top rail.



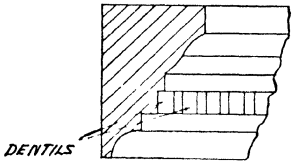


DEEP CEILING BEAMS HUNG IN THE FLIES TO REPLACE MASKING BORDERS

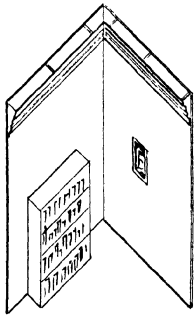
CEILING BEAMS



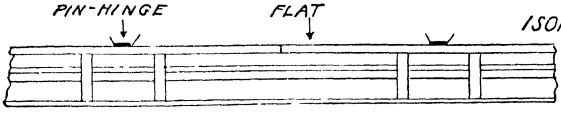
A COLUMN



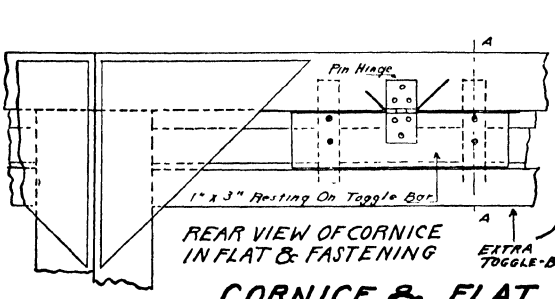
DESIGNER'S FRONT VIEW



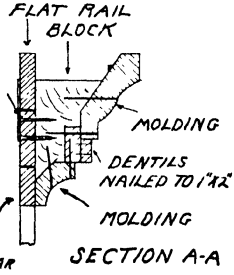
ISOMETRIC SHOWING POSITION OF CORNICE ON SET



TOP VIEW OF CORNICE IN FLAT



REAR VIEW OF CORNICE IN FLAT & FASTENING



SECTION A-A

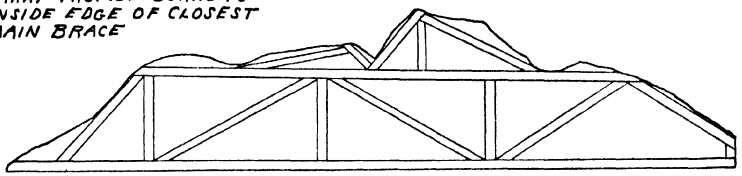
CORNICE & FLAT

Crate. Properties are usually transported in crates. These are built exactly like boxes 1″ by 3″ strips, except for the wide cracks between the strips, and a diagonal strip nailed to each side for reinforcing. The corners are usually reinforced by steel crate corners, purchased from theatrical supply houses.

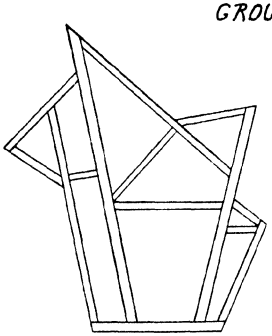
Cut Outs. These are set-pieces, of irregular outline, usually representing distant hills, rocks, etc. They are framed as flats are framed, but where it is impossible to represent the irregular outline by strips of 1″ by 3″ or 1″ by 2″, profile board is nailed to the edge (with 1¼″ clout nails, clinched), and after canvasing the profile is cut with a keyhole saw to the exact shape desired. Some technicians prefer to cut the profile before canvasing.

Door Flat. The only unusual factor in the construction of a door-flat is the sill iron, or saddle iron that forms the tie across the threshhold. The simplest joining is the sill iron, bent by the technician in the shop from ¾″ scrap steel, 3/16″ thick, and drilled and countersunk for #9 screws. If the rail on the sides of the door opening are at least 9″ each, the sill iron need not be bent to run up the sides. If the rail is less than 9″, the iron should be bent to run 12″ up the side. The wood of rail and stile must be cut away to allow for the 3/16″ thickness of the sill iron. A saddle iron is similar in purpose, but has two vertical members welded to the flat, sill iron to run up on either side of the door opening. These are obtained from theatrical supply houses.

CARRY PROFILE BOARD TO INSIDE EDGE OF CLOSEST MAIN BRACE

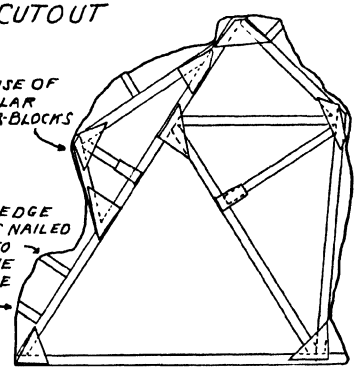


REAR VIEW CORNER-BLOCKS REMOVED
GROUND ROW CUTOUT



NOTE USE OF IRREGULAR CORNER-BLOCKS

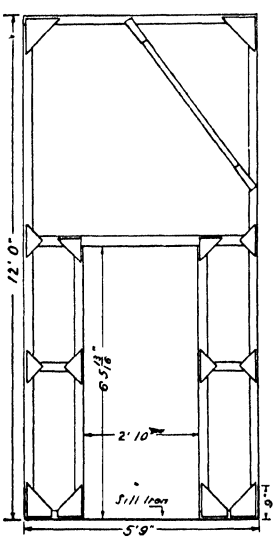
SMALL EDGE BRACES NAILED ONLY TO OUTLINE PROFILE



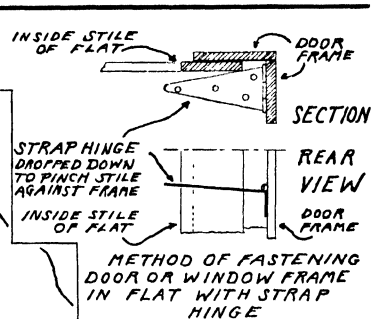
REAR VIEW CORNER-BLOCKS REMOVED
IRREGULAR SET-PIECE

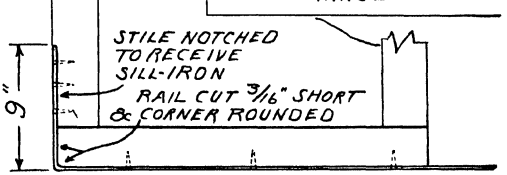
REAR VIEW MOUNTAIN CUTOUT

THREE TYPES OF CUTOUTS



REAR VIEW





DETAIL OF SILL IRON
CORNER-BLOCKS REMOVED

A DOOR FLAT

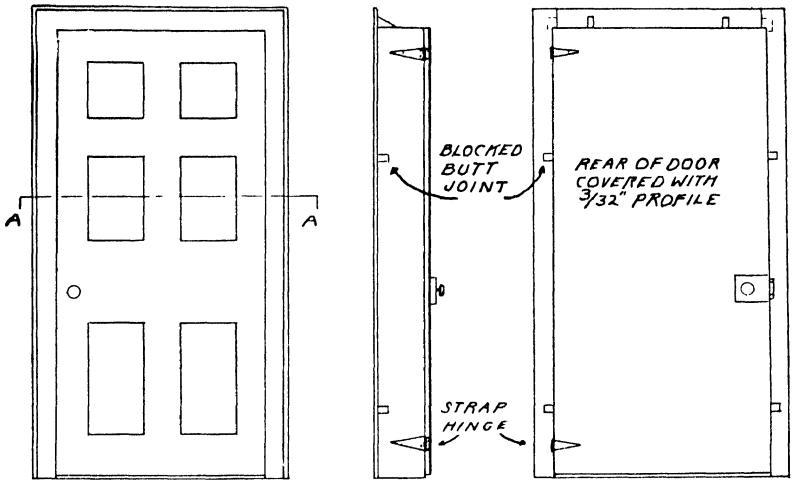
Door Frame and Door. The simplest type of door is a canvas-covered flat, hung in a door opening. This primitive type of door is rarely used any more. A variation of this type, useful for cabin doors, etc., is the same simple canvas or profile covered flat, hung—not in the door opening—but set back 6″ to 12″ by thickness pieces or reveals.

The commonest stage door is one that opens offstage (and whenever possible, all stage doors open offstage) framed of 1″ stock mortised and tenoned, with profile nailed over the panel openings in the rear, and a small molding applied around the edges of each panel. This type of door is usually hung at the back of a regular door frame, made of a threshold and two side pieces, a top piece, and top and side facing pieces. The stage door is usually hung not *in* the frame, but behind it, thus making a close fit unnecessary.

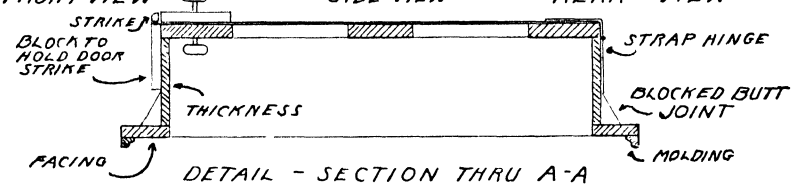
Front doors in interior scenes must open on stage. Regular doors are sometimes used, but are apt to be too heavy. It is preferable to make up a door of 1¼″ stock, mortised and tenoned, with 3/32″ profile set in for panels, held in place by small moldings on either side. These must be carefully fitted with ½″ clearance at top, and ⅜″ as clearance on each side.

The most usual mistake in making doors and door frames is in calculating the outside width of the door frame, in relation to the door-opening in the flat. If the door opening in the flat is 3′ then the outside measurement of the door casing which must fit in the opening is 28½″, and the door, if it is to swing on stage and fit inside the casing, 26¼″ wide. If the door fits *behind* the casing, as is the custom with doors opening off-stage, the door width will be the same as the casing width.

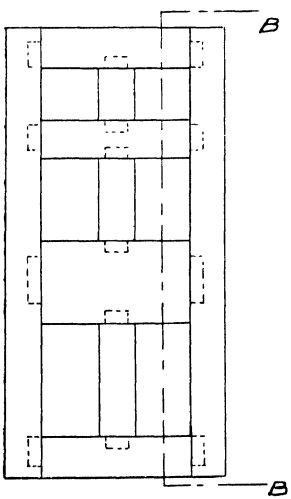
Door frames are usually bolted to the flat with two ⅜″ carriage bolts, on each side. For quick changes and stock sets, a large strap hinge is fastened to the side of the door frame, so that one flap will drop down when the frame is in place, thus holding the frame solid. See p. 617.



FRONT VIEW SIDE VIEW REAR VIEW



DETAIL - SECTION THRU A-A



FRAMING OF DOOR SHOWING MORTISE & TENON JOINTS

SECTION B-B

NOTES:
CHECK WIDTH & HEIGHT OF DOOR FRAME WITH DOOR FLAT TO INSURE PROPER FIT

DOORFRAME MAY BE FASTENED WITH FLAT ANGLE IRONS AT TOP INSTEAD OF MORTISE & TENON

FACING OF DOOR FRAME IS NAILED & SCREWED TO THICKNESS

DOOR & DOORFRAME

Drops—Plain. Plain drops are hung from the flies. In order that they may hang smoothly, they are battened at the bottom and top. This consists in tacking and gluing the top edges of the canvas to a strip of 1″ by 4″ (see "Batten") as long as the drop is wide. Another strip of 1″ by 4″ is then glued so that the canvas is caught between the two pieces. This process is repeated along the bottom edge, using 1″ by 3″ stock. The drop is rolled out on its batten for transportation. The material of the drop itself is usually canvas sewed together with the seams horizontal.

Drops—Framed. Where a steadier background is desired, it is possible to fasten stretchers between the bottom and top battens, exactly as a roll ceiling is made (see "Ceiling"). This is useful for simple backwalls of interior sets, if no ceiling is used, and if there is no door opening.

Drops—Legs. A type of drop similar to a border at the top, with side strips running to the stage floor. The bottom batten is in two parts, one for each leg.

Drops, Gauze. See "Materials."

Flat. See pp. 576-578.

Fireplace Flat. A simple flat, with a rectangular opening at the bottom. If the opening is very wide, a sill iron is used to tie across the bottom.

Fireplace. Two or more frames of 1″ by 3″ or 1″ by 2″ outline the rear, front, and recessed face if any. These are joined together by stretchers, and the whole covered with profile, and/or canvas. Molding trim is added afterward, and the mantel shelf nailed to the top. The fireplace is set up on stage by fastening with pin-hinges to the flat. A small fireplace backing is set behind the opening, and serves to represent the interior.

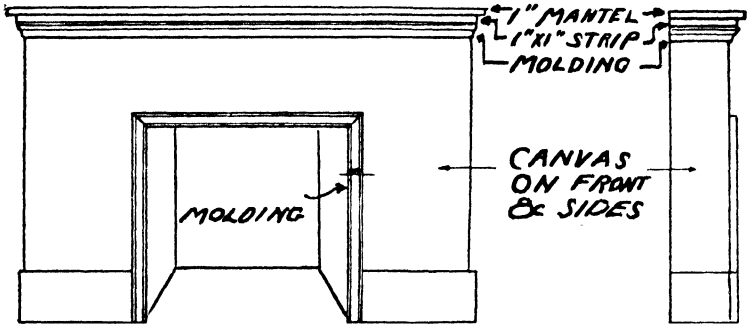
Food. Wax or papier mâché replicas of food are used if food is not eaten. A meal served and eaten on stage may be completely realistic, secured from a restaurant just before use on stage; but since stage convention allows a meal to be represented with very little actual eating, it is customary when possible to use wax or papier mâché main dishes and to serve and eat only slices of dark or light bread, cut in the shape of the meat or fish that is served.

Flame-Proofing. See p. 596.

Floor Cloth. See p. 592.

Furniture. See p. 591.

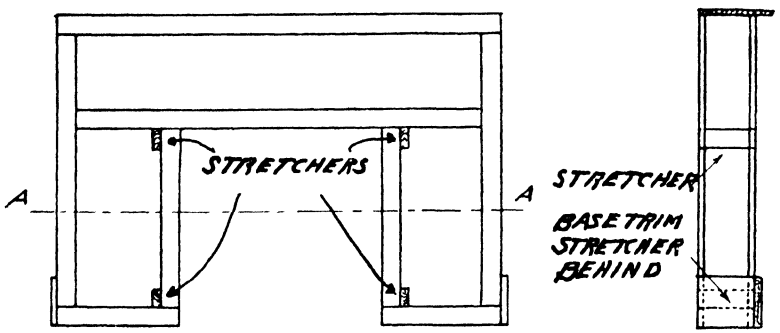
Grass. See p. 591.



FIRE OPENING & CHIMNEY BACK IS SMALL 3-FOLD

FRONT VIEW

END VIEW



REAR VIEW - MANTEL REMOVED. FRONT FRAME IS SIMILAR. JOINTS MAY BE MORTISE & TENON OR KEYSTONED & CORNER-BLOCKED

END VIEW CANVAS & MOLDING REMOVED

SECTION A-A.
NOTE STRETCHERS TYING TWO FRAMES TOGETHER

A FIREPLACE

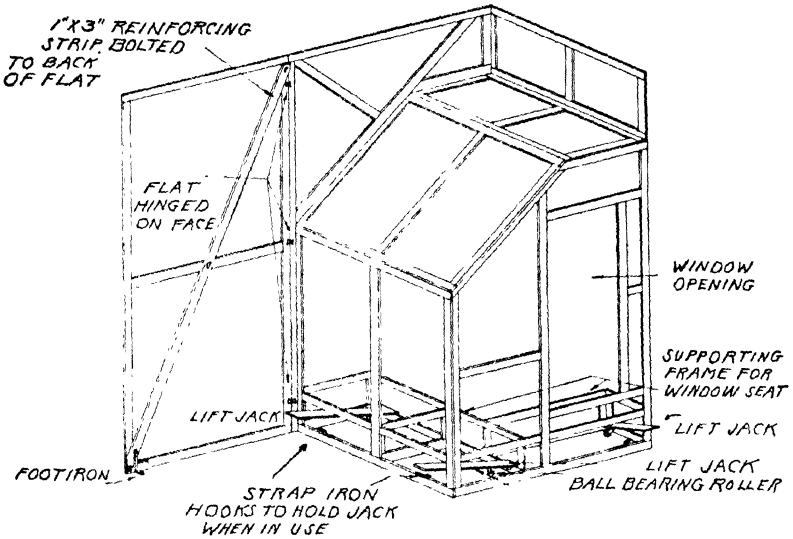
Gable Room. The simplest type of gable room is that with rear or side walls sloping in. The sloping wall is a framed flat, hinged to the vertical wall, and supported partly by resting on the adjacent side wall, but in main with its weight supported by lines from the grid.

A small gable is usually built to be assembled as a unit, and *rolled* on and off stage.

Hinging Flats Together. See p. 580.

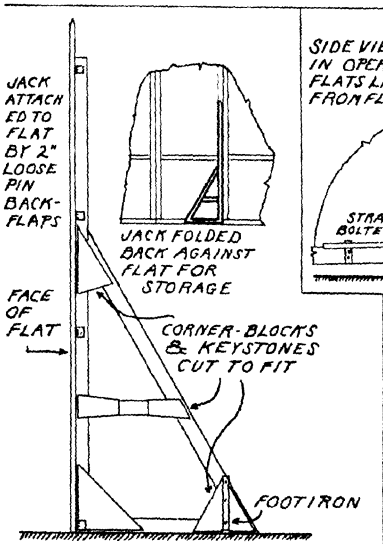
Jacks—Brace Type. This is the firmest type of stage bracing, infinitely preferred to the stage brace, as it insures an absolutely rigid fastening. Brace jacks are usually hinged to the flat they are meant to brace, so they may be folded back against the flat for storage, or scene shifting.

Jacks—Lift Type. This type of jack makes it possible to roll set pieces on and off stage, and let them down solidly in place when in use, whereas a piece of scenery mounted on rollers tends to tremble and shake slightly. The lift jack consists simply of the lever, usually 1¼″ by 6″, the pivot which is a large strap hinge, or two 2″ backflaps, side by side, and the roller. The distance from the center of the roller to the joint of the hinge should be about one-fifth of the total length of the lever. The lift jack is put into operation by pressing down on the lever with the foot, and then catching the end under a scrap-iron hook, or block of wood to hold it in place.



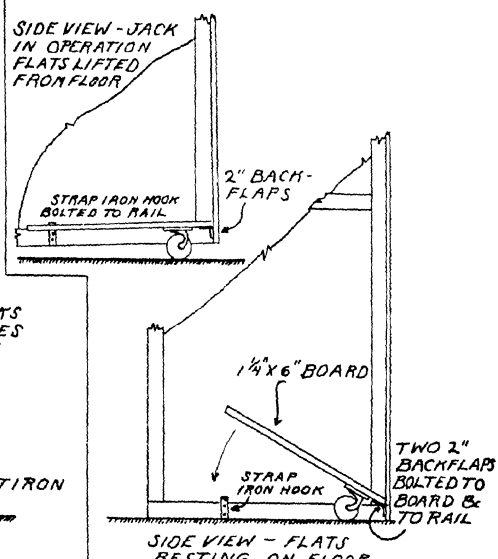
A SMALL GABLED UNIT

REAR ISOMETRIC VIEW



A BRACE JACK

SIDE VIEW OF JACK ATTACHED TO FLAT



A SIMPLE LIFT JACK

Joints. The *butt joint* is the simplest form of joint. Any two pieces of wood having plane surfaces in contact and fastened together make a butt joint. Its strength is no greater than the holding power of the nails, corner block or keystone, used to fasten it.

The *blocked butt joint* is a butt joint reinforced by one or more blocks of wood in the angle between the two members. It is used for reinforcing door and window frames, and occasionally in furniture construction. It is stronger than the butt joint.

The *miter joint* is a form of butt joint in which the two members meet at an angle. It is used in joining moldings; the simple picture frame is the most common example of its use.

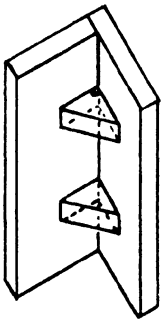
The *halved joint* is made by two overlapping pieces of wood, half of each being cut away. It is sometimes used to give additional strength to flat construction, and also in furniture construction. Stronger than the butt joint, it is less strong than the mortise and tenon.

The *notched joint* is a form of the halved joint. When the members being joined intersect, rather than lapping their ends, the joint is said to be notched.

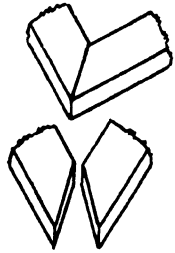
The *mortise and tenon joint* is made by cutting a tenon (or tongue) in the end of one piece, and a mortise (or slot) in the other piece of lumber. This joint is frequently used in flat frames. If the mortise or slot goes completely through the wood, the joint is called an open-ended mortise and tenon. If it is made so that it is open along the side, it is called an open-sided mortise and tenon. It is usually glued as well as nailed, and is a very strong joint. The technician frequently uses it in furniture construction, as well as for making extra-strong flats.

The *scarf joint* is used for splicing scene strips together to get lengths over 16′, for extra tall flats, and for battens. The ends to be joined are cut to taper with saw or plane for 18″. The two tapered surfaces are then glued together and nailed with clout nails ¼″ longer than the thickness of the wood, clinching the ends of the nails on a steel plate. A row of large tacks or fine box nails is placed at each fine edge of the splice, to prevent splitting back. A well-made scarf joint will take as much strain as the wood from which it is made.

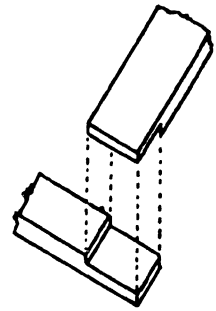
Tongue and groove is the type of joint used in joining flooring. The boards come from the mill with a tongue on one side and a groove on the other.



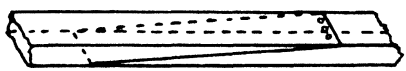
BLOCKED BUTT JOINT



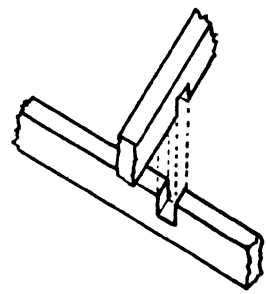
MITER JOINT



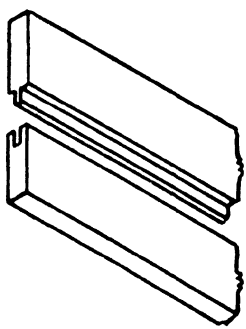
HALVED JOINT



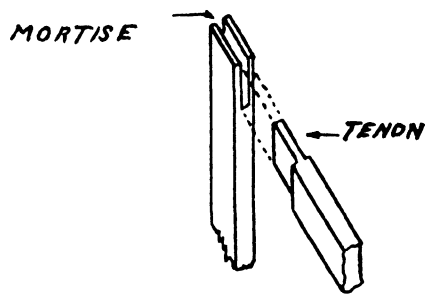
SCARF JOINT



NOTCHED JOINT



TONGUE & GROOVE



OPEN MORTISE & TENON JOINT

JOINTS

Log Cabin. On the framework of an ordinary flat, strips are nailed to outline the outside curve of each log. Chicken wire is then fastened to these strips in the shape of the log, and covered with canvas. If extra strength is desired, half circles cut from 1″ by 12″ may be nailed to the strips, to help hold the chicken wire in the proper curve. The effect of intersecting ends of logs in a log cabin exterior is obtained by building out with chicken wire, profile, and canvas—not the logs the ends are supposed to be attached to, but building onto the logs they are supposed to intersect.

A lesser log projection, such as the inside of a log house, may be obtained by an ordinary flat to which are attached in regular rows, 9″ to 12″ folds of canvas, soaked in paste and glue mixture. These must be pressed down on the flat surface, until dry.

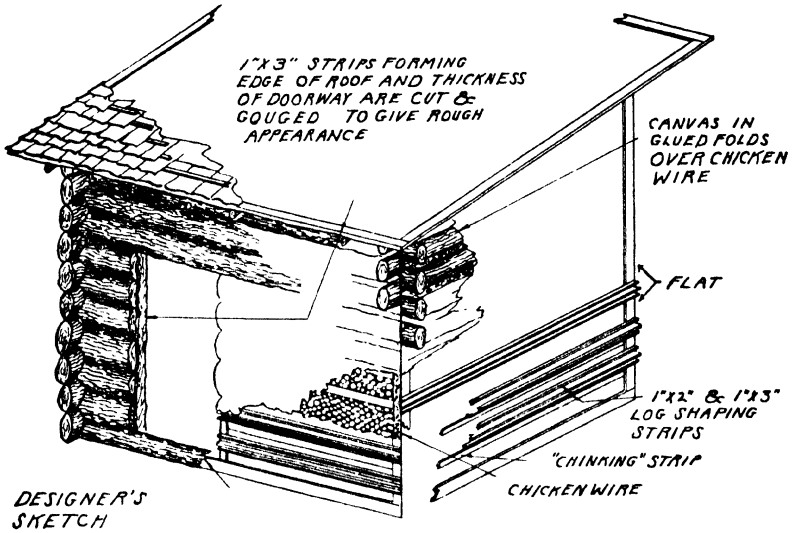
Mirror. Mirrors are rarely used on stage because they reflect the lights into the eyes of the audience. If a real mirror is used, the surface is covered with white of egg, or soaped lightly to prevent reflection. Sometimes sheets of tin or aluminum are used as a substitute for mirror glass.

Moldings and Ornaments. Special moldings and ornaments not obtainable from lumber dealers may be made up by modeling in clay, making a plaster cast, and filling it with papier mâché, in the method described on p. 590. Note that large varieties of pressed-wood ornaments may be obtained for application to furniture, to imitate wood carving. Your lumber dealer can obtain a catalog for you.

Paneling. Elaborate very realistic interior sets are sometimes built with paneled walls. The panels are 3/32″ profile board, applied from the rear and canvased on the face. The panel outlines may be actual wood stock, joined with a notched joint at intersections; or if the projecting face of the panel is more than 6″ wide, it is framed of pieces 1″ by 3″ to save weight, and covered with 3/32″ profile and canvas.

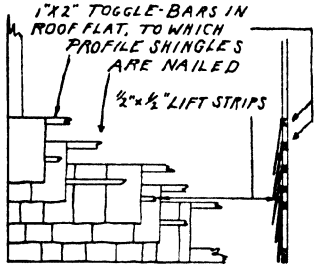
Papier Maché. See p. 590.

Plaster of Paris. See p. 590.

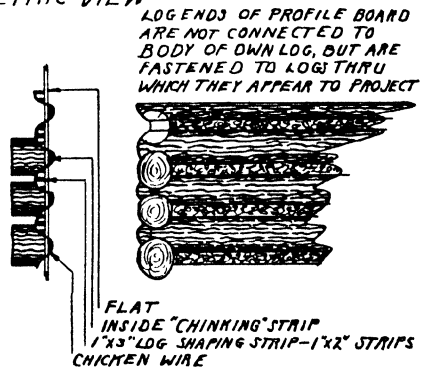


DESIGNER'S SKETCH

ISOMETRIC VIEW

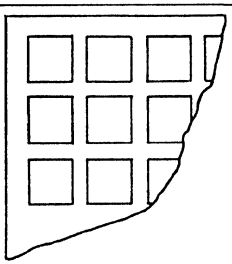


TOP VIEW & SECTION DETAIL OF ROOF

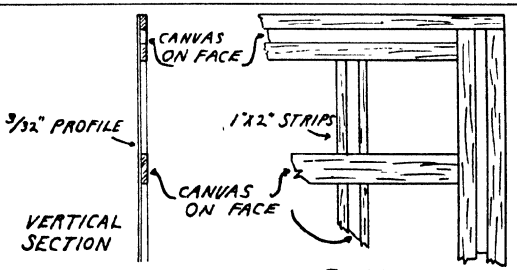


END & SIDE DETAIL OF LOGS

A LOG CABIN



FRONT VIEW



REAR VIEW
PROFILE REMOVED

PANELING

Parallels and Platforms. The parallel is the theatre form of folding platform. It is the lightest, most portable type of platform yet devised. The principle of construction may be applied to any size platform, but in practice, where a large area platform is needed, a number of parallel platform supports are used, set about 2′ to 3′ apart, covered with large platform tops, covering the parallels and also spanning the intervals between parallels.

The frames from which the parallels are made are an adaptation of the simple flat; but the triangular bracing is much more important. Parallel frames are usually built with the verticals (stiles) projecting below the bottom rail, which has the position of a very low toggle bar. This makes it easier to set up the parallel on an irregular floor surface.

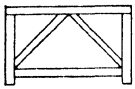
If possible parallels should be mortised and tenoned, but may be made with simple butt joints held by corner blocks and keystones, provided 1¼″ stock is used, instead of 1″. When opened up, the span in one direction should be 2′ or less between supporting frames.

The method of hinging illustrated here was originated by the author and is superior to the form generally used on Broadway, as it makes a perfect rectangular shape when opened.

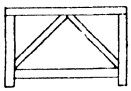
The parallel is not customarily convased. If used on stage, a flat is pin-hinged or bolted to the side of the parallel.

Pin-Hinged. Any type of hinge with a removable pin is referred to as a pin-hinge; usually the 2″ loose pin backflap is meant. The stage technician uses the pin-hinge as a method of quick, firm fastening, rather than as a true hinge. Lengths of fairly heavy wire are carried by the stage grips, and these are used for quick fastening, the ends being bent over to prevent the wire from slipping out.

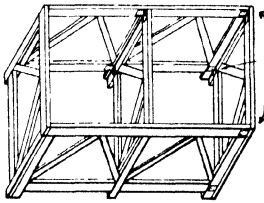
Pullman Section. While the technician may rarely be called upon to put a Pullman section on stage, the principles of scene construction used in the construction of such a set are typical of all other complicated or unusual representations. *The fundamental structural planes are determined and frames built which carry out these outlines. These frames are joined together by stretcher pieces.* All curved surfaces are first covered by light profile, before canvasing.



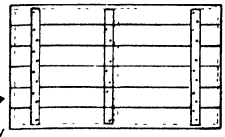
END FRAMES



INSIDE FRAME

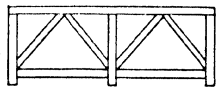


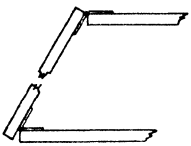
ISOMETRIC VIEW



BATTENED TOP
BATTENS SCREWED ON

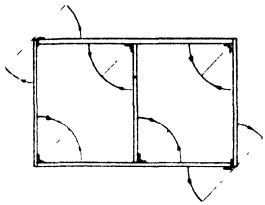
SIDE FRAMES



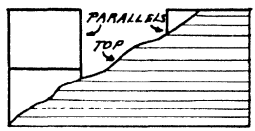


DETAIL OF HINGING

NOTE: ALL RIGHT-ANGLE JOINTS IN FRAMES MORTISED & TENONED — BRACES BUTTED & NAILED



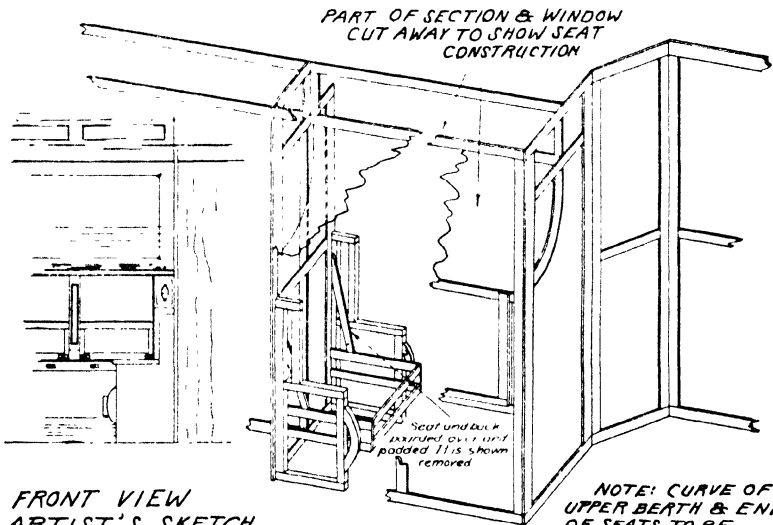
HINGING PLAN



METHOD OF USING A LARGE PLATFORM TOP TO SPAN THE SPACE BETWEEN TWO PARALLELS

PLAN

A PARALLEL



FRONT VIEW ARTIST'S SKETCH

NOTE: CURVE OF UPPER BERTH & ENDS OF SEATS TO BE COVERED WITH PROFILE

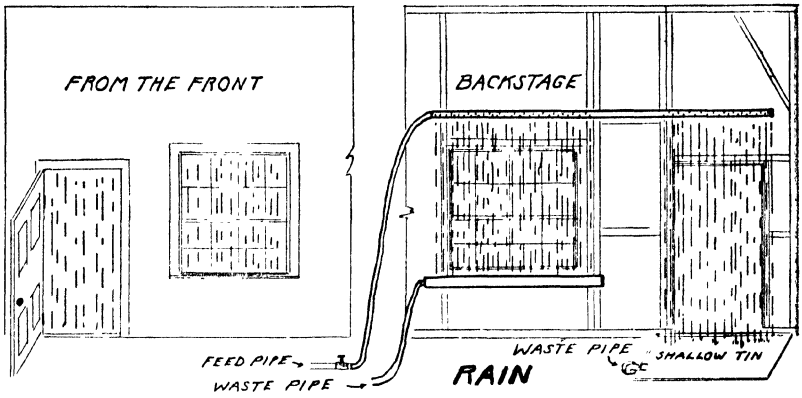
ISOMETRIC REAR VIEW

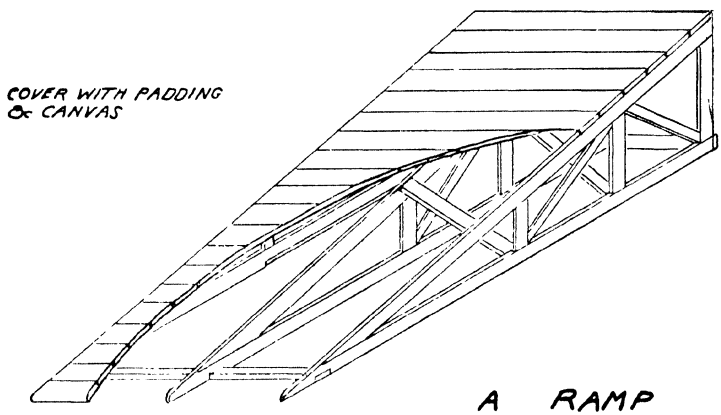
A PULLMAN SECTION

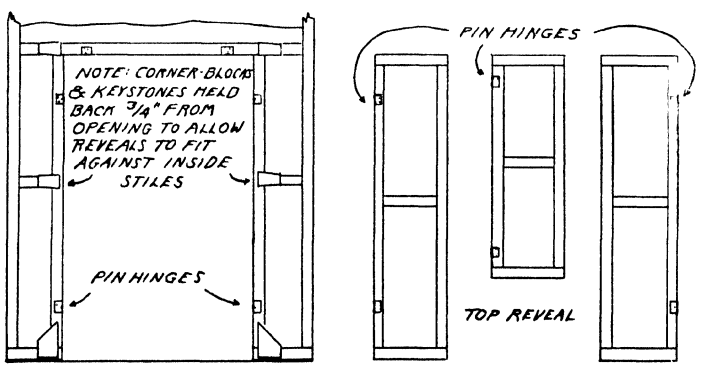
Rain. General rain effects are created by use of light and gauze drops. Special realistic rain is sometimes required outside of doors, windows, etc. This is accomplished by a perforated 1″ or 2″ pipe above the door or the window, out of sight of the audience, which is connected with the water system through a controlled valve. A metal trough is installed directly below, on the floor, or below window height, and this connected with the waste or sewer pipe. Intensity and duration of the rain storm are controlled by the valve.

Ramp. A stage ramp is made of a parallel series of triangular flat frames, tied together with stretcher strips, and nailed flooring. Ramps should have the top surface padded and canvased. If the ramps are steep, strips are sometimes nailed across to help the actors get firm footing.

Reveals. Reveals or thickness pieces are simply very narrow flats, hinged or screwed or nailed at right angles to door and window openings, to give the effect of thickness of wall. If the reveal is less than six inches wide it is customary to use a ½″ or 1″ piece of board, canvased on the surface to give a good paint surface.


FROM THE FRONT
BACKSTAGE
FEED PIPE
WASTE PIPE
WASTE PIPE
SHALLOW TIN
RAIN


COVER WITH PADDING & CANVAS
A RAMP


NOTE: CORNER BLOCKS & KEYSTONES HELD BACK 3/4" FROM OPENING TO ALLOW REVEALS TO FIT AGAINST INSIDE STILES
PIN HINGES
PIN HINGES
TOP REVEAL
DOOR FLAT FITTED FOR REVEALS
SIDE REVEAL
SIDE REVEAL
REVEALS

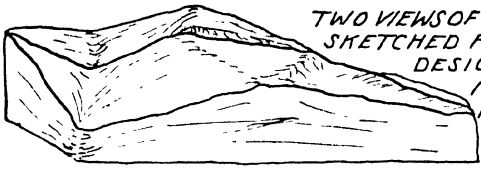
Rocks, Scenic and Practical. Scenic rocks, used as part of the scenic background, are wooden frames, of 1″ by 3″ or 1″ by 2″, built to the general shape of the desired rock, and finished by covering the frame with chicken wire (fastened with small staples) and then canvas, which is bent and folded to give the exact shape specified.

Practical rocks, on which actors work, present a more difficult problem. The scene designer must furnish a scale model of the rock to the technician. The technician will determine from this model the main straight contour lines, and draw these straight contour lines on a scale plan of the rock. There will be one flat frame built for each of these contour lines. By means of dividers, the technician will determine from the model the top outline which each of these contour frames will have. He will then draft the frame in outline, and then determine the vertical and triangular bracing that is necessary. If there is more than a 2″ span between frames, additional frames should be added. (See p. 643, "Weight-bearing Structures.")

If the designer furnishes the scale model in modeling clay, the technician may, after determining the main straight contour lines, cut through the model with a sharp knife at these points. Each cross-section so revealed will be the outline of a frame.

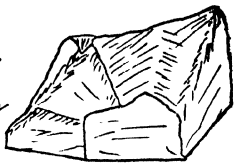
The joints of these frames are butt-jointed, as the diverse angles make it impractical to mortise and tenon the frames. Typical bracing is shown on the opposite plate. If extra strength is desired, the vertical and diagonal braces may be overlapped and bolted to the top and bottom rails with 3/16″ stove bolts.

When the frames are completed and ready for assembly, a trial set-up should be made first, with the frames lightly tacked together. It will be found that some of the frames will need beveling on the ends to fit smoothly. Note: it is essential that there be a vertical at each point where a cross frame is joined to a main frame.

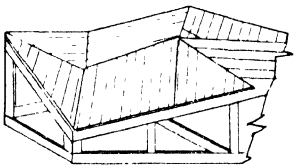


TWO VIEWS OF ROCK SKETCHED FROM DESIGNER'S MODEL IN CLAY

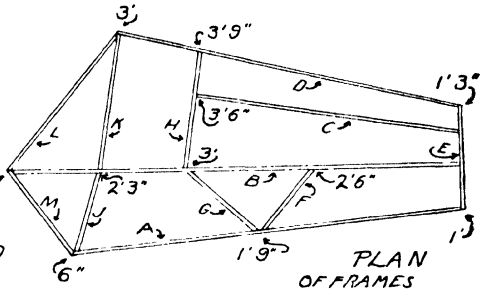
FRONT VIEW



END VIEW

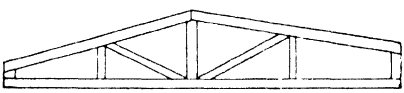


SECTION OF ROCK WITH CANVAS & PADDING REMOVED



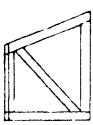
PLAN OF FRAMES

E



A

HEIGHTS ABOVE FLOOR LEVEL SHOW IN PLAN, USED TO DETERMINE OUTLINE OF FRAMES



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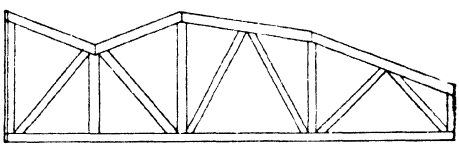
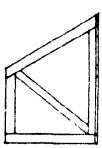
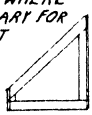


B

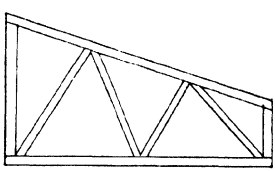
BEVEL ENDS OF FRAMES WHERE NECESSARY FOR SNUG FIT



G



J



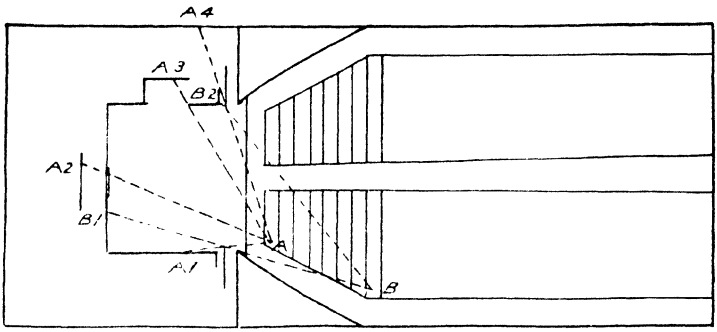
C

SEVEN TYPICAL FRAMES OF THE TWELVE USED IN ROCK

JOIN FRAMES WITH KEY-STONES & CORNER-BLOCKS CUT TO FIT.... USE 1"A6" TONGUED & GROOVED FLOOR-ING NAILED TO FRAMES

A PRACTICAL ROCK

Sight Lines. The sight lines of a set are the lines of vision from the extreme positions in the auditorium; from the front seat, from the back seat, from the extreme sides. The actual sight lines may be worked out on a plan and a vertical section of the theatre, showing the set on stage. There are two general types of information to be determined: (1) Can the entire set be seen from the extreme positions in the auditorium? and (2) Is the set so masked at edges and through doors and windows that the backstage area or the stageflies cannot be seen from the extreme positions in the auditorium? Thus in the plate opposite it can be seen that the set is fully visible from the extreme seats, but that spectators in the front row can look up into the flies, and from the seats in the front row, spectators can look off stage.

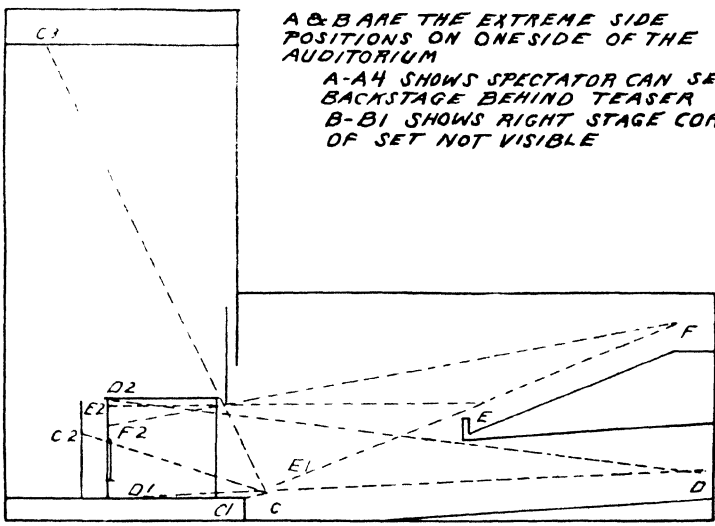


PLAN

A & B ARE THE EXTREME SIDE POSITIONS ON ONE SIDE OF THE AUDITORIUM

A-A4 SHOWS SPECTATOR CAN SEE BACKSTAGE BEHIND TEASER

B-B1 SHOWS RIGHT STAGE CORNER OF SET NOT VISIBLE



SECTIONAL ELEVATION

C - EYE LEVEL OF SPECTATOR IN FRONT ROW
C-C2 SHOWS BACKING IS TALLER THAN NECESSARY.
C-C3 SHOWS TEASER IS TOO HIGH TO MASK GRID
D - EYE LEVEL OF SPECTATOR IN LAST ROW
E - EYE LEVEL OF SPECTATOR IN FIRST ROW OF BALCONY
F - EYE LEVEL OF SPECTATOR IN LAST ROW OF BALCONY

EYE LEVEL IS TAKEN AT 42" ABOVE FLOOR

TWO VIEWS NECESSARY TO DETERMINE PROPER THEATRE & SET

SIGHT LINES

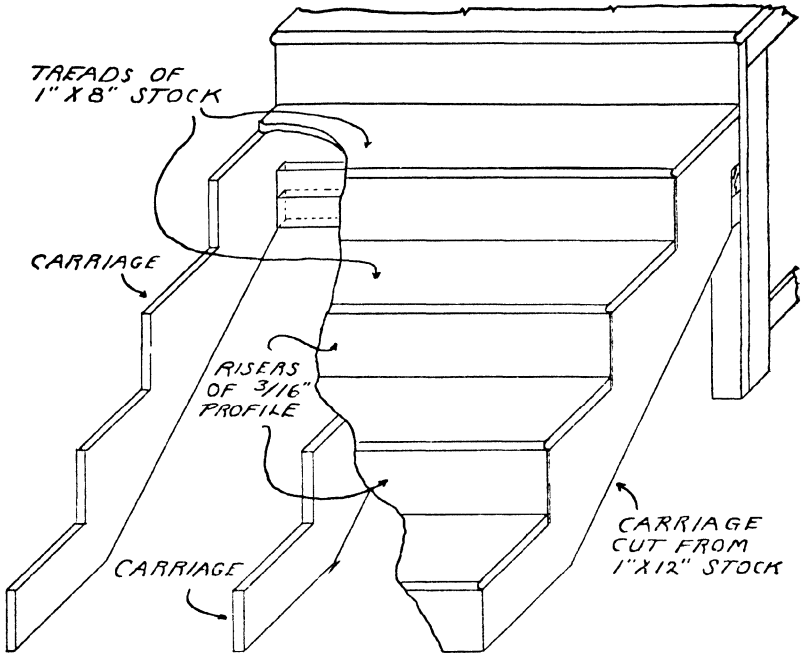
Smoke. The usual method of obtaining smoke on stage is by a chemical reaction: ammonia fumes passed through hydrochloric acid produce a white smoke in the form of NH_4Cl. If a large quantity of smoke is desired, commercial smoke or smudge pots are used. It is essential that in this case the smoke doors above stage be open, to provide a strong upward draft, and prevent the smoke from getting out into the auditorium. Low pressure steam (dead steam) is convenient way of getting a white smoke or steam on stage. The steam pipe should be run to an air-tight box on stage, and released from the box by a hose to the point desired. Small amounts of smoke or steam may be obtained from melting dry ice.

Snow. Snow on the costume of an actor is coarse salt or white cornmeal. The traditional snow storms of melodrama were obtained by confetti-like bits of white paper, shaken in a long canvas cradle full of holes. As the bits of paper escaped they floated more or less realistically, onto the white canvas snowbank (built on a wood and wire frame). This method is still used, but fire laws make it necessary to use flameproofed paper.

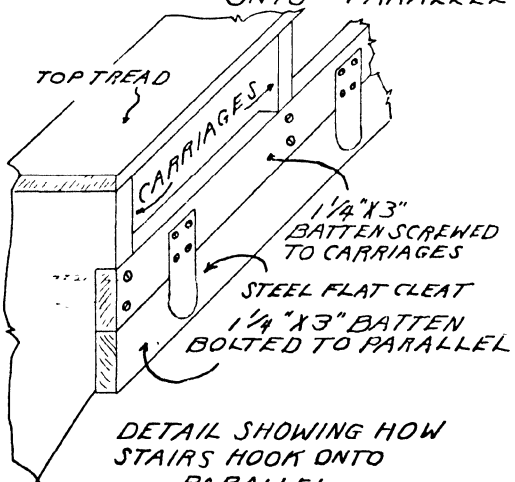
Stairs. The essential parts of a stair are the carriages, which are the notched timbers forming the structural foundation, the treads, which are the boards actually stepped on, and the risers, which are vertical boards between treads. Onstage stairs are almost always hooked onto the edge of a parallel platform. The balustrade is made separately, attached to a flat, and set up on stage, fastened to the edge of the stairs, by pin-hinges.

Off-stage stairs, to give access to balconies, platforms, etc., are made without risers, and the balustrade is replaced by a practical handrail, bolted to the stairs and platform, to give the actors support.

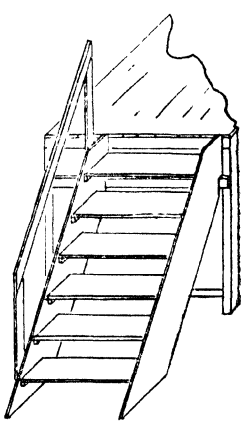
Note that the riser of a stair should never exceed $7\frac{1}{2}''$ in height, and the tread should never be less than $8\frac{1}{2}''$ in width. These are limitations: a more comfortable step has a $7''$ riser, and at least $10\frac{1}{2}''$ width of tread.



CUT-AWAY VIEW OF STAIRS HOOKED ONTO PARALLEL



DETAIL SHOWING HOW STAIRS HOOK ONTO PARALLEL



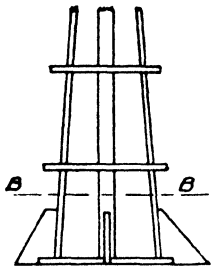
TYPE OF STAIRS USED OFF-STAGE

STAIRS

Tree Trunk. A tree trunk need not be completely rounded. Not more than three-quarters of the tree will be visible to the audience. Construction is a good deal simpler than a column, because the irregular shape makes unnecessary the series of curved sweeps used to outline the form of a column. Instead cross-pieces may be used, made of 1″ by 3″ and of the size of the tree diameter. As the diameter will vary with the taper of the tree, there should be cross-pieces every two or three feet from bottom to top. These horizontal cross-pieces are tied together by vertical strips of 1″ by 3″, screwed (or hinged for greater strength) to the ends of the cross-pieces. This frame is then covered with chicken wire and canvased, leaving projecting folds in the canvas to imitate the bark of the tree.

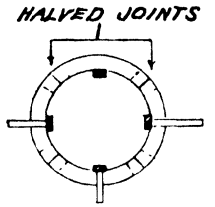
A branch is built the same way and attached at the proper angle to the main trunk. The plan must allow for cross-pieces above and below the place where the branch joins the main trunk, in order that the branch may be firmly fastened. If the branch is large, it is desirable to have two branches, one on each side, balancing each other. Very large, rather squat tree trunks may be mounted on rollers. The tree trunk is equipped with foot irons on the back of the stage for screwing to the floor. It is advised that a line also be dropped from the grid and made fast to a hanger iron at the top of the trunk, to prevent any possibility of the tree falling over.

If the trunk has a wide-spreading root structure, such as swamp maples have, it is best to add framework at the bottom for this, rather than try to make the fundamental shape the finished shape of the roots.



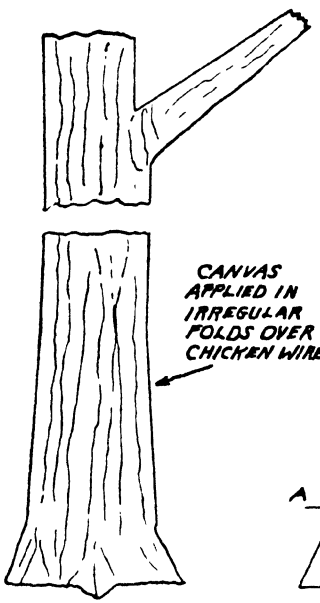
FRONT VIEW

NOTE: VERTICAL STRIPS MAY BE NAILED TO OUTSIDE OF CURVED FRAMES FOR GREATER RIGIDITY BEFORE WIRE & CANVAS ARE APPLIED.

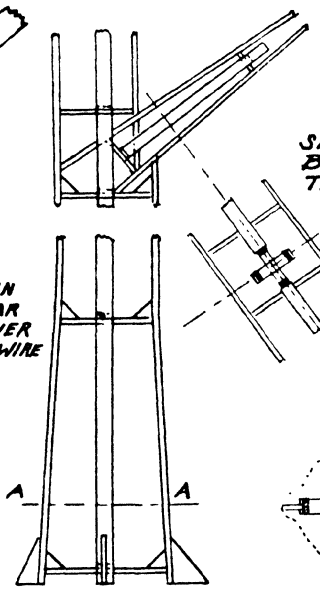


SECTION B-B

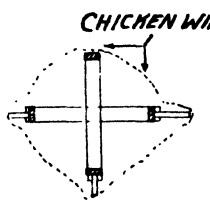
ADAPTATION OF COLUMN CONSTRUCTION



FRONT VIEW



FRONT VIEW

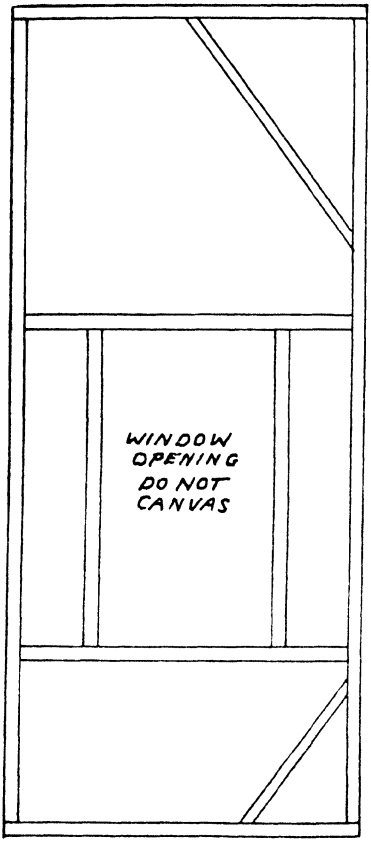


SECTION A-A

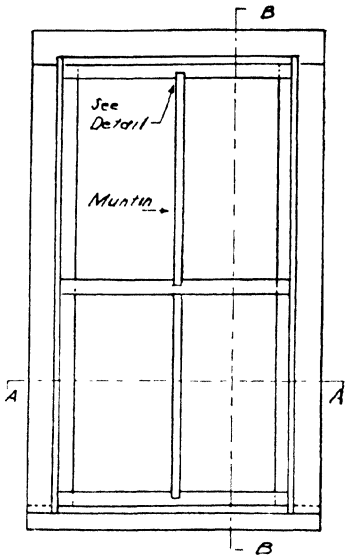
USUAL METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION

REAR OF TREE NEED NOT BE FINISHED WITH WIRE & CANVAS UNLESS VISIBLE TO AUDIENCE

A TREE TRUNK

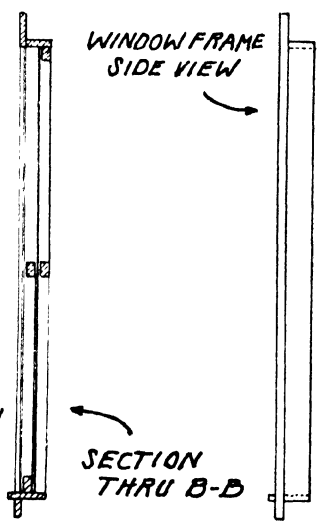


WINDOW FLAT
REAR VIEW
CORNER-BLOCKS &
KEYSTONES REMOVED



WINDOW & FRAME
REAR VIEW

SECTION THRU A-A



DETAIL
OF MUNTIN

NOTE:
COVER BACK
OF SASH WITH
GALVANIZED OR
BLACK SCREEN
WIRE.

SEE PAGE 6/9
FOR DETAIL OF
FASTENING IN FLAT

WINDOW & FLAT

Window Flat. Slight modification of a simple flat. Toggle bars and inside stiles outline the opening.

Window Frame and Window. The simplest form of window is made by nailing cross-pieces or muntins across the back of the window opening. Facing pieces, to indicate the frame, may be attached directly to the window flat, and black or galvanized screen wire may be tacked behind the muntin. If glass curtains and drapes are to be used, such a simple type of window may serve.

This type of window may be made more realistic by building a window casing of 1″ by 3″ or 1″ by 4″ thickness pieces, or reveals. The muntins are then fastened to the rear edges of the reveals.

A true double-sash window and frame may be made in almost exact imitation of actual window frames; or an inside frame may be used as secured from lumber yard stock; the sashes without glass, covered with screen wire, and fitted to slide in the frame.

Window frames are usually fastened in the flat by strap hinges fitted to the outer faces of the side casings. (See p. 617.)

Wings. Flats used at the sides of the stage for masking are called wings. Rarely seen on the stage today except in modified form for exterior scenes. The old-fashioned wood wing was a two-fold flat, with one edge of profile, irregularly shaped to imitate foliage, and painted with a wood scene. Set up unfolded to a 70-degree angle, it served to both frame the scene and to mask off back stage areas.

IV. DETERMINATION OF STRAIN IN WEIGHT-BEARING STRUCTURES

One of Professor George Pierce Baker's favorite stories was of a Greek drama staged in front of Widener Library at Harvard, on an outdoor built-up platform. The technician with true Yankee thrift decided to build solely that part of the stage actually used by the actors in the business of the play. The rest of the stage was made of light wooden framework covered with canvas. All went well during dress rehearsal, but during the performance some of the actors became rattled, and as the chorus chanted "Lo—here comes the king—" the king, striding in with regal pomp, made a kingly gesture—and disappeared from view. He had changed his entrance and stepped through the canvas.

The technician must anticipate all possible strains that may occur

during the action of the play and must design weight-bearing structures so as to bear safely such strains. There are three factors which determine the strength of weight-bearing structures: the design itself, in terms of braces, shape, etc.; the strength of the joints fastening the members of the structure together, and the strength of the materials themselves.

The most useful general rule for design of supporting frames is: reinforce them by braces which form triangles. This will give maximum rigidity to each frame, and will tend to distribute strain.

Joints may be considered as being of two kinds: (1) compression joints, where the strain tends to force the two joined pieces together, but may tend to twist them in relation to each other, and (2) tension joints, where the strain tends to pull the members apart. In light wood frames the glued mortise-and-tenon joint provides maximum tension and compression strength. A butt joint, fastened with keystones or corner blocks, gives good strength under compression strain, but is weak under conditions of tension, and not very strong in resisting twist. The best substitute for the glue mortise-and-tenon joint, for general strength, is the simple overlapping of the two pieces to be joined, which are then nailed, screwed, or preferably bolted together. Under straight compression, however, this is less strong than the butt joint.

The concern of the stage technician as to the strength of materials for weight-bearing structures will be almost entirely with the strength of the wood used, as the ordinary bolts and screws used are relatively much stronger than the small sizes of lumber needed.

There are four general rules that will guide the technician in calculating the strength of the lumber used.

Rule I. A live load (that is, actors moving about, dancing, etc.) has twice the destructive force of a dead load. Thus a beam that will safely support 400 lbs. of dead weight will support only 200 lbs. of live weight.

Rule II. A load concentrated at the middle of a beam has twice the destructive force of an evenly distributed load. Thus the beam that will support 400 lbs. of dead weight, evenly distributed, will support only 200 lbs. evenly distributed live load, and only 100 lbs. of live weight concentrated at its mid-point.

Rule III. The strength of a beam (its resistance to breaking) increases directly as the breadth of the beam, and increases as the square of its depth. Thus doubling the breadth of a beam only doubles its strength, but doubling the depth increases the strength many times. A beam 3″ deep may be said to have a strength of 9 units (3^2) whereas a beam 6″ deep will have a strength of 36 units (6^2).

Rule IV. The stiffness of a beam (its resistance to bending) increases as the *cube* of its depth.

It is because of these facts brought out in RULES III and IV that beams are always set *on edge*, in order that they may have maximum strength and stiffness. A formula for calculating the same concentrated live load in lbs. for Idaho white pine is as follows:

b = breadth of beam
d = depth of beam
W = safe concentrated live load

$$W = \frac{b = d^2 . 1200}{3 \times \text{span in inches}}$$

or Span in inches $= \dfrac{b \times d^2 \times 1200}{3W}$

The figure 1200 represents the working unit stress in lbs. per square inch allowed by the New York Building Code for Idaho White Pine.

If tongued-and-grooved flooring is used for platform tops, the strain of the load is distributed fairly well, and consequently the destructive tendency of the load may be considered as *half* the concentrated live load.

The following table gives an approximation of the safe distances between vertical supports for beams of various sizes, of Grade B or better, Idaho White Pine, used with tongued flooring.

1″ by 3″ (on edge) ..... maximum safe span is 2′3″
1¼″ by 3″ (on edge).. .. maximum safe span is 2′10″
1¼″ by 4″ (on edge)..... maximum safe span is 4′

If a very high degree of rigidity is desired (lack of perceptible bending) the span should not exceed half the distance given above. The maximum safe span between supporting frames for tongued-and-grooved #2 common white pine flooring is:

1″ by 6″. ..... 2′
1¼″ by 6″..... 3′

Vertical members of platform frames may safely be made of the same size material used for the cross beams; the method of joining of a "parallel" platform frame provides adequate stiffness for the vertical members, even if the platform is very high.

The importance of adequate triangular bracing in all frames supporting weight cannot be overemphasized.

V. THE PROBLEM OF SOUND EFFECTS

Conventional Theatre Practice. Sound effects in the theatre are not, and cannot be, completely realistic. Sound effects are used to give the illusion of life beyond the inclosure of the set, and must be judged by their effectiveness in suggesting that outer reality to the audience. No matter how closely a sound effect imitates reality, it is a poor sound effect unless it is able to stir the imagination of the audience. Of course the text of the play, the setting, the lighting, and the performance of the actors will be factors in the success of a sound effect.

The fact that modern audiences are familiar with many of the devices conventionally used to make sounds makes the problem more difficult. The device of galloping empty cocoanut shells on a stone or wooden block is so well-known that the most realistic imitation is apt to seem comic to the audience; their imagination visualizes, not galloping horses, but a hard-working prop man down on his hands and knees, pounding away with a pair of cocoanut shells.

Another factor that must be considered is the familiarity of the audience with the sound in question. Years ago an audience not too familiar with autos accepted as a realistic imitation the noise made by a vacuum sweeper. Even ten years ago it was possible to suggest a bombing plane overhead by playing a record of a plane on a phonograph connected to a loud speaker. Events of the last few years have made us listen so acutely to the drone of planes overhead that it has become extremely difficult to give the illusion of reality in the theatre. Frightened, rather than stimulated by these problems, directors have tended to reduce sound effects to an absolute minimum. The courier on horseback arrives silently in the modern theatre, and motor cars come and go as noiselessly as though they were all Rolls Royces, equipped with fluid drives. Birds are still allowed to chirp on occasion to introduce a pastoral scene, and dogs to bark, but horses, cows, ducks, lions, and crows are literally "dumb animals" off-stage. Thunder, wind, and rain are still common in the theatre, since the conventional stage versions of these sounds are comparatively realistic. Certain scenes and certain plays are so definitely related to special sound effects, such as factory noises, perhaps, or soldiers marching by outside the window, that in these cases the director or producer is obliged to obtain the proper sound effects, through experimentation and careful rehearsal. This is relatively rare in the professional Broadway theatre, however, because of the high costs of production, and the fact that a director functions in each production with a different personnel. Community theatres and school theatres are in a much better position to take the leadership

in bringing sound effects back into the theatre as a stirring and truly dramatic device.

Radio Broadcasting Technique. Sound-effect records are frequently used by radio broadcasting studios, for sound effects in dramatic programs. They are by no means used exclusively owing to the difficulty of getting a recorded sound exactly on cue, and the sound technician in the studio uses a variety of home-made machines and devices to produce the majority of sounds that you hear over the air.

In the last two decades sound-effect records, amplified by a loudspeaker, have come into fairly common use. In theory they are an excellent substitute for sound machines, as recordings may be purchased of almost every kind of sound. Records take up little storage space, require less time for rehearsal, and repeat the sound effect exactly the same at each rehearsal or performance.

However, the radio difficulty of cueing in a record carries over to stage use of records, and another studio difficulty is emphasized in the theatre. There is a definite limit to the possible volume of sound obtainable from a record. Thus sounds such as explosions, thunder, and rumble of heavy trucks are ridiculously feeble; if the volume is set higher, the effect is to "blast" the amplifier, and the result is a screech or a roar.

A third difficulty is that good amplifying equipment is expensive, and not available in most theatres. It also requires the attendance of a trained sound technician.

However, if records are used in combination with mechanical devices, particularly for crowd effects, parades, etc., a better effect may be obtained than by mechanical devices or records used alone. But it must be stressed that the amplified record is not a substitute for the older mechanical methods of obtaining sound effects, but rather an additional device.

General Principles. Sound effects in the theatre have two points of reference—fundamental reality, and the style of the play as determined by the director. Therefore the technician, creating a sound effect, begins by listening to the actual sound he seeks to imitate (when this is possible), analyzing the sound, noting volume, pitch, and characteristic rhythm. He then selects conventional sound machines he may have on hand, or devises new ones, and imitates the real sound as closely as possible. When he is satisfied with this imitation, he is ready for the first sound rehearsal with the director. Undoubtedly the director will wish changes—since the sound effects must fit the style of production. When the director is finally satisfied, the technician should record in the form of notes exactly how the sound effect was produced, how the machine

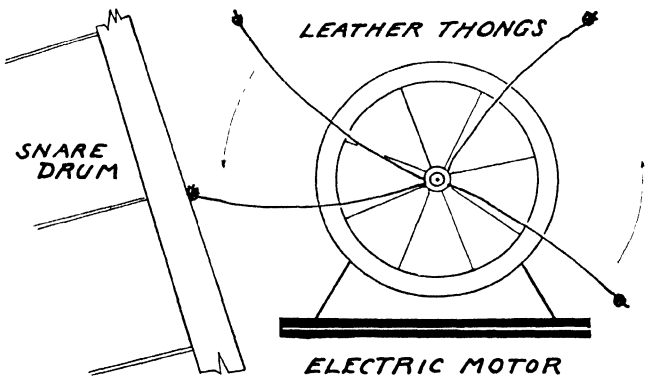
or several machines were manipulated, so that the effect may be repeated exactly at dress rehearsal.

Remember that there will probably be no similarity between the method of producing the sound effect and the manner in which the original sound is produced in real life. For instance, shot vigorously shaken in the bottom of a large tin dishpan can be effectively used to indicate the sound of a locomotive coming into a station.

The usual mistake—happening too often even in the best theatres—is to use a conventional device and strive to imitate a sound effect heard before in the theatre, rather than to use ingenuity to imitate the real sound. A vacuum sweeper never sounded like an auto, but for years technicians and directors accepted the vacuum sweeper as an auto engine, because it was a conventional practice.

Unfortunately, conventional methods of producing sound effects are usually bad, and the standards of today's theatre extremely low in this respect. In no other field of the theatre is there as much need for intelligent creative effort by the technician.

Airplanes. Records are useful, but the amplifier should be located above the set for proper direction of sound. Six inch leather thongs, with the ends knotted, attached to a small electric motor pulley, and allowed to strike on the surface of a snare drum give an excellent effect when used in combination with the record. Varying the position of the drum will vary the quality of the sound. This device should also be located above the stage.



Animal and Bird Noises. These are extremely difficult to imitate convincingly. It is best to rely on a human imitator. Bird whistles, part of a trap drummer's usual equipment, are frequently used, but the effect is unmistakably artificial. Records are not satisfactory because the hum of the amplifier is usually as noticeable as the animal or bird sound. The bull-roarer is sometimes used for bull or lion roars, etc. (See "Creaking Doors" for description of Bull-Roarers.)

Avalanche (Landslide—Collapsing Building). With a little trouble, this effect can be made completely convincing. A combination of devices should be used. A junk shute—a long wooden trough with a number of obstructions in it—sloping steeply from a point near the grid, down to the stage floor, is the basic device. A quantity of rounded stones and half-bricks, dumped in at the top, rumbles and reverberates down the shute, accompanied by a steady roll of thunder sheet and irregular pounding of the thunder drum. A rumble cart suggests the approach, and the dying away at the end. Optional additions are a crash machine and shotgun blanks or dynamite caps fired in a strong ash barrel. Records are of little use unless the avalanche is supposed to be at a great distance.

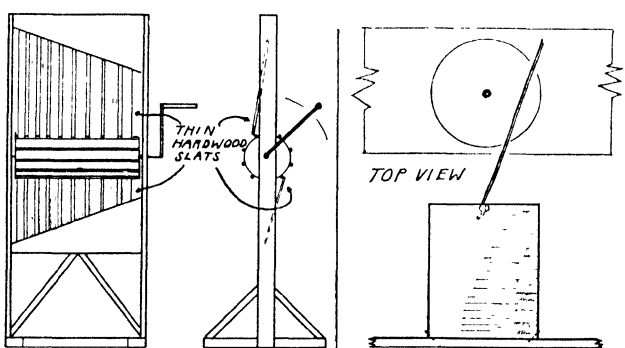
Autos (Motorcycles—Motorboats). Do *not* use a vacuum sweeper. A record is probably the best method of approximating an auto effect. A motorcycle can best be imitated by an actual motorcycle, on its standard. The motorcycle engine also makes an effective motor-boat. Do *not* use an old-fashioned hand klaxon for an auto horn. An actual modern auto horn should be used, slightly muffled.

Bells. Real bells may be used when available. Equally good are iron pipes, hanging free by a wire, struck by a padded end of a stick. The diameter and length of the pipe will determine the pitch. Good bell effects may be got by use of records, providing the amplifier hum is not too obvious.

Breaking Glass. Pieces of old window glass in a sack, smashed on the floor.

Clock Striking. An iron pipe (see "Bells") or a musician's triangle makes a good clock chime. Great care must be used to strike the pipe or triangle at exactly regular intervals, and if the time indicated is of importance, the greatest care must be taken always to count the chimes correctly. Experience shows that many people in an audience count the chimes, and a mistake will always be noticed.

Crashes. Records may be used, provided they are backed up by a crash machine, or similar mechanical effect. It is difficult, however, to get the record effect exactly on cue. The exact point where the needle should be put on the record may be marked by light colored pencil. A single rumble of a metal thunder sheet can be used with the machines.



Creaking Doors. This essential part of most mystery plays can be produced in a variation of tonal effects by a bull roarer. A large tin can (or pan) is fastened to a board (bottom up), the bottom pierced with a hole, and cord, wire, or sash cord put through the hole and

knotted so that it may be stretched taut. The operator puts powdered rosin on a piece of cloth, or on the palm of a cloth glove. Stretching the wire or cord tight, he rubs the rosined cloth on the wire or cord. The size of the can, the cord used, and particularly the tautness with which the cord is held, will vary the pitch and character of the sound. The low pitched sounds are sometimes used for animal noises, such as lion or bull roars.

Electrical Reproduction of Sounds. There is no satisfactory ready-made electrical sound system on the market, suitable for sound effects. If possible have an experienced sound technician make up equipment, using the very best materials. If this is not possible, use a portable loudspeaker unit, attached to a double turntable pickup, so that two sound records may be blended, or a quick change made from one record to another.

Explosions. A shotgun, loaded with blanks, and fired into a heavy metal ash-can, gives a tremendous explosion. For maximum effect, both barrels of a twelve gauge may be fired at once. The ash-can prevents fire hazard from the discharge, and tends to increase the explosive sound effect. If fire laws allow, a dynamite cap may be exploded in a heavy ash-can, set off electrically by closing a battery circuit. This device is particularly useful for battle scenes, where a number of explosions (as bombs) occur on cue. A number of dynamite caps can be suspended in the barrels in advance, and set off by the stage manager by connecting switches. The effect may be varied by placing the ash-cans under the stage. In any case, the greatest care must be taken during the wiring. Make sure that the battery is not connected during wiring. Erect barriers to keep everyone at least ten feet from the ash-cans. Realistic accompaniment of explosions is the simultaneous or slightly delayed crash of crash machine, or rumble of junk shute.

Factory Noises. A variable speed electric motor to the drive wheel of which leather thongs have been attached (similar to apparatus for airplane) is allowed to run at a fairly low speed, while the thongs slap against a board or a piece of metal. A rhythmic louder thumping on every sixth or eighth beat, done by dropping the padded end of a 4″ by 4″ on the stage floor will help the effect. Records are useful as general background. Simple mechanical devices such as old electric or hand sewing machine, or an electric drill, can also be used. These sounds may be amplified electrically if desired.

Fire Engines. Carefully done, this effect is extremely convincing. The effect is produced by careful combining of a number of devices. A hand-driven siren is the base effect. With this may be combined a record of a siren, used to give the far-away approach. As the "fire engine"

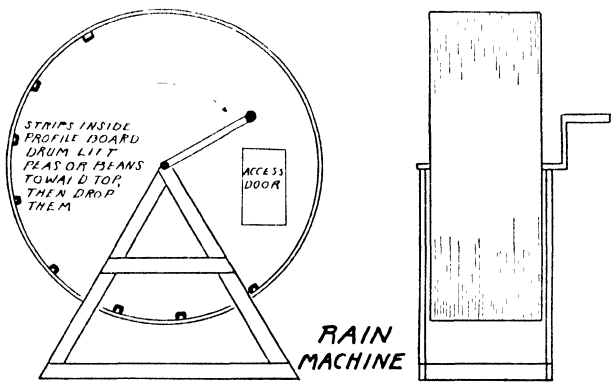
comes nearer, the hand siren should be worked in and the record faded out. At the same time the rumble cart (see p. 651) should be operated, at increasing speed, over a heavily padded surface of stage floor, while one or more padded 4″ by 4″ timbers may be rapidly thumped for additional vibration. Without the siren, the effect is of a heavy truck, or trucks, passing in the street. Fine details may be worked in, such as the rapid clanging of a bell, to indicate the fire-chief's car, and the blasts of a hoarse whistle (attached to a tank of compressed air) to imitate the whistles now frequently heard on fire engines. A record of crowd shouting, played low, will give background of excitement.

Marching Feet (Footsteps). The best effect is obtained by the same method used in radio broadcasting studios—a number of people marching in one place. The sound may be increased by having the marching done on a raised wooden platform. Varying the surface and the type of foot movement will vary the sound. If sanded, the effect is somewhat like marching feet on concrete. In some cases, an actual thin concrete slab has been laid in the theatre to get the effect of marching feet on the pavement. If the marching is supposed to be through brush, the marching should be on a padded platform. Thin boards and twigs may be broken by the prop man meanwhile. There is almost an infinite number of effects possible, by varying the surface. A record of marching feet may be used in the background, or the marching feet may be electrically amplified.

Music. Records are an obvious means of producing off-stage music. A musical accompaniment for a non-realistic play may be produced by a few instruments played in a sound-proof room (understage, for instance) and this music picked up and projected to the audience by amplifiers. This gives the stage manager absolute control of volume, but is somewhat difficult to cue. It is successful only if an excellent sound system is available.

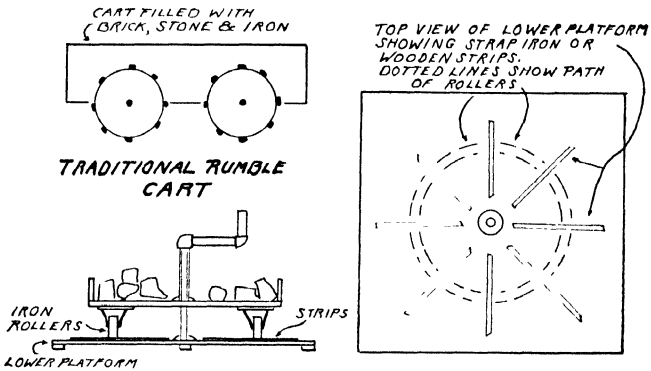
Rain (Hail). The rain machine is simple to build, simple to operate, and very effective. It consists of a section of a hollow cylinder, three or four feet in diameter, and a foot to two feet wide, with strips of wood nailed to the inside of the surface of the cylinder at six inch intervals. The cylinder, or drum, is fitted with a pipe axle, and mounted in a frame so it will revolve freely. Several handfuls of dried peas are put inside through a small door in the end. As the drum is revolved the peas are lifted by wooden strips, and as the strips near the top, the peas drop to the bottom, giving the sound effect of rain-drops. If beans are used, the effect is of rain on a roof. Shot instead of peas gives the effect of rain on a tin roof. Large shot gives the effect of hail. The larger the drum, the louder the effect, though volume may also be controlled by the

speed with which the drum is turned. The rain cylinder (or drum) may be made of 3/16″ profile, the ends of the cylinder reinforced by strips of 1″ by 2″ nailed on the outside. A pipe handle should be fitted to the axle for easy operation.



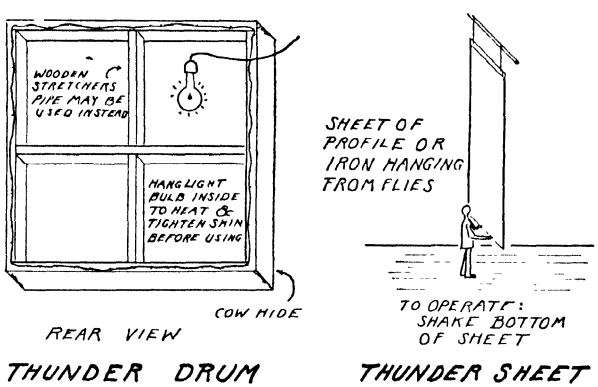
Rumble Cart. The traditional rumble cart is a small wooden wagon, with a box about 2′ by 4′. The wooden wheels, about 1′ in diameter, are either octagonal or they may have wooden lugs nailed to them. The rumble cart is then filled with old iron, stones, or bricks, and pulled across the stage floor. It was formerly used as an additional device for imitating the rumble of thunder, but today its greatest use is for imitating the passing of trucks, fire engines, etc.

The disadvantage of the rumble cart is that it requires a comparatively large open stage space to operate and turn in, if sustained operation is necessary. A more compact form of rumble cart was devised by the author for use in the Yale theatre, some years ago. Two square wooden platform tops, 4′ in diameter, are made. A 1″ pipe 2′ long is fastened to the bottom platform, by a floor flange. A 1″ hole is drilled in the top, or wagon platform, and it is then mounted on heavy iron casters or rollers. Strips of wood or scrap iron are nailed to the track surface, radiating out from the center. The top is then fitted over the projecting pipe, and as the top platform is revolved, the rollers passing over the strips of wood on the bottom platform give the rumble effect. If a railing is built around the top platform, iron and stones may be loaded on, to increase the vibration and volume. A larger pipe may be fitted down over the axis pipe, and fastened to the top platform by a floor flange. A handle may then be fastened to the top pipe, for easy operation.



Steam. Use a tank of compressed air. For variation of sound, lead the air through pipe or hose, and allow it to strike against the small metal or wooden baffles, or strips of wood. Of course, volume may also be controlled by regulating the quantity of air escaping.

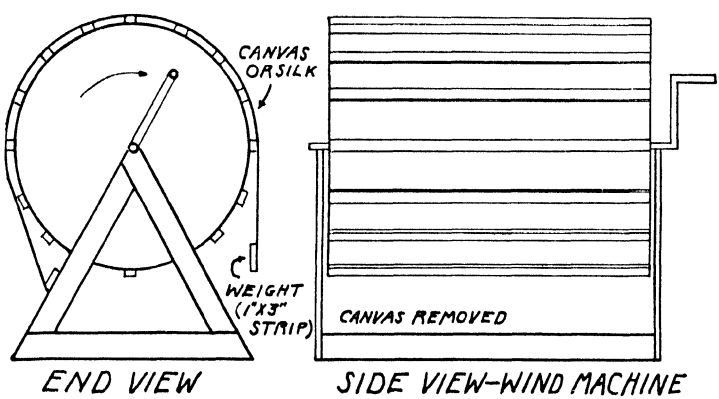
Thunder. The thunder sheet is conventionally a piece of approximately 20 gauge sheet metal, 3′ wide and 6′ to 12′ long, suspended lengthways so that the bottom edge is about three feet from the stage floor. When the bottom edge is shaken, a somewhat metallic reverberation results. A sheet of 3/16″ profile similarly operated gives a deeper, more realistic tone. This can also be used for distant explosions. If possible, a thunder drum should also be used with the thunder sheet. Wet cow-hide or calf skin is stretched on a heavy square wooden frame about 3′ to 5′ square. The skin is tightly stretched, and nailed. Heat before using, to get tight stretch.



Trains. Train effects, like fire engines, are composite effects, and because of the difficulty of assembling and cueing in the numerous separate effects necessary, a record is usually substituted for the mechanical effects. The rhythmic puffing of the steam, the rumble of the train, and the bell or whistle may be added by mechanical effects, picking up and emphasizing the background record. The trick of shaking shot in a large dishpan, for the puffing of the engine, has already been mentioned. If a second slightly smaller pan is fitted in the larger one, and the shot shaken between the pans in a rotary motion so that it hits both pans, the effect is improved. This is considerably better than the trap-drummer's conventional two blocks of sandpaper rubbed against each other, or wire brushes on metal. The improved rumble cart may be used to get the rumble of the train, and if metal rollers and a few metal strips are used, the effect is of the click of wheels over railjoints.

Whistles. Trap drummer's whistles are useful, and may be attached by a rubber tubing to a tank of compressed air for greater volume. Small steam whistles may be fitted to the compressed air tank, also. Far-away whistles are effective on records.

Wind. The wind machine is almost identical with the rain machine in appearance, except that the cylinder or drum is usually of smaller diameter, and twice as wide. The strips of wood are nailed to the outside surface of the drum, and a canvas cloth fastened to the frame on one side, and thrown over the drum, so that when it is revolved, the strips of wood brush against the canvas. Vary volume and pitch of sound by speed of revolution. Heavy silk instead of canvas gives an interesting variation.



VII. THE FUNDAMENTALS OF SCENE PAINTING

Painted scenery, as introduced into the theatre in the middle of the sixteenth century, was dominated by perspective painting, and scenic artists attempted to create perspective pictures on the stage. The result was artificial, of course, but it was not until the development of realism in the theatre of the late nineteenth century that perspective scene painting was abandoned. With this change in scene design, came a whole change in the technique of scene painting. The complicated and difficult rules of perspective painting had made scene painting a special craft. Today the scene painter has a much simpler task. He is concerned with the effect of color, light on color, and texture—knowledge which may be easily gained by experience, provided certain simple fundamentals are thoroughly understood.

Materials. Scene painting is done with dry pigment, which has been mixed with the proper proportion of water and glue, called size water. The mixture of glue serves to fasten the color to the painted surface. Dry color (as dry pigment is usually called) is available in the form of fine powder at almost all paint stores, at a price varying from 12¢ a pound for certain colors to 75¢ a pound for the most expensive colors. Not all paint stores carry all varieties of colors, and the stock carried at the paint store where the purchasing is to be done should be examined. The names of the various colors are not at all scientific or truly descriptive for the most part, and must be learned in connection with examination of actual dry colors available.

Dry colors vary in intensity, some being much brighter or purer than others. A basic stock of almost a dozen colors may be chosen for general scene painting, but special designs may require a few extra colors or larger quantities.

When dry pigment is mixed with water, the color becomes a good deal darker than it will be when it has dried. Therefore, when mixing pigments—always mix them dry—a small sample of the color should be mixed with size water and applied to a scrap of canvas or wood, and allowed to dry. This enables one to know exactly what the color will be when dry. It is therefore essential to make this preliminary test before the whole batch is mixed.

One of the most useful pigments, and one which will be used in large quantity, is white pigment, called whiting. It is cheaper than any other pigment, usually about 3¢ to 4¢ a pound. Only the best quality available should be used. Whiting is used for mixing with other pigments for obtaining the lighter shades. Because of its low cost it is

also generally used for the first, or priming, coat, to produce a good painting surface on the canvas.

The glue used to make size water may be of various kinds. The strongest and best is gelatin flake glue. There is also available a white flake glue suitable for making size water, but it is a less pure form of glue, and more of it is required. The powdered form of gelatin glue is much less satisfactory than flake. Flake glue costs between 15¢ and 40¢ a pound, depending on kind, quality, and the quantity purchased.

The time-honored method of obtaining the right mixture of glue and water for size water is to add the glue (which has been soaked overnight with enough water to cover it, and then cooked in a double boiler until soft) to warm water, mixing well, until the size water is strong enough to cause the fingers to stick together slightly when it is pressed between them. Size water that is too strong will make the fingers very sticky—and will make the paint tend to crack when dry. Size water that is too weak will allow the paint to rub off the canvas.

Mix the dry color with size water to form a smooth even paste, and then add additional size water until the mixture has the consistency of thick cream.

The paint should be kept warm while being used, and stirred frequently to prevent precipitation in the bottom of the bucket. Be sure to mix a large enough batch to do the entire job, as it is very difficult to reproduce a mixed color exactly.

The quantity of paint needed to cover a set will vary with the thickness of the coat, the method used to apply it, and the kind and quality of pigment. Roughly from 10 to 15 pounds of dry pigment will be needed to paint with a brush one coat on an average sized interior set

Mixed paint allowed to stand for a number of days is subject to bacterial action, and becomes extremely offensive in smell, unless a teaspoon of a strong disinfectant, such as carbolic acid, is added to the mixture.

Warning: certain pigments are *acid* in reaction, although most are alkali. Alkali and acid pigments mixed together sometimes have peculiar and unexpected color reactions, so that they should always be tested in sample before mixing any quantity of dry color together.

Certain intense colors are available only in a wet form of pigment called pulp color. They may be mixed the same as dry pigment, but as they are much more expensive, they are used only for special effects, and for lining and highlighting.

Oil and lacquer paints are used for special paint jobs only, usually on wooden surfaces, such as furniture.

Dye colors, that is, pigment which dissolves in water, are used very sparingly, since dye colors will work through any overlaying paint. They are sometimes used for a thin transparent overcoat, or glaze, and are generally used to paint cycloramas, large drops, and any fabrics which must be folded for storage, as dye colors will not crack or rub off.

Bronze and silver metallic powders are sometimes used, mixed with bronzing liquid, or stirred into size water. In the latter case, the mixture may be applied as a spatter, to give additional life to a surface.

Color. There are three basic ways in which colors may vary from each other, and the scales of possible variation are those of color, intensity, and value.

The *color* scale should be familiar to everyone. It is usually shown as a wheel, with the colors occupying a place on the rim of the wheel—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, and around to red again. All possible hues of color occur somewhere on the wheel. When two colors next to each other on the wheel are mixed, a new color, in between the two, is obtained. Thus, red and yellow make orange, red and orange make red orange, etc. See Color Charts, p. 400.

The scales of intensity and value are less well known. *Intensity* is the comparative brightness of a color. Thus red may be very bright, or it may be dulled almost to gray. There is no way to increase the intensity of a pigment, but it may be dulled down toward gray by the addition of the color that stands opposite to it on the color wheel. Thus, if we start with bright orange, the color opposite on the color wheel (its complementary color) is blue. Adding blue to orange dulls the orange down, and if the orange and blue are exactly complementary, the addition of enough blue will turn the orange into gray.

The *value* of a color is its lightness or darkness. By adding white to red, we get a lighter red; and by adding black, a darker red. Thus the value scale of a color runs from white at one end to black at the other. Practically, colors are lightened in scene painting much more frequently than they are darkened. Black must be used very sparingly, as it darkens the color much more quickly than white lightens it.

Commercial pigments are not all of the same intensity or value. Some are much duller (lower in intensity) and some are lighter or darker than others (higher or lower in value).

The Workshop and Its Equipment. A paint shop has three basic functions. (1) It provides a place where drops, flats, and other scenery may be conveniently painted; (2) it provides storage space for the pigments, brushes, pails, pans, and glue; and (3) it must have available

water for mixing paint and cleaning pails and brushes, and an electric or gas plate for heating size water and paint.

In Europe scenery is generally painted while laid out on a floor. The painter walks about on it, using a longhanded brush.

A simpler method, taking less space, though more equipment, is to paint scenery while it is fastened on a vertical position. Since all drops, and most flats, are too tall to be reached from the floor, it is obvious that some method of either raising the painter or lowering the scenery is needed.

The most common method is to use a paint frame—that is, a skeleton framework, generally of 1¼″ by 6″ stock, hung from the ceiling by lines passing over pulleys, so that it can be lowered or raised. A permanent paint bridge may be built half-way from floor to ceiling. The painter on the bridge can thus reach any part of the scene to be painted, by raising or lowering the frame. If there is a basement below, a slot may be cut in the floor, allowing the frame to be dropped through; in such a case a bridge is not needed.

Another, less satisfactory method is to build a permanent scaffold, with a five, ten, and fifteen foot level, connected by steps. The scaffold is then mounted on rollers, and can be moved sideways from one part of the scene to another, while the painter, by moving from one height platform to another, is able to reach the upper and middle areas of the scene.

Whichever of these methods is used, it must be emphasized that the frame or wall area to which the scenery is temporarily nailed must be large enough to allow an entire drop, or backwall, to be hung at one time.

The workshop layout is completed by shelves for storage of materials and equipment, conveniently located in relation to a sink, with running water, and a gas or electric plate. Other essential pieces of equipment are:

Brushes:
  For priming, and covering large areas—7″ and/or 8″ width
  For laying-in, and smaller areas—3″, 4″ and/or 5″ width
  For lining and detail work—assorted linen brushes
  For applying stencils—stenciling brush
Six-foot straight edge
Snap line, with chalk, or small muslin bag of dry color for chalking snap line
Charcoal sticks, for sketching and designs
Sponges for applying paint in "sponging" technique
Stencil paper

Techniques of Scene Painting. Flat-painting—the simple application of paint with a brush—is used for priming coats and ground coats. Occasionally a flat coat will be used for the finished surface of the scene, but more usually a broken irregular texture is desired, since such a texture gives greater depth, and also takes light better. There are six standard methods of obtaining various textures:

1. *Sponging.* A sponge is dipped in paint, the excess paint squeezed out, and the sponge patted or rolled against the canvas.

2. *Rolling.* A piece of linen canvas or burlap is dipped in paint, wrung out, and twisted into a roll, and then rolled over the surface of the canvas.

3. *Scrumbling.* A brush with only a little paint in it is irregularly swept over the surface of the canvas, with long strokes. Its chief purpose is to achieve a blending of contrasting ground colors. A separate brush should be used for each color. The brush used is dry enough so that the brush strokes show on the canvas. Dry-brushing is the use of an even drier brush, with the same type of light sweeping stroke, and is employed to obtain shading of a surface, or texture effects such as wood graining.

4. *Spattering* (or "splattering"). A brush dipped in paint is struck lightly but sharply against the wrist, so that tiny drops of paint spatter onto the canvas. A spatter finish is frequently done with a number of different colors, in which case each color used should be allowed to dry before another color is spattered on.

5. *Stippling.* The end of a medium-full brush is touched against the surface. Stippling is frequently done with a number of colors, one used after the other is dry. Stippling may be used in connection with sponging.

6. *Glazing.* A thin coat of scene paint, or a thin dye, is painted over the finished paint job to pull the scene together, or to bring out a certain color, or to dull down the under-coats.

Except in the case of scrumbling, care should be taken to see that each color applied is dry before another is added. A special form of spattering, that resembles a glaze in effect, is obtained by using metallic powder, usually silver, in size water, and spattering it evenly all over the set.

Regularly repeated patterns, such as wall-paper patterns, may be stenciled on the set, the chalked snap line being used to mark the set for regular application of the stencil. A light spatter, rolling, or sponging should be used on top of the stenciled pattern to blend it with the background.

Of course, the colors used in these texture finishes, are all important. Usually they are lighter in value than the ground color. They may be abruptly contrasting colors, provided that they are blended by scumbling or pulled together with a glaze. However, a light spatter may be done with sharply contrasting colors, the effect under lights being a blend of the colors. This type of spatter is frequently used for a permanent set. Different colored lights tend to bring out the different spatter colors, thus effectively changing the colors—and mood—of the setting by the use of lights.

Most sets are shaded so that they are lighter in value behind the actor in the on-stage areas, darkening above and at the sides. This helps to give theatrical emphasis to the scene, and also helps to "kill" excessive light reflection at the edges of the set, and thus concentrate attention on the acting area.

The proper use of these techniques will come only with practice. Valuable experience may be obtained by practicing these types of finishes on a few old flats. In any case, the purpose of the painter will not be to improvise, but to execute the designer's color sketch.

Repainting Old Scenery. Most theatre organizations find it necessary to re-use old scenery. Several paint jobs may be done on a canvas surface, one over the other, providing dye paint has not been used. In order to paint over dye, the surface must be shellacked, to prevent the dye from working through. However, this tends to stiffen the canvas, so it is wise to avoid the use of dyes, if scenery is to be used again. After several paint jobs have been done on scenery, it is desirable to remove a quantity of old paint, by scrubbing the surface with an ordinary scrubbing brush and hot water. The water should not be allowed to soak into the flat, however, as it may cause the wood frame to warp and loosen the glue which fastens the canvas to the flat.

VIII. COSTUMING THE PRODUCTION

The costume designer judges textiles for three characteristics: (1) how they drape, (2) their weave, and (3) their texture.

Drape. Consider if the material is heavy or light, stiff or pliable. Will it drape in long heavy folds like velvet, or float away from the body like chiffon? Will it stand in stiff folds like brocade, or cling to the body like satin? Especially when substituting inexpensive materials for costly ones is it essential to know the draping properties of textiles.

Textiles that will drape in heavy flexible folds are: velvet, jersey, duvetyn, monks cloth, some cottons or muslins, flannel, turkish toweling, ratine, naturally heavy or weighted silk crepe ("weighted" means that sizing had been added to the material to lend body; when washed the sizing disappears, and the material becomes soft). Many inexpensive rayon and cotton fabrics of excellent draping quality may be found in the drapery departments of stores rather than at dress-good counters.

Textiles that will drape in stiff heavy folds are: brocades, upholstery fabrics, shoe satin, weighted muslin, canvas cloth, sail cloth, and metal cloths with heavy foundations.

Light, floating materials are: chiffon, georgette, crepe de chine, cheesecloth, voile, tarletan, tulle, net, gauze, lawn, organdie, taffeta, and cellophane. Of this group the materials that are *both light and stiff* are: organdie, taffeta, tarletan, tulle, net, and cellophane. All these materials will stand away from the body. Tarletan, for instance, is the traditional ballet-skirt material.

The other fabrics mentioned in the light, floating group are soft. They lack crispness. To understand the difference between the two classes of lightweight materials, stiff and soft, compare the same skirt in organdie and in voile. Though they be cut from exactly the same pattern, the effect will be entirely different. Compare chiffon and taffeta.

Weave. Consider if the material is coarse or fine. All heavy materials are not coarse, and all coarse materials are not heavy. Fish net is both coarse and light; velvet is heavy and fine. We must know this if we are to choose materials suitable to the period of the play and the social status of the wearer. Kings and queens wear costumes of finer weave than peasants. For contemporary plays, coarse tweeds suggest the out of doors; silks, the drawing-room; clinging satins, the sophisticate; chiffon and tulle, the ingenue.

Monks cloth has a coarse weave. It is cotton, heavy in weight but soft to the touch and exceedingly drapable; it resembles heavy wool from a distance. Burlap resembles monks cloth in that it is heavy in

weight and has the same coarseness of weave but it is harsh to the touch, stiff, and less drapable. However, it is less expensive than monks cloth. In costuming, it is only suitable for the coarsest of garments, a woodcutter's or hermit's costume.

Texture. This is a consideration of the surface of the cloth. Is the cloth shiny or dull, nubby or smooth? Crepe de chine and satin are both silk but one has infinitely more sheen than the other. Weave, rather than material, determines texture. Satin is not shiny because the silk it is made of is shiny but because of the manner in which it is woven. Sateen is shinier than muslin though both are cotton; sateen is cotton with a satin weave. However, satin is shinier than sateen because silk has more sheen than cotton, to begin with. Sateen is not a very good substitute for satin; some rayons are better. Smooth shiny cloths reflect the most light and create the deepest shadows. A satin dress will attract the eye. Every chance motion of the cloth will be discernible. In like manner, metal cloth will reflect the light and catch the eye. Nubby cloths like tweed, monks cloth, and turkish toweling absorb rather than reflect light. That is what makes them look dull. They do not show as much contrast between light and shadow as shinier materials do; they will recede rather than dominate.

Shiny cloths are: satin, metal cloth, pineapple cloth, drapery rayons, metallic oil cloth, silk damask, rayon, and cotton drapery damask.

Dull cloths are: duvetyn, flannel, felt, most woolen cloths, unbleached muslin, cretonne.

SURFACE TEXTURE, APPLIED BY SPRAYING, PAINTING, DYEING.

Inexpensive cotton cloths like muslin, sateen, voile, and nainsook may be made interesting in texture by dyeing and painting. Heavily sized (i.e., weighted) materials should first be washed in very hot water to remove the sizing (or filling) which would repel the dye.

A piece of cloth that has been dyed a flat uninteresting color may be improved by giving it a vibrating top surface that will create more intensified highlights and shadows under the stage lights. There are four ways in which added depth of tone may be applied to cloth.

1. The simplest method is *top dyeing*. Let us say the material has already been dyed a flat even green. A second, not too even dipping of pale blue over the green will result in a color that is still basically green but in an improved texture which reflects much more light and shows deeper shadows.

2. Another way of applying the overtone is by the *spatter method.*

The cloth is stretched on a curtain frame set parallel to the floor. One spatters with a stiff brush. The dye color used may be a deeper value of the undertone or another color entirely. The brush which has very little dye on it is held a few feet from the cloth. The technique is to tap the handle of the brush so that it will spatter the dye on the cloth in small uneven dots. The brush must be kept *quite dry* or the result will be not dots but messy blots of color. The spatter-method produces an interesting overtone of flecked color that takes the stage lights extremely well. The cloth may be spattered in two top colors for more unusual effects. A cloth flecked in red and blue over a pale base color will be more vibrant than one which has been dipped in a dark dye bath to begin with.

3. An alternate of the spatter method is the *spray method.* Cloth for spraying must be hung on a line or tacked on a wall. The dots may be sprayed on the cloth with an ordinary insect spray gun. This results in more even dotting than the spatter method, however, and produces a different effect under the lights.

4. The fourth method of applying artificial texture to cloth is the most difficult: it consists of *painting highlights and shadows on the cloth* with scene paint or poster colors. Since it is impossible to dye light tones over dark basic colors, the paint method where opaque paint is used is the only way to highlight a dark color. Artificial shadows may be painted on cloth by using a darker tone than the base color. The shadows should not be solid but applied in cross-hatched lines or in any other broken method so that the base color will show through.

The method of painting highlight and shadows on cloth is not usually successful because ordinarily the lights and shadows on cloth change as the figure moves, and it is only on relatively stiff cloths (which are not body-conforming) that painted shadows will be convincing. Painted highlights on darker cloths are easier to accept than painted shadows and add considerable life to an otherwise dull costume. Highlights and shadows should be applied to the finished costume only. Top dyeing and spattering are done on the cloth by the piece before cutting the pattern.

Heavy brocaded fabrics such as were used during the Renaissance may be approximated by painting heavy muslin or sateen in designs appropriate to the period. The designs need not be carried out carefully in detail; only the large outlines are important. It is also cheaper and quicker for mass effect, for instance, to *paint* bow-knots on the bell skirts of costumes than it is to drape them in real cloth. Embroidered hems and neck-lines are best simulated by painting. It is best to paint with dyes for this purpose, for dyes will not rub and crack off with

wear as will scene paint and poster colors. Oil colors even when mixed with a quick-drying medium take too long to dry. The material to be painted should be stretched on a frame (a curtain stretcher makes a good frame) and set parallel to the floor so that the colors will not run down. The easiest way to transfer the pattern to the cloth is to sketch it directly on the cloth, free hand with a piece of charcoal. Irregularities do not show as such and are all to the good. Leave narrow white lines between the colors so that there will be no running together. These will not show as white lines, and will make the design more vibrant when viewed from a distance. The design may also be traced with carbon paper. The oily carbon lines will repel the dye at the edges but the color should not come to the edge anyway, so this is no problem.

A stencil may be used but since it is hard work to cut a separate stencil for each color to be applied, the best plan is to use one basic stencil in a very pale color. This will set the pattern without arduous transferring and other rich colors may be applied free hand. For Renaissance designs, broken touches of gold and silver paint may be used effectively.

Since it entails much work to enlarge designs from small source material for those who are not gifted at freehand enlarging, it is a good idea to have on hand a reference file of designs large enough for direct tracing to the cloth. For this purpose an excellent source is a sample book of wall-paper borders, which may be used for edges of hems and sleeves or for girdles. All-over wall-paper designs are useful too. Both come in many antique motifs. Most important, these designs come in large sizes. They are usually open in pattern for they, too, are meant to be seen at a distance and there is an endless variety in them from Victorian swags and bow-knots to neo-classic Greek key designs.

An extremely simple method of applying an interesting dark-and-light pattern to cloth is by *tie dyeing*. Sections of the material are tied into knots or wrapped with cord or tape and the material is then dipped in the dye bath, or only the points of the knots may be dipped, first, to form medallion centers of a different color. When the material is untied and rinsed it will be found that the dye has not penetrated at all in the innermost sections of the knots, leaving these the highest light, and has penetrated elsewhere in irregular shadings of color. Stripes, circles, and squares of infinite variety are made possible by this method. The cloth may be tied and dipped over and over again for any combination of colors. Remember that the parts meant to resist the dye must be knotted or wound up firmly. Sections already dyed may be tied or wound up again to resist the next dipping.

VARIOUS TYPES OF DYE AND THEIR FUNCTIONS.

If one is to do a considerable amount of dyeing one cannot rely on the package dyes at the corner drug store. Dye in quantity will have to be ordered from a chemical company to achieve both quality and economy. For this purpose it is well to become familiar with the following types of dye and their functions.

1. Direct or Salt Dyes. These dyes are used most often. They will dye cotton and linen but not silk or wool. They come in a wide range of colors and are easy to use. The solutions are made by mixing thoroughly *one* part of dye to *twenty* parts of warm water. Solutions are then bottled and carefully labelled for future use. Benzoate of soda added to each bottle will prevent spoilage. When dyeing, thin the solution to the desired shade with water to which you have added three tablespoons of common salt for each gallon of water. The water for the dye bath need not be warmed unless you find difficulty in making the dye penetrate the material. Two tablespoons of acetic acid or vinegar added to each gallon of bath water will help prevent fading or rubbing off of the dye.

2. Basic Dyes. These will dye silk or wool but not cotton. Basic dyes come in very brilliant colors and can be used to *top-dye* cotton if the material has first been dipped in a direct dye. Basic dyes fade easily; therefore, it is well to use acetic acid or vinegar with them to set the dye. When making up solutions use three tablespoons of acetic acid or vinegar to each spoonful of dye used. Solutions should be rather thick. They should be thinned with warm water for dipping and the dye bath should be kept hot (but not boiling) while dyeing.

3. Acid Dyes. These are used for silk and wool too. They differ from the basic dyes in that they do not require heating to produce fairly fast colors. When dyeing add one tablespoon of diluted sulphuric acid and two tablespoons of salt to every gallon of water in the bath.

4. Alcohol Dyes. These are the best dyes for spraying and painting because they do not require heating and seem to take hold on the fabric better than other dyes. Fairly thick stock solutions of this dye are prepared with denatured alcohol. To use in the dye bath, thin to the desired color with half and half mixture of alcohol and water.

5. Batik Dyes. These come already mixed in beautiful clear colors and can be used on any type of material but they cannot be had in commercial quantities and are far too expensive for general dip-dyeing but are excellent for painting borders, etc., where there is little waste. They are useful in emergencies since they are already in solution and need only thinning with cold water for immediate use.

General Suggestions. 1. Dye colors as much as possible under artificial lights similar to those which will be used to light the set. Colors dyed to harmonize in daylight may prove quite different under the stage lights.

2. Be sure to wash the filling out of sized fabrics before dyeing. If heavy cottons still resist the dye and still continue to show spots, heat the dye bath until it is hot and dissolve any good soap in it before immersing the material again.

3. Do not dip-dye enormous lengths of cloth at one time. Five yards are as much as can be handled conveniently at one time. Keep the material moving about in the dye bath so that the dye will have a chance to penetrate all parts.

4. Dyed material should be rinsed in cold water before hanging up to dry. Hang fabrics to dry by the selvage. As the piece is usually much narrower than long, this will prevent the dye from dripping the full length of the cloth and in this way there will be less variation of light to dark.

5. Most dye-colors dry much lighter than the color of the wet fabric. To see how the color will look, squeeze a corner of the fabric dry. The lightest parts will show approximately what color the piece will be after it has been rinsed and dried.

6. Most dyed fabrics look better under stage lights if they are left rough dry instead of ironing them smooth. The natural crinkles improve the texture. However, it is difficult to cut accurately material that is rough dry. In most cases it is better to iron the material before cutting the pattern; wetting and rough drying the finished garment later.

COSTUMES FOR A PRODUCTION.

Costumes and accessories may be rented, borrowed, or made.

Renting costumes is expensive and worth considering only when the group produces but two or three plays a year and performances are few. In small communities it is difficult to find an adequate supply of costumes for rent in a sufficient size range. Before going to the costumer's, the person in charge should be armed with the measurements of the costumes required to avoid needless trips.

It is possible to borrow costumes only for certain productions. For plays in modern dress most actors are able to supply their own and it is a simple matter to borrow the rest with adequate accessories. It is possible to borrow costumes for plays in Victorian settings for the period is not so remote.

For most permanent groups making the costumes for a given production is most practical. This may seem more expensive in initial cost

but is cheaper in the end because the same costumes may be used over and over again and may be altered to fit different players and productions. It should be pointed out here that certain costumes are too difficult or costly to make. Even where the bulk of costumes is made in the theatre workroom, it is advisable to rent or borrow some of them. It is better to borrow Victorian costumes for drawing-room plays. For pageants or musicals, it is better to make them, for here the colors and lines must be exaggerated and then, too, materials in the old costumes will not stand the wear and tear required by a musical.

Uniforms should be rented. It is difficult for the average sewing room to turn out a convincing policeman's or guardsman's uniform. It is possible to acquire uniforms for the permanent collection at relatively little expense. Used uniforms may be bought quite reasonably. This is cheaper than renting, for uniforms are used over and over again. For fifteen or twenty dollars a miscellany of uniforms, jeweled headdresses, judges' robes, and the like may be had for use in future productions. The same handsomely padded red coat with plenty of braided frogs will make a bandmaster, a Russian or Viennese officer. A heavy straight blue pea jacket may be revamped with buttons or braid to produce a conductor, first mate, or an admiral. Trips should be made to thrift shops, Salvation Army, and second-hand stores, for old fur coats, beaded and embroidered evening gowns, wraps, belts and bags, discarded feather boas and fur trimmings, old beaver and straw hats, junk jewelry, animal skins, and the like. These treasure hunts are very valuable, especially for furs since furs are practically impossible to imitate convincingly.

The costume staff consists of:

1. The costume designer.

2. The head of the workrooms who supervises the cutting, sewing and dyeing, and acts as co-ordinator for the designer and workroom. She is responsible for the successful interpretation of the sketches.

3. The wardrobe mistress, who is custodian of the costumes, sees that they are kept in repair and properly stored. She is on duty during all performances to help with dressing and emergency repairs.

4. A group of workers who may be paid employees or volunteers.

Since amateur groups cannot often enjoy the luxury of specialization, the above duties are usually undertaken by more or fewer persons, depending on the size of the organization. The designer may also be the head of the workrooms.

The ideal designer is one who is not only capable of producing a sketch but also able to follow through, supervising the cutting and execution. The ideal workroom director is one who is capable of doing a

little of everything but most important, she must be skilled as a cutter. A workroom cannot be stocked with patterns for every conceivable costume in every conceivable size. Almost any garment can be cut from the basic patterns shown, if the cutter has imagination and a good eye. Many volunteer workers can run a sewing machine but few people have sufficient understanding of pattern-making to be able to cut. Some people are born with this understanding, others acquire it; but no costume staff can function without an efficient cutter.

Somehow in theatre production, regardless of the length of preparation time, there is always a terrific rush at the end. The workroom director must know how to delegate work.

The Workrooms. The costume staff will require three rooms to work in: a sewing room, a dye room, and a storage room for finished costumes. If possible, these workrooms should be housed in the theatre. This saves time for the actors, since it is easy to appear for fittings while offstage during rehearsals without missing cues. Working so close to the theatre, the costume staff becomes familiar with the group they have to dress.

In schools where the facilities of the home economics department are used for the construction of the costumes, a storage room equipped with racks for finished garments should be provided next to the dressing rooms. Be sure this room is equipped with an iron and a board and enough sewing materials for emergency repairs.

Equipment for the Sewing Room. 1. Cutting table about 30 inches high, 46 inches wide, and as long as space permits, but at least 6 feet. It is convenient to have the edges marked off in inches.

2. Sewing machines. There should be a least one machine for every two workers, more if possible. They should be power-driven and capable of sewing heavy materials.

3. Sewing materials. Provide scissors, large and small, pins by the box rather than a paper (steel pins are more expensive but they do not rust), pin cushions, a magnet to pick up dropped pins, needles (hand and machine in coarse and fine sizes), thread, tape measures (fabric), yard sticks, snaps, hooks and eyes, a stapling machine, razor blades, tailor's chalk (black and white) and charcoal for marking patterns. If each worker has a complete set of supplies in his own box, much time can be saved.

4. Shelves and cupboards should be provided to hold sewing materials. Provide electric outlets for electric irons, place for ironing boards.

5. Electric iron and board.

6. A full-length mirror for trying on costumes.

7. Garment racks on casters to hold costumes while in work (These can be made of one-inch pipe.)

8. An adjustable dress form will cut down required fittings.

9. Wooden hat moulds for constructing head-dresses are useful.

Equipment for Dye Room. The dye room should be near the sewing room.

1. Sink with water supply and stationary washtub.

2. Large enamel or aluminum pans for dyeing.

3. Two-burner gas stove to accommodate large pans for hot dye baths.

4. Curtain stretcher to hold cloth for spraying and painting.

5. Drying rack.

6. Shelves and cupboards and tables.

7. Spray gun, brushes, dyes, gold and silver paint, salt, acetic acid, vinegar, wood sticks or spoons for working cloth in dye bath, dye remover, soap, rubber gloves.

Equipment for Storage Room. Costumes and accessories must be carefully stored and, most important, boxes must be clearly labeled if the most is to be made of them for future productions.

1. Ample shelf space, quantities of boxes.

2. Racks made of one-inch pipe on casters. These racks must be tall enough to accommodate long-skirt costumes. Racks to accommodate short jackets, capes, etc., may be made in double tiers to save space. Individual hangers (wood, not wire), and skirt hangers.

3. Tissue paper for padding shoulders and hats.

4. Large dust-proof covers for racks.

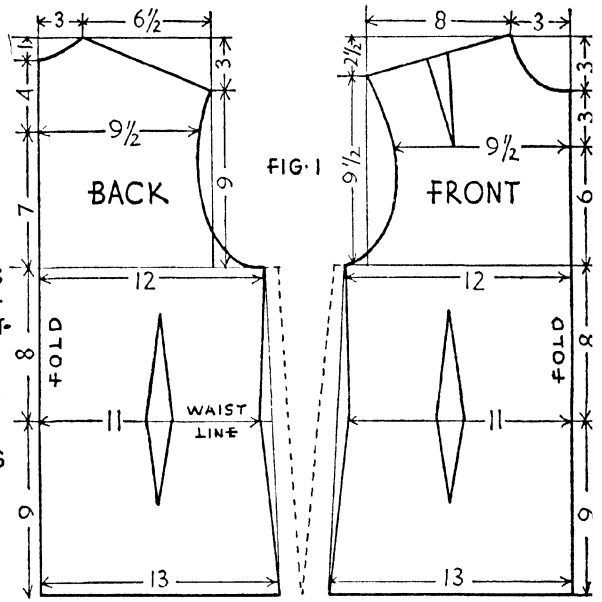
5. Labels for boxes, cards to identify costumes.

6. Ladder for reaching shelves.

BASIC PATTERNS.

The accompanying diagrams give instructions for drafting the most commonly used basic patterns with some suggestions as to how they may be varied. The patterns are given in size 16 for women and size 38 for men. The pajama pattern for men illustrated may be used for women, too, when altered to measurement. These instructions presuppose some familiarity with pattern anatomy. If, on the other hand, there is no member of the costume staff with sufficient understanding of the subject to make these patterns, it is a simple matter to *buy* a set of patterns that will prove just as useful. Remember, however, that the bought tissue-paper pattern will not last long. All patterns including bought ones should be cut out of light cardboard and numbered for safe keeping.

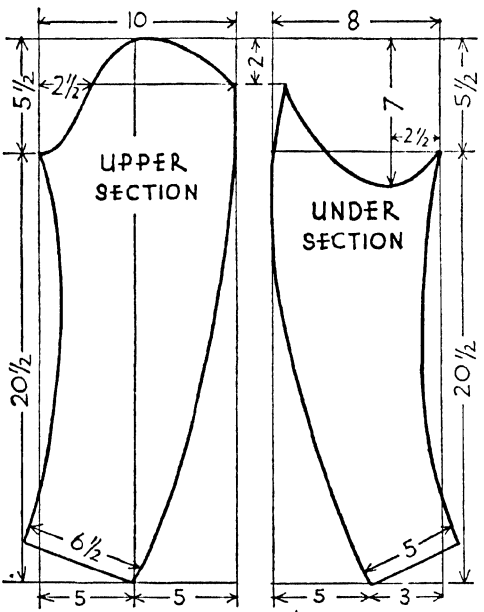
MAN'S WAIST AND SLEEVE



MAKE WAIST DARTS AS LARGE AS NEEDED TO MAKE WAISTLINE SNUG· FOLLOW----- LINE FOR LOOSE TUNIC

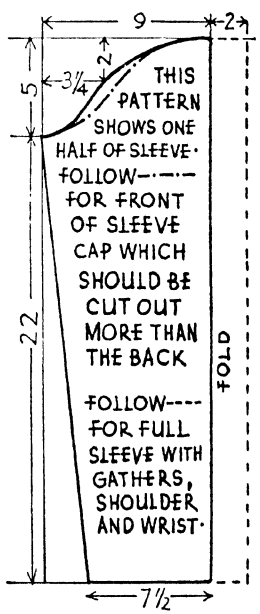
MAKE SHOULDER DART AS LARGE AS NEEDED TO FIT·

TWO-PIECE SLEEVE FIG·2



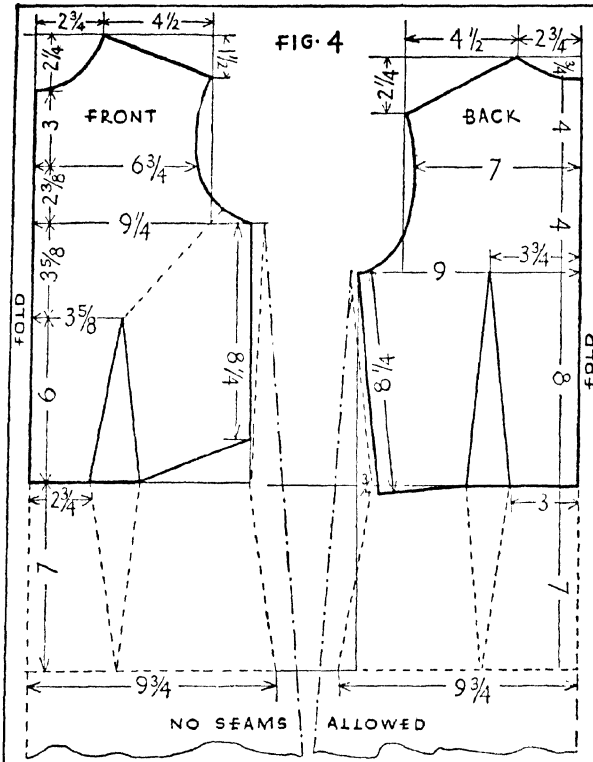
NO SEAMS ALLOWED

ONE-PIECE SLEEVE



FIG·3

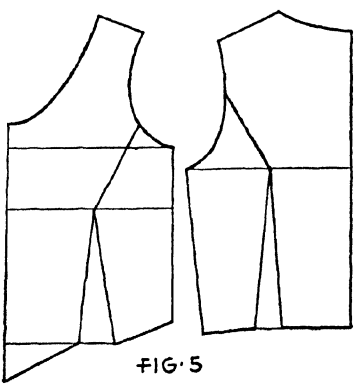
WOMAN'S BASIC FITTED WAIST

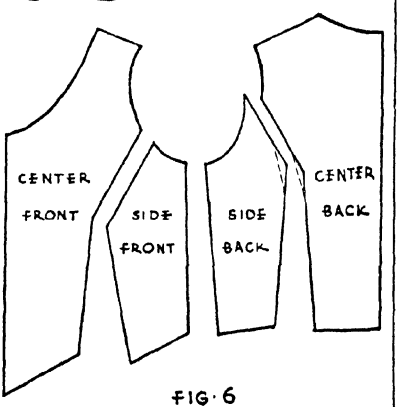


FOLLOW---- FOR HIP-LENGTH FITTED WAIST

FOLLOW-·-·- FOR LOOSE TUNIC, EXTEND TO ANY LENGTH DESIRED·

MAKE WAIST DARTS AS LARGE AS NEEDED TO MAKE WAISTLINE SNUG·



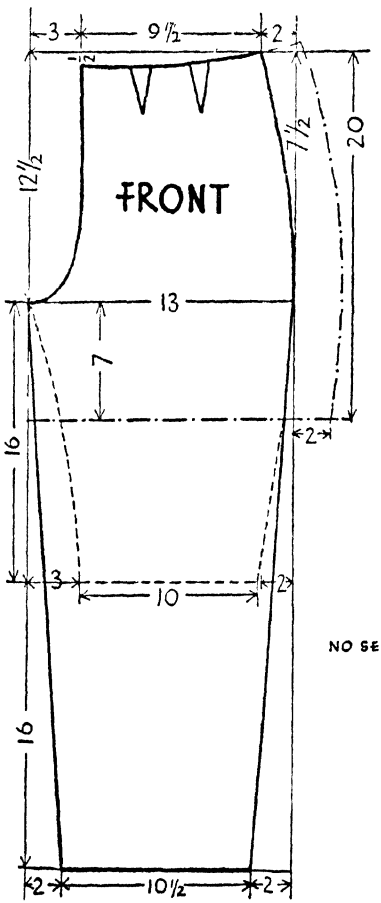


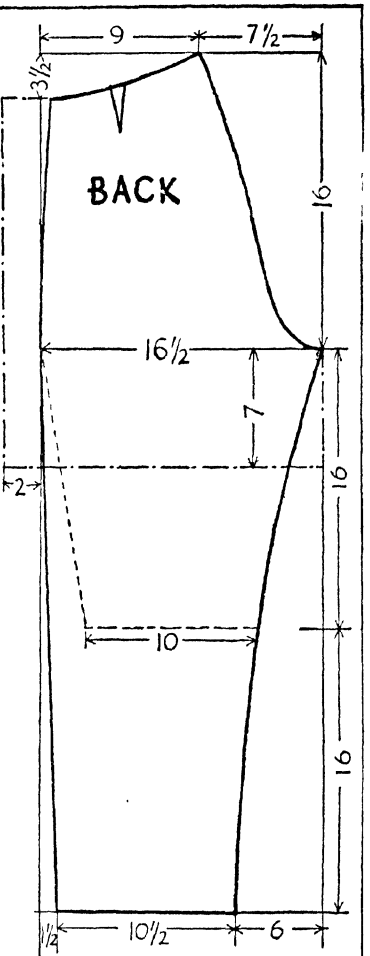
MOVE DARTS TOWARD SIDE SEAMS · LOWER WAISTLINE AT CENTER FRONT · LOWER NECKLINE ON BASIC WAIST (FIG·5) THEN CUT PATTERN APART FOR FRENCH BODICE (FIG·6) ADD SEAM ALLOWANCE·

MAN'S BREECHES AND TROUSERS

FOLLOW DOTTED LINES FOR KNEE-LENGTH BREECHES

FIG·7



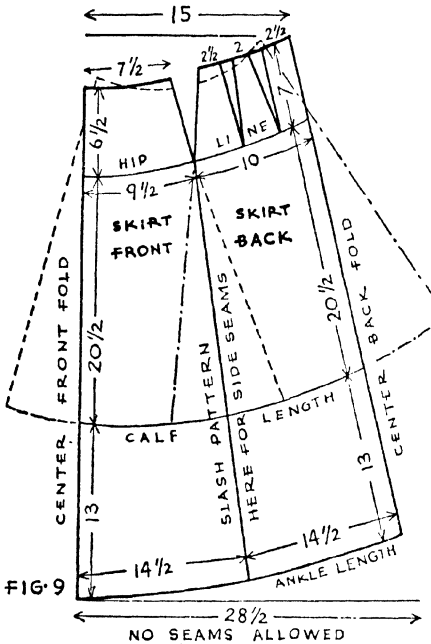


NO SEAMS ALLOWED

FIG·8

FOLLOW DOT-DASH LINE FOR THIGH-LENGTH FULL-PUFFED TRUNKS·GATHER AT WAIST AND THIGH·

WOMAN'S SKIRT AND CAPE



FIG·9

—·— ·—SHOWS HOW TO MAKE BACK OF SKIRT MORE CIRCULAR.- - - - - SHOWS HOW TO MAKE FRONT OF SKIRT MORE CIRCULAR. NOTE THAT THE FULLER THE SKIRT, THE DEEPER THE WAIST-LINE CURVE BECOMES. FOLLOW SAME METHOD FOR MAKING ANKLE-LENGTH SKIRT FULLER.

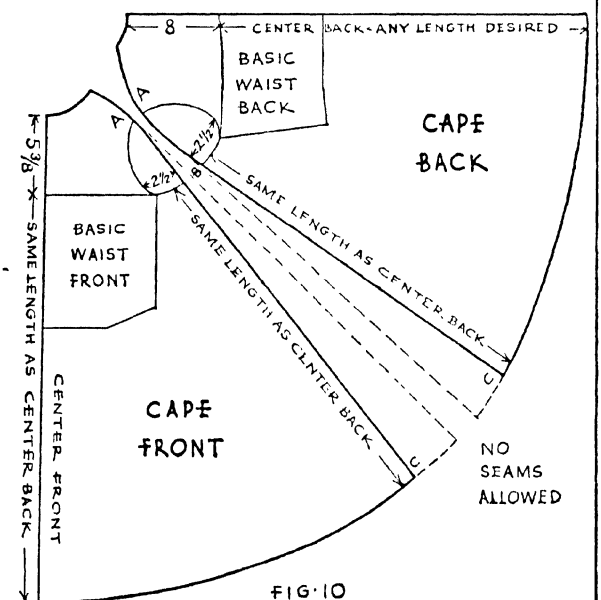
TO DRAFT CAPE BEGIN WITH WOMAN'S BASIC WAIST

FOR

MAN'S CAPE

BEGIN WITH MAN'S WAIST PATTERN.

- - - - - - LINE SHOWS HOW TO WIDEN CAPE.

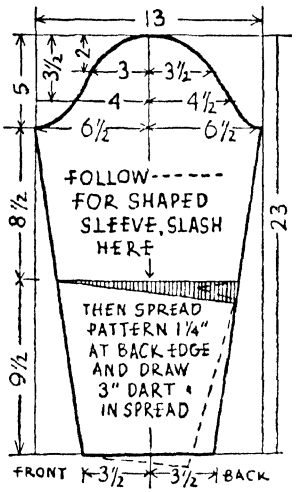


FIG·10

WOMAN'S SLEEVE PATTERNS

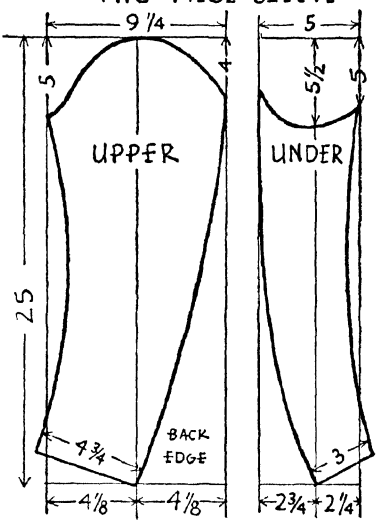
FIG·11

ONE-PIECE FITTED SLEEVE

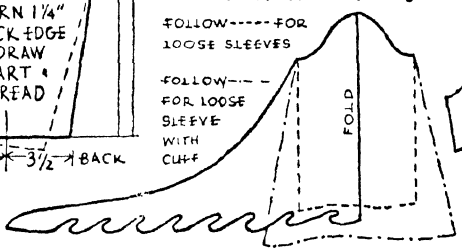


FIG·12

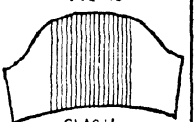
TWO PIECE SLEEVE



VARIATION OF THE BASIC PATTERN

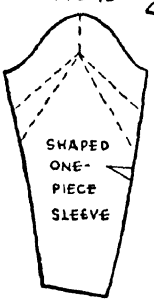


FIG·15



SLASH PATTERN AND INSERT WIDTH IN SLASH FOR FULL GATHERED SLEEVE

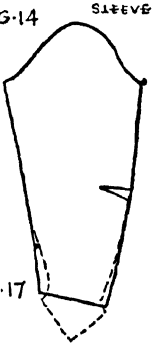
FIG·13



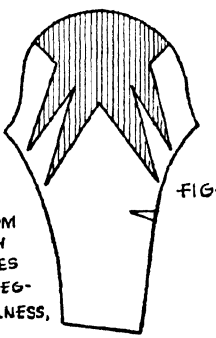
FOR SLEEVE WITH VERY FULL SHOULDER BUT TIGHT-FITTING FROM ELBOW TO WRIST, SLASH PATTERN ON DOTTED LINES (SEE ABOVE), SPREAD SEGMENTS AND INSERT FULLNESS, SEE FIG. 16

FOLLOW SOLID LINE FOR ONE-HALF PATTERN FOR DAGGED-EDGED SURPLICE SLEEVE

FIG·14



USE SHAPED ONE-PIECE SLEEVE AS BASIC PATTERN FOR SLEEVE WITH POINT BELOW WRIST.



FIG·16

FIG·17

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE USE OF BASIC PATTERNS

1. MAN'S WAIST AND SLEEVE: Fig. 1 provides pattern for fitted or loose tunics. The pattern is given to the hip line only but may be extended to knee or ankle length, loose style, for Norman and Saxon costumes of about 900 A.D. With kimono sleeves added to it, Fig. 1 loose style makes early Christian garment. Fig. 1 fitted style may be used for 14th century *coathardie*, and also may be used for Tudor costumes when slightly flared from the waist to the knee.

The two-piece sleeve (Fig. 2) may be extended in length for long, wrinkled Anglo-Saxon and for most coat sleeves after 1700. When large cuffs are used, make pattern fuller through the arm and much wider at the wrist.

2. WOMAN'S BASIC WAIST: Follow dot-dash line for all loose tunics, Fig. 4. These are suitable for Norman and Saxon garments. Add width at center-front line for Early Christian tunic, and gather. Add width at center-back line as well for all peasant and gypsy-type blouses with gathered neck line.

The fitted French bodice (Fig. 6) is the basic waist pattern for most dresses from the 15th to the 19th centuries. Use it with square neck for Italian Renaissance and Henry VIII costumes; with high neck for Puritan costumes; with low, round neck for Restoration costumes. Exaggerate the point in the center-front for Elizabethan and James I costumes (stiffen point).

3. MAN'S BREECHES AND TROUSERS: Follow dotted line for 18th century breeches. Follow dot-dash lines for puffed Elizabethan trunks. Long trousers may be used for Saxon costumes; fringe them for Indian costumes. Make them wider or narrower from knee to ankle for other periods.

4. WOMAN'S SKIRT AND CAPE: The straight gathered skirt which is used most with the fitted French bodice is not shown here, for it is nothing but a straight piece of desired length and width.

The circular skirt (dotted lines, Fig. 9) may be cut into sections called gores. To do this, mark pattern into desired number of sections, usually six, and add seam allowance to each section. The skirt may also be cut in a full circle for oriental dance skirts.

The cape (Fig. 10), when drafted from man's waist pattern, may be used short length for Elizabethan costumes; full length for Spanish costumes.

5. WOMAN'S SLEEVES: Use woman's sleeve variations as a guide for man's sleeves too. The woman's gathered sleeve (Fig. 15) may be made as full as desired by inserting more or less width in the slash. Use Fig. 16 for 1840 and 1890 "leg o' mutton" sleeves. See Fig. 14 for 14th century pointed surplice-type sleeve; wrist length for women. For men it is sometimes cut shorter and is used as oversleeve on a tight-fitting undersleeve. Fig. 17 shows Medieval pointed sleeve.

Any standard pattern company can supply a group similar to these illustrated. Many companies put out a series of masquerade costumes that are suitable for period dress. A *Martha Washington* costume, for instance, will supply a pattern for a French bodice, a pattern for skirt panniers, and a Watteau pleated sacque. An *Uncle Sam* suit will provide instep trousers, vest, and tail coat. A *George Washington* costume will provide an 18th century suit consisting of tricorne hat, vest, and knee breeches.

A man's contemporary two-piece pajama and dressing gown pattern provides in the pajama top, a yoked shirt pattern; in the pajama bottom, the basis for most trousers, Persian, Saxon, Chinese modern, etc., if altered for additional fullness or reduced as required. The pajama pattern may be shortened for knee breeches of whatever period. The dressing gown may be used as a basis for a simple straight tunic, to the knee for a Saxon costume, full length for a Norman costume. The short fitted tunic with a flare from the waist makes a Persian Prince.

A woman's pajama pattern may be used to make a Chinese costume or a clown; the trousers may be used for overalls or slacks or, when made fuller, for Persian trousers. The top will make a smock or Russian blouse.

Basic Patterns should be cut out of heavy brown paper or light cardboard; all parts of one pattern should be carefully numbered and identified, then pinned together. For instance, the largest piece might be marked "FRENCH BODICE, Size 16, Four Parts." All other parts of the pattern should bear identification such as "F.B.2," or if more description is desired (though for the experienced cutter this would hardly be necessary) the legend on the pattern section might read "F.B. Side Front." It is important to know how many parts the pattern has because all too frequently sections are lost in the putting away. Cardboard patterns may be hung on hooks near the cutting table—a convenient way of handling them.

As one drafts variations of the basic patterns, if there is any likelihood of their being used again, these should be cut out of cardboard for the permanent collection.

Measurements. Very few persons' measurements correspond at all points, bust, waist, hips, with any standard pattern. It is therefore essential to have a complete chart of the actors' measurements before cutting the costume. Measurements should be taken at the following places.

1. Center back length—from neck to waistline
2. Across back—about 4″ below neck
3. Shoulder seam—from neck to armhole

4. Full back width—from side seam to side seam
5. Side seam length—from armhole to waistline
6. Back waistline—from side to side
7. Across chest—about 3″ below neck
8. Center front length—from neck to waistline
9. Full front width—from side to side at bustline
10. Front waistline—from side to side
11. Bust circumference—tape a bit higher in back
12. Waist circumference—take a snug measurement
13. Hip circumference—about 7″ below waistline
14. Neck circumference—tape at base of neck in front and around nape in back
15. Underarm length—from armhole to wrist
16. Arm circumference—a bit below armhole
17. Elbow circumference—with arm bent up
18. Overarm length—from armhole to wrist
19. Wrist circumference—a loose measurement

Measurements must not be taken tightly. Take chest measurement at full expansion. Ask model to take a deep breath; then compare these measurements with the basic pattern. If the actor's measurements are fairly close to those of the basic pattern, the latter may be used as a guide in cutting. If, however, great alteration of these patterns is required, trace the basic pattern on to paper and alter the paper pattern to suit.

Alter Measurement of the Basic Pattern in the Following Ways:

Waist Pattern. When waist pattern needs enlarging at all points. slash the pattern in a straight line from the center of the shoulder to the waistline, both front and back of pattern. Then add the necessary fullness in the slit. Reduce the size of the pattern by making a fold in these same lines. Patterns should never be increased or decreased in the center front, for this will distort the neck-line.

Bust—Fitted Waist. To increase the bust measure moderately, add the necessary width at the bust line in the side seams of the front of the pattern. If, however, the bust is very large, cut out waist dart and slash dotted line into armhole; then spread needed amount at bust point of existing dart and draw new dart.

Front and Back Length. First determine whether added length is needed between the shoulder and bust or between bust and waist, then slash at the desired place and add length in slash. Reduce length by taking a fold in these places.

Armhole. To make the armhole smaller, add height in a gradual slope at either side of the side seam, adding slightly more at the front of the waist than at the back.

Shoulder. Add material to the armhole end of the shoulder line to lengthen shoulder. Reduce in same place.

Sleeves. First determine whether alteration is necessary above or below the elbow, then slash pattern across sleeve where needed and add length in slash. Reduce by taking folds in same place.

Pajama Trousers Pattern. Add or reduce width front and back in side seams. To add or reduce length, determine whether alteration is necessary from waist to crotch or below. Slash pattern horizontally where alteration is necessary. Insert added length in slash or fold to reduce length.

Skirt Pattern. To lengthen skirt pattern without altering the width at the bottom slash pattern horizontally three inches below hip line and add necessary length. Reduce by folding in same place. The waist line may be reduced or enlarged by taking in or letting out the waist darts. In a gored skirt reduce or enlarge each gore as required. The diagram shows how to increase width of skirt pattern.

Cape Pattern. To lengthen cape add length to bottom, tapering side seams from C to B to reduce fullness if desired. For additional fullness add at side seams from C to nothing at A.

Executing the Costume.

Basting and Fitting. When a costume is turned over to the seamstresses, it should be cut to measure and pinned to show how the parts go together. The first step is the basting. This should be done by hand and should be strong enough so that the costume will not fall apart in the fitting. Two fittings are all that should be necessary. Allow large seams so that the garment may be adjusted easily. If the actor is fairly even on both sides, fitting one side carefully should be enough; the other half of the garment can be matched later. This will save time and the actor is always in a hurry.

Sewing. When the first fitting is over, the machine sewing should be done. Press all seams as sewn. Collars, cuffs, and trimmings should be applied. Openings should be finished. Zippers are quickest for dressing. Where hooks and eyes are used, they should alternate. All skirt hems, trains, etc., should be pinned or basted only. The final sewing should be left until after the second fitting. The second fitting acts as a check up. Is the garment too tight? Is the length of sleeves correct? Make the actor move around in his costume to make sure it is comfortable in every particular.

Finishing. After the last fitting, the costume must be "finished." This consists of cutting away selvages: stitching armholes a second time to prevent strain accidents; pinking or running a machine stitch on the edge of the seam allowance to prevent fraying (this is unneces-

sary if the costume is to be worn only a few times); putting up the hem by hand, never by machine; then securing and cutting away all loose threads.

Pressing. Darts should be hemmed flat or cut open and pressed flat. All seams should be pressed flat again, stretching a little as you press, to prevent puckering. If time permits, go over the whole garment with the iron. Then hang on the rack with tissue in sleeves and shoulders to prevent creasing again.

Accessories. The accessories are a very important adjunct to the costume. Usually specific items are called for in the script, and there is no end of trouble if the costumer should fail to provide a pocket to hide the secret letter or to supply the glove which betrays the clandestine visit! Such failures can be guarded against if all items are carefully noted on the costume identification cards.

The accessories should be pinned to the costume or hung on the same hanger with the costume, and before each rehearsal or performance, they should be checked against the card. Of all accessories, wigs and shoes are the most difficult to obtain. Realistic wigs are impossible for the costumer to construct. When they are a necessity, they must be rented. But since they are very expensive, it is wise wherever possible to contrive a substitute for the realistic wig. One can get away with artificial hair when a cap or hat is used with the costume to cover most of it. In some productions, a stylized head-dress is permissible and neatly solves the problem. Marguerite's long, golden braids, for instance, may be made of artificial silk or even yellow wool. The high Marie Antoinette head-dress may be built out of buckram and wire, covered with draped maline or even cellophane and bound at intervals with ribbons. After all, it is chiefly the silhouette that counts. If that is correct, the materials used to achieve it will not matter so much and a frankly artificial head-dress is much better than simulated real hair of the absorbent-cotton variety.

Period foot-wear is a serious accessory problem to the impecunious little theatre group. The thing to establish is whether the heels were high or low and what the general silhouette was and then one must try to approximate this as well as possible. For women, the job is not so difficult, for most period costumes are long and all but cover the foot. Ballet slippers or laced-canvas beach espadrilles will do for most heel-less styles; and for periods when high heels were used, the good old opera pump may be revamped with a bow or a painted buckram buckle. Donations of kid and satin evening shoes will solve many problems. Men's shoes present more difficulty than women's. In many cases the silhouette of the foot-gear may be approximated in felt sewn to a heavy sock. Plain, rolled woolen socks without a shoe will do well

enough for medieval costumes. It is possible to add tongues and buckles to modern shoes for some period styles, though this is not very satisfactory, for the glueing will break wherever the action of the foot causes creasing.

Audiences have learned to associate certain characteristic accessories with period dress. Even if the dress does not conform in every particular to the mode of the period, if the general silhouette is approximated and the accessories are identifiable by the audience, the costume is adequate for theatre purposes. A dress with a full gathered skirt and fitted French bodice may be revamped for production after production with only a change of accessories. A hooped petticoat and pantalettes worn under such a basic dress, with the addition of flat slippers, will make a Civil War costume. A roll worn around the hips under the skirt and a starched white ruff will make an Elizabethan costume. The same dress with deep white lace-edged collar and cuffs makes a Cavalier costume. Add huge sleeve revers and a gable hat and you have a costume of the time of Henry VIII.

Custodianship. All costumes should carry an identification card giving the following information: (1) the name of the production and the scene; (2) the name of the character for whom the costume is designed; (3) the color of the costume; (4) a list of accessories for the costume.

These cards should be made in duplicate before the costume goes into work. The head of the sewing staff should file a complete set of cards for each production. They are her guide for the construction of the costumes.

A duplicate card is pinned to the costume while it is in work. This card remains on the costume all the time. It is removed by the actor only during the performance. It is used by the person in charge of the distribution of costumes to see that the actor is given every item he needs. It is used by the actor to check accessories as he returns the costume.

When the costumes have been sewn and have received their final pressing, they must be checked with this identification card and carefully hung on racks together with their accessories until the time of the performance. Be sure to use good wooden hangers, not wire ones, and pad the shoulders and even the bosoms of the costumes with tissue paper to prevent wrinkling. Do not crowd on the racks. A clean dust- and light-proof cloth large enough to cover the whole rack will protect all the costumes from dust and fading. These covers can be made of inexpensive lightweight slipcover material and will cost less than individual garment bags. The racks of costumes may be kept in the sewing room or storage room until the time of the performance. Before

the performance the racks should be brought to a place convenient to the dressing rooms and one member of the sewing staff should be placed in charge of the distribution of the costumes.

From this point, the actor is responsible for his costume and accessories until the end of the performance, when he returns them. The actor should be assigned hooks for his costumes in the dressing room. He should hang his costumes in the order in which he will wear them. Be sure the dressing-room floor is kept clean, to avoid soiling costumes. Be sure that some member of the sewing staff is on duty in the dressing-room to take care of repairs and to help actors dress.

At the end of the performance, the actor must check his accessories against the identification card and return them with the costume as he received them. The person in charge of distribution checks all items again as she accepts them, noting any damage to be mended. In this way, costumes are made ready for the next performance or for the storage room.

Costumes which are to be stored should be sorted—men's and women's according to style—brushed, dry cleaned when necessary, padded with tissue in the shoulders, and hung on racks. Hats should be placed in large boxes with plenty of tissue around them and enough tissue stuffed into the crowns to preserve their shape. If closed cupboards are provided in the storage room, the hats may be stored on pegs on the shelves. Belts and girdles should be stored in a separate carton, shawls and scarves in another, etc. Shoes which are heavy should be stored in bins at floor level. Sort carefully for style and separate men's and women's.

If possible, segregate woolen things into compartments of their own as these need more frequent inspection for moths than cotton or silk. Be sure woolen costumes are clean before storing, and pack with moth crystals. Costumes that are furred should be sprayed with some moth-repellent and stored in garment bags.

The front face of all boxes and bins should bear a label giving a complete inventory of contents. This will save much weary opening of boxes to find a specific item. The dust-covers on the racks should also bear cards of identification.

When a play is going into the repertory and the whole production is to be preserved intact for future use, it is most convenient not to sort the costumes but to preserve them on one rack, ticketing them with the name of the play. In this instance, men's and women's shoes may be stored together and so labeled, etc.

Jewelry must be stored in small compartments to avoid snarling of chains and interlocking of pieces. A number of stocking boxes will hold many items neatly in individual compartments.

IX. STAGE LIGHTING FOR THE TECHNICIAN

HISTORY AND THEORY.

The history of stage lighting began when the theatre first moved indoors, in the 16th century. Serlio, writing at that time, described the first lighting effects:

"But if you need a great light to shew more than the rest, then set a torch behind, and behind the torch a bright basin, the brightness whereof will shew like the beams of the sun . . . You may also place certain candlesticks above the scene, with great candles burning therein, and above the candlesticks you may place some vessels with water, wherein you may put a piece of camphor, which burning, will throw a very good light, and smell well."

During the first half of the 17th century Inigo Jones in England tremendously elaborated the simple effects of Serlio, using candles, lamps, and reflectors. Lighting was a static thing, however, simply a method of getting more effective scenic backgrounds in dramatic spectacles. Lighting of the actor and the acting area remained primitive, because of the clumsiness of the available light mediums—the oil lamp and the candle. The acting area was illuminated by chandeliers and wall brackets, and the auditorium was as bright as the stage. It was not until the latter half of the 18th century that the stage lamps were concealed from the view of the audience, as footlights, borderlights, and strip-lights.

The introduction of gas-lighting at the beginning of the 19th century first made possible the use of light as a really dramatic element in the production. By means of valves, controlling the gas feed lines, the lights could be dimmed, made brighter, or turned out altogether. Thus for the first time it was possible to darken the auditorium during a performance and thus concentrate attention on the stage. It was possible to play different scenes with different intensities of light. By concentrating the valve controls at one place (called a "gas table"), one man was able to control the intensity of all the lights in the theatre. Gas light was brighter than oil lamps or candles, and with improved visibility, theatres tended to be built larger. At first there was only a simple substitution of open flare gas lights, protected by wire screens, in the familiar foots, borders, and strips. The problem of changing color remained almost as difficult as in the days of oil-lamps, although even then there were elaborate mechanical attempts to get simple color variation. The two other great disadvantages of gas were the great danger of fire, through contact of scenery or costumes with the open

flames, and the intense heat and bad odor. At the end of a three-hour performance the oxygen in the auditorium and on the stage was almost exhausted, and attempts to provide ventilation involved dangerous drafts which increased the fire hazard. However it was with gaslighting that realism in the theatre developed.

The development of the electric light in the latter part of the 19th century immediately solved these problems and made possible the free use of color in light. The invention of the more powerful tungsten-filament gas-filled light bulb, giving a concentrated source of intense light, made possible the floodlight and the spotlight. Arc lights had been used for some time as spots, but they were difficult to control, and involved considerable fire risk. While at first—and for a distressingly long time—most theatres simply followed the old idea of using foots, borders, and strips as the main light sources, the superior possibilities of control inherent in the small spotlight led to its adoption as the main light-source.

Today we are still in the pioneer era of electric stage lighting. We may expect improvements in lamps, instruments, and methods of control that will go far beyond anything we now know. The theatre technician has the responsibility of aiding this development, and he must always realize that he is working with a flexible medium whose possibilities are yet unknown, and should not fall into the error of simply imitating present practice.

THE REAL OBJECTIVES OF STAGE LIGHTING.

A creative approach to stage lighting must be based on a clear understanding of the objectives of stage lighting.

Vision. Stage lighting must first of all give the audience a view of the actor and the setting. Without enough illumination to see the actors' faces and the set, the work of actor, the director, and the scene designer is frustrated. Therefore adequate vision is the primary objective of the technician.

Emphasis. If an important scene is played in a dimly lit area, while unimportant characters are brightly lighted, the effect is as bad as if the leads mumbled their lines, while the bit players delivered their lines center stage, full voice. The playwright establishes the basic emphasis and the director clarifies, shades, and underlines to bring out the "spine" of the play. The technician must have an intelligent understanding of the director's production of the play in order to aid, and not hinder, its development. However, comparative intensity of light is only one means of getting emphasis. The color of the light, the actual form of the light, and movement of light can be equally important.

Mood. The mood of a scene or a stage setting is the dominant emotion it produces in the spectator, and there are as many moods as there are emotions. The effectiveness of light as a creator of mood is easily demonstrated by recalling the contrasting moods of a bright summer morning, a gray day, the full moon, sunlight reflected from fresh fallen snow, or October twilight. A dinner served by candlelight has a completely different mood from the same meal served in a blaze of electric lights. These light differences are almost equally effective in the theatre, regardless of the visual background. Thus comedy is always played in relatively bright light, and shadowed areas are common in romantic plays. A large part of the mood effect of the stage setting itself is dependent upon the way in which light is used to "paint" the set. In general, all sets present the most satisfactory effect in relatively little light—sufficient to reveal the setting, but with not so much light that it is reflected back in quantity, and most moods can also be better obtained in the acting area with a rather limited amount of light.

There is therefore a continual conflict between vision and mood, and it must be left to the director to effect a compromise between the two. The technician must never forget that light always gives some mood quality, and he must consider with the director and the designer whether the right mood has been obtained.

Time of Day. Aside from mood value there is straight expositional value in time of day as portrayed in terms of light. Frequently a lapse of time between scenes can be quickly conveyed to the audience by lighting realistically for time of day.

These objectives of stage lighting—vision, emphasis, mood, and time—are obtained by the technician by variations of intensity, color, form, movement, and direction of light. Experience and experimentation will teach which means are most effective in obtaining the objectives desired.

THE TECHNICAL BACKGROUND.

To make full use of all possibilities of stage lighting, the technician must have knowledge of the mechanics of his instruments—a comparatively simple matter—and also the much more difficult knowledge of the physics of electricity, light and color.

Electricity. Obviously there can be no attempt here to teach the principles of electricity. However it is desirable to review some of the terminology commonly used.

> An ELECTRIC CURRENT is a flow of electricity from one point to another. DIRECT CURRENT is a continuous flow in one direc-

tion. ALTERNATING CURRENT is an alternating flow, first in one direction then in the opposite, usually at the rate of sixty alternations to a second.

An AMPERE is the name of the unit used to measure the *rate of flow* of electric current.

A VOLT is the unit of measure of the *pressure* of flow of an electric current; technically this is called the difference in potential.

A WATT is the unit of measure of voltage and amperage. Amperage multiplied by voltage gives the wattage measurement of electric current.

A KILOWATT is a thousand watts. A KILOWATT HOUR is a kilowatt of current used for one hour. This is the customary unit by which electric current is sold, that is, for so much a kilowatt hour.

An OHM is the unit of measure of electric resistance. All materials offer some resistance to the flow of electric current, some much more than others. Even the copper wire itself through which the current flows offers resistance. A resistance through which a pressure of one volt forces a flow of one ampere is called an OHM.

A CIRCUIT is the complete path of an electric current and is always continuous. When it is broken at any point, the flow of electricity is stopped. If lamps or other equipment are wired in the circuit so that the current must pass through each lamp in sequence, we have a SERIES CIRCUIT. If the lamps are wired so that the current may reach each lamp directly without going through the other lamps, the circuit is said to be a PARALLEL CIRCUIT. Lamps for stage lighting are always wired in parallel, switches in series.

Light. Light may be considered to be that form of energy which, acting on the eye, produces vision. Light radiates in all directions from its source. The radiation in a single direction is called a RAY of light, and a number of rays in the same general direction is called a BEAM. Light travels in straight lines when going through a single medium.

Intensity—the measure of light in a given direction produced by a one-candle power lamp—is called CANDLE POWER, and the amount of light exactly one foot from the source of light is called a FOOT CANDLE. The amount of light necessary to cause an illumination of one foot candle is called a LUMEN. The photometer (familiar to most photographic enthusiasts) is an instrument for measuring the foot candles of illumination at any given distance from a light source.

The technician will find the photometer extremely useful in helping to correlate experience gained in lighting different sets, because it makes it possible to determine exactly how much light illuminates a backdrop

or any other part of the scene. The human eye adapts itself to almost any intensity of illumination, and therefore cannot be counted on to register exactly the actual amount of illumination. The photometric measurement of illumination gives a true and permanent record.

Thus the technician can compare the lighting of different sets, though completely different types and quantities of lighting instruments may have been used. The photometer is also useful for making a check of the comparative efficiency of different pieces of stage lighting equipment as regards their power of illumination and the distribution pattern of that illumination.

> REFLECTION. Certain surfaces *absorb* most of the light that strikes them. Other kinds of surfaces *reflect* most of the light that strikes them. If the reflecting surface is perfectly smooth and highly polished, the reflection is known as REGULAR REFLECTION. If the reflecting surface is rough, the light rays bounce off in many different directions, and this is called DIFFUSE REFLECTION. The law of regular reflection is that a light ray is reflected at the same angle at which it strikes the reflecting surface. This angle produced by the light ray striking the reflector is called the ANGLE OF INCIDENCE. The angle at which the light ray is reflected is called the ANGLE OF REFLECTION, and these two angles are similar. Light rays reflected from curved surfaces have their angles of incidence and reflection with the *tangent of the curve* equal to each other. Diffused reflection occurs in the theatre when light rays are reflected by painted surfaces.
>
> REFRACTION. When light passes obliquely from one medium to another, the light ray is usually bent. The most common example is the lens of a spotlight. As the light passes through the air, and then through the glass lens, it is bent. Most lenses are shaped so as to bend the light rays together, to produce a more concentrated beam of light. This bending of light rays, passing from one medium to another is called REFRACTION.

Color. In Part VII color was discussed in terms of colored pigment but actually color is the sensation produced in the human eye by light of different wave lengths. Pigments, or colored surfaces of any sort, appear colored to us because they reflect light of certain wave lengths. Red pigment reflects light of one wave length, green of another wave length, and so on through the whole range of colors. What we call white light includes most of the possible wave lengths.

White light is colored by subtracting from it all but one particular wave length. When blue gelatin is placed in front of a white spotlight, the blue gelatin absorbs all but the blue wave lengths. On the other hand, it is possible to *make* white light by combining lights of various

colors. Red, green, and blue light focussed together on a certain area will be reflected back to us as white light.

It is important that the technician has clearly in mind this true nature of color, for much of the behavior of colored light on scenery and costumes that seems mysterious will then become simple and logical. Thus when a green backdrop turns very dark under red light it is because the green pigment can reflect only the green wave lengths, absorbing other wave lengths. If white light is projected onto the backdrop, the green pigment will reflect the green wave lengths, absorbing the rest.

> Color mixture by means of colored lights is called the ADDITIVE METHOD of color mixture. The primary colors in the additive color scale are red, green, and blue, and light of any color may be obtained by the mixture of these colors in the proper proportions. The mixture of pigments to obtain color is called the SUBTRACTIVE method of color mixture, because pigments give color by absorbing or subtracting all except their particular wave lengths. This is the conventional method of color mixture and has been discussed in Part VII.

While a knowledge of the theory of color mixture is essential, the technician should supplement theory by the use of a small color-testing room, where colored fabrics, costumes, makeup, and samples of painted canvas can be tested under a spotlight with various color mediums. Such a color-testing room may be rigged up on stage out of a number of opaque flats.

DETERMINATION OF PROPER LIGHTING EQUIPMENT.

Practical experience in stage lighting and a first-hand knowledge of the types of equipment offered by manufacturers are essential background to the purchase of lighting equipment. It is recommended that the technician inexperienced in lighting consult the best talent available; skilled lighting technicians may be found in the drama departments of many colleges and universities. Certain basic principles may be outlined here, however.

The cost of a lighting installation can vary from five hundred dollars for a skeleton layout of second-hand material to over fifty thousand dollars for the best modern equipment. Directors and producers too frequently underestimate the cost of equipment needed to do a first-rate job. It has been said that the proper amount to invest in the lighting layout is at least twice as much as you can afford!

Of course a crowded production schedule or repertory will require a more elaborate set-up than four or five short-run productions a year. Again, if the schedule is limited to plays with one or two settings (usually interiors), much less equipment is needed than for plays with many scenes. Realistic lighting, particularly of exteriors, requires more units and more complex dimming control than stylized productions.

In any case the lighting installation must be as flexible as possible. Flexibility is achieved by the use of equipment that can be employed in many different ways. An example of lack of flexibility is the old-fashioned permanent installation of footlights and three border lights, all permanently wired to switchboard dimmer plates.

Even the wiring installation can have flexibility. Outlets or pockets should be plentiful and well distributed in the auditorium as well as on stage, at any point where lighting equipment may conceivably be used. However, these should not be connected permanently to switchboard dimmer plates. For maximum flexibility, the switchboard should be of the type that allows any of the outlets to be connected with any particular dimmer plate. Then every dimmer can always be used regardless of what outlets may be used.

There are two schools of thought on switchboard design. The best New York City lighting technicians prefer a switchboard with a limited number of relatively large variable capacity dimmer plates, "ganging" together a number of spotlights on one dimmer plate. Individual variations in intensity among the spotlights connected to one plate are achieved by using different sizes of lights, by variations in focussing, by shuttering down the opening, and by a mixture of frosted gelatins to diffuse the light, or clear ones to concentrate it. The advantages of this system are that the switchboard is compact and simple; therefore easy to operate, and relatively inexpensive. Many spotlights of varied types are required, however.

The contrasting school of thought has its enthusiasts among university drama departments and community theatres, who advocate a larger number of small capacity dimmers, allowing almost individualized control of spotlights and other units, preferably remote control.

Such a switchboard is considerably more expensive and much more difficult to operate, because of the increased number of controls. Those who dislike this second type of switchboard claim that it is almost impossible for even a skilled operator to operate without mistakes under the tension of production. Certainly if there is any limitation on budget it would seem desirable to use the first type of switchboard and put the money saved into additional light units.

In any case it is important that the total amperage capacity of the

board be at least 50,000 watts for a full sized theatre and 20,000 watts for a small theatre. This is in addition to the wattage of the auditorium lights.

The incandescent spotlight is the most important lighting unit because it can be used for almost any purpose, although its primary advantage is that it throws a concentrated beam of light. Spotlights are usually rated by the size lamp they take, from the 250-400 baby spots, up to the 1500-2000 watt size. Primary considerations in selecting spots are the size of the stage and the distance the spot will be from the stage. On small stages all lighting from stage positions can be done with 100 watt to 500 watt spotlights.

Important points to check in addition to price are:

Comparative efficiency (Determined by photometer test)
Mechanical sturdiness
Compactness
Provision for ventilation
Ease and firmness of hanging and focussing
Access to lamp.

All other types of lighting units—footlights, borderlights, striplights, and floodlights (olivettes)—are essentially some form of metal box, or trough, fitted with one or more lamp bases and lamps, and open on one side to allow light to come out. The inside of the metal box or trough is painted white or aluminum, or treated in some way to produce diffused reflection. Borderlights, floodlights, and striplights are usually provided with some sort of adjustable hanger or bracket for fastening them in position.

The most useful borderlights come in sections eight feet long, provided with separate compartments for each lamp, an efficient reflecting surface, and provision for use of color frames.

The question of compactness may be the determining factor in selecting footlights, unless there is a generous footlight trough sunk into the stage floor. Compartment footlights, much like compartment borderlights but using smaller lamps, are available; also footlights with concealed lamps, giving out indirect light.

Footlights and borderlights should be wired in four separately controlled circuits. Each circuit may then be used for a separate color.

THE LIGHTING PLAN.

There is no other art of the theatre so little understood and difficult to teach as stage lighting, and with reason. Light, electricity, and color, the elements involved, are highly complex; their laws are unfamiliar to most people; and special study is necessary to understand even the

primary facts. There is little known about the psychology of light, and unlike painting in pigment, which has a long recorded history, painting with colored light is as novel to us as painting with pigment was to a cave man. The equipment used for stage lighting is expensive and complicated, and changes rapidly. But granted that the technician has a thorough knowledge of light, electricity, color, and all forms of lighting equipment, these elements have so many variables that there are literally hundreds of possible light plans for even the simplest interior. A major difficulty in planning the lighting of a set is that there is no satisfactory method of recording a particular plan in such a way as to make the intention as clear as the score of a symphony is to the conductor of an orchestra. The poor substitutes that must be used at present are the lighting plan and the cue sheet.

A lighting plan consists of a plan of the set on stage, with the position of all lighting apparatus indicated. The instruments may be drawn in more or less to scale, or indicated by symbols. The areas lighted by each spotlight—that is, the "throw"—is also indicated, with the color to be used. No attempt is made to indicate the probable spread of light from borderlights or footlights or strips. The spread of light from floodlights may or may not be shown. Each spotlight and floorlight is assigned a reference number, and the outlet to which each is connected is shown. At one side of the plan will be a diagram of the switchboard hookup—that is, showing which outlets (and which light units) are to be connected to which dimmer plates, with the wattages of the separate units checked against the wattage capacity of the various dimmer plates, to be sure there is no overloading.

The switchboard cue sheet will list the switch positions and dimmer readings at the opening of the play and at the opening of each scene, followed by all changes in position or dimming up or down. However, the cues will not be lines from the play; they will be numbers in sequence, from one on, with a number assigned for each change in the board setup. The stage manager or his assistant will call to the board operator the cue number at the proper moment, when the switch is to be thrown or the dimmer handle moved, after, of course, a previous warning. This system of number cues allows the switchboard operator to concentrate fully on his manipulation of the board.

A typical section of a cue sheet:

#7. Throw on switch number 5.
#8. Start slow dim out. Dimmers 8, 12 and 13.
#9. Bring up dimmer 5.

As the operator hears each number called by the stage manager, he performs the operation listed on his cue sheet. If there are many

scenes, or if the lighting set-up is an elaborate one, it is well for the assistant stage manager to read aloud the position of switches and dimmers at the beginning of each scene, while the switchboard operator checks the board.

It must be borne in mind that the original lighting plan worked out to express the values desired by the director and designer will only be a starting point. At the present time the art of lighting the play is developed by long and patient trial and error, and continual exploration of the vast possibilities of modern lighting instruments and controls.

A Few General Principles.

1. Light projected from above along the diagonal of a cube at a forty-five degree angle with the stage floor seems to be the most satisfactory for lighting faces and bringing out the natural features.

2. Footlights and borderlights should be used for blending the scene together and for lighting the scenery, and never for illuminating the acting area.

3. In most cases any given acting area should be lighted diagonally from above from two sides, one light a cool color, the other a warm color; and all warm colors should come from one side, and all cool colors from the other side.

4. Beware of spotlights mounted on the front center of the balcony. They will tend to flatten the features of the actor and cast shadows on the scenery. They can be useful for toning and blending, however.

5. The lower the intensity of the light on the background, the lower the intensity of light on the actors' faces may be. If the background is brightly lighted, the intensity of the light on the actors must be increased to maintain equal visibility.

6. Use as few lighting units as possible to get the desired effect. Over-complication prolongs the period of light rehearsals, increases labor costs, and usually results in loss of emphasis and mood, and a cluttered effect.

7. Use special spots freely to emphasize important properties, give emphasis to the scenery, or to highlight important business, but be sure that every special spot has a real function.

8. Do not be afraid to use the footlights freely, but always at low intensities.

9. The synthetic white light created by red, green, and blue is richer and gives far more interesting shadows than the whitelight of an uncolored electric lamp.

10. Allow adequate time for light rehearsals. Changing the focus of lamps, changing gelatins, or simply changing a dimmer reading takes time, lots of time. It is better to insist on adequate time from the beginning than to make promises to the director which cannot be kept.

11. Keep the light plan, the cue sheets, and all records up-to-date and make fresh light plans and cue sheets whenever the old ones become much marked over. This way lies sanity and an opening performance run off without mistakes.

X. STANDARD LIGHTING EQUIPMENT AND ITS USE

Arc Spotlights. An arc spot light has as its source of light the incandescent glow produced by an electric current jumping a small gap between two carbons. Other characteristics are moveable carbon holders, either manually operated or electrically driven, for keeping the tips of the carbons at a constant distance as they are consumed by the intense heat; a resistance for reducing voltage to the fifty to seventy-five volts required; and an iris form of shutter for controlling the size of the beam of light, or for cutting it out entirely. Arc spotlights are available in ratings from 25 amperes to 200 amperes; the 200 ampere arc consuming some 12,000 watts.

Arc spotlights are used where an intense light is needed, and the distance from instrument to stage is great, as from the back of a balcony to the stage. Fire laws require an operator in attendance.

Disadvantages of the arc spotlight are the impossibility of dimming it except by closing down the iris shutter, and the sputtering noise it usually makes.

Prices of arc spots range from about $100 to $700 depending on size and equipment. They can be purchased from practically all stage lighting companies.

Balcony Front Lights. Various types of spot lights and projectors with concentrated light beams are frequently used mounted in racks on the front face of the balcony rail, in the center, or at the sides. Diffusing type spots, such as Fresnel lens spots, are not used, because of their tendency to spill light on the top and sides of the proscenium arch. As the almost straight throw of light casts the actors' shadow on the scenery, balcony front lights should be used at low intensities, for toning and pulling together the acting area. Racks, which hook over the edge of the balcony rail, capable of holding three or four spotlights, may be purchased from most stage lighting companies, or they may be made to the technician's design of pipe or angle iron. They should be provided with wire netting below the rack to prevent the possibility of color frames, shutters, etc., from ever dropping into the orchestra seats below. Architects should make permanent provision for balcony front lights in concealed compartments on the balcony when a theatre is built.

Beam Front Lights. Whenever possible spotlights should be mounted in the ceiling of the auditorium so as to project light through slots in the ceiling or through the open face of false beams, onto the downstage acting area. Beam lights are preferably mounted at the sides rather than at center positions, so as to give a diagonal throw. Such lights will not cast shadows of the actors on the back wall, nor spill onto the set.

Plano-convex lens spotlights are used rather than the diffuse Fresnel type spots, and in sizes from 500 to 1500 watts, or the more efficient ellipsoidal reflector type of spotlight in 500 or 1000 watt size.

New theatres should be built with ample provision for beam lights, and wherever possible old theatres should be altered to provide facilities for mounting spotlights in this position.

Border Lights. The old type of border light was a long metal trough with a number of small wattage lamps of various colors. This was replaced by a border light divided into compartments, in each compartment a 100 or 150 watt lamp, and with provision for mounting individual color frames. The reflecting surface of this type borderlight is usually simply an inside coat of white paint. The most recent type of borderlight provides highly efficient individual metal reflectors, and uses either pyrex colored glass roundels or gelatin color mediums. Different sized reflectors are available for lamps from 75 watts to 500 watts. The 200-watt size is large enough for an average stage, and the 75-100 watt size is adequate for smaller stages.

Border lights may be purchased in any length, and wired with any number of color circuits. If the border lights are purchased in 8′ long units, wired for four circuits they will be adequately flexible. Border lights are usually equipped with chain hangers to hang from pipe battens.

The three types of borderlights mentioned above may be purchased from almost all stage lighting companies. They are usually sold by the foot, and in 8′ or greater lengths the cost is about a dollar and a quarter a foot for the old type, five dollars a foot for the compartment type, and from eight to fourteen dollars a foot for the very efficient individual reflector type.

Border lights are no longer used for illumination of the actor, but for toning and blending together the spotlight areas, and indirectly for lighting the set.

Bridge Lights. A long narrow iron bridge is sometimes hung from the grid, just behind the teaser. It is usually counterweighted and raised and lowered by a winch. All types of light units may be mounted on the guard railing or hung just below. As the bridge takes up a good deal of room, the customary "first pipe" is preferable to a light bridge for spotlights for interior scenes. For exteriors and non-realistic or open-type settings, the bridge offers some advantages. It allows an operator to change the focus and color of spotlights during a performance, and a follow spot may be operated from the bridge; but probably its chief advantage is in speeding up focusing and color changes during the light rehearsal.

Bunchlight. This is a nearly obsolete form of floodlight, in which the light source is a considerable number of 100-watt or smaller lamps in an open metal box, mounted on a stand. It has been dropped from the lists of most stage lighting companies.

Cable. Flexible stage lighting cable for conducting current from switchboard to lighting units is made in various sizes to accomodate various amperages. The most common kind of cable has two separate conductors bound together, each conductor consisting of a stranded copper cable. The insulating covering is either a tough cotton and rubber braiding or a more expensive all-rubber covering.

Sizes of cable are listed according to the thickness of the copper con-

ductor, sizes generally used running from the small #16 gauge to the large #2 gauge.

Gauge number:	16	14	12	10	8	6	4	2
Amperage capacity:	6	15	20	25	35	50	70	90

Thus a 1500-watt spotlight, drawing approximately 15 amperes, would require 14 gauge cable.

Stage cable is also available with either six or eight conductors, for use with either three or four circuit borderlights.

Clamps. Spotlights, projectors and floodlights may be ordered equipped with *pipe clamps* for attaching the units to pipe battens. The two basic types are the C-clamp and the 2-piece clamp.

A *cable clamp* is frequently used with the heavy borderlight cable to hold the cable to the pipe batten and take the strain of its weight off the borderlight.

Color Box. A metal container for six color frames, which may be attached to a spotlight. By depressing a lever on the side, or by a cord control, any one of the six color frames may be raised in front of the spotlight lens, thus making quick color changes possible. Color boxes are sometimes called *boomerangs*.

There is also available a remote-control color box, electrically operated. The cost is high, however; about ten times the cost of a color box.

Color Wheel. The color wheel is a much less expensive, but larger and clumsier device for obtaining quick color changes. From four to seven discs of color are mounted in a large metal wheel. As the large wheel is revolved any of the color discs may be brought in front of the spotlight. The cost, depending on the size and number of the color discs, ranges from three to eleven dollars.

Connectors. These are devices for connecting lengths of cable to each other, or for connecting cable to light units. They are sometimes also used for connecting cable to switchboard outlets, instead of stage plugs. (See "Plugs.")

A connector has two parts, a female or receiving part, and the male part, which has two brass studs or prongs, which fit into the female part. Connectors are available in various sizes and amperage ratings, from 5 amperes to 100 amperes, and only similar amperage connectors will fit together.

Warning: Connectors should always be attached to cable of the same amperage rating, and male and female connectors at each end of the cable should have similar capacities.

Multiple connectors are female connectors to which two or three male connectors may be fastened, so that two or three instruments may be connected to one feed line. Branch-off connectors are female connectors, which may be fastened to a cable running through them, without cutting the cable. Thus a number of units may be connected to a continuous cable, at different points.

Cyclorama Lights. There are no true cyclorama light units on the market at the present time, perhaps because of the comparatively rare use of the cyclorama in New York productions.

The best substitutes among standard equipment are high-powered individual reflector type borderlights used above and below, augmented by reflector type floodlights used above.

Dimmers. The resistance dimmer works on the principle of decreasing voltage of a lamp by increasing the resistance in the circuit. The chief disadvantage of this type of dimmer is that lamps of smaller capacities than the dimmer cannot be completely dimmed out. However a variable-size resistance dimmer may be purchased, the 3000-watt size of which will effectively dim out lamps down to 1500 watts, and the 2000-watt size of which will dim out lamps of as little as 1000 watts.

The cheapest resistance dimmer is the slide type, which cannot, however, be mechanically locked together with other dimmers for centralized control.

The more durable plate-type resistance dimmer may be purchased with an interlocking mechanism, which allows a number of dimmers to be locked together, and operated simultaneously by one dimmer handle, or unlocked and operated separately.

The principle of the transformer has recently been applied to stage dimmers to produce extremely flexible and efficient type of dimmer called an austratat. A 4000-watt transformer type dimmer will completely dim out a 50-watt lamp, as well as any other size up to its capacity. No type of dimmer should be loaded with more than its rated capacity.

The transformer type dimmer may also be purchased with the mechanical interlocking device.

As a rule only the slide resistance dimmer is purchased separately, for auxiliary operation of single spot lights. All other types of dimmers are usually purchased incorporated into a switchboard. (See "Switchboards.")

An extremely expensive vacuum-tube type of dimmer is available for concentrated board control but its expense prohibits its use for almost all theatres.

Remote-control resistance-type dimmers are sometimes used for dimming very large wattages.

Floodlights. These are light units which give a general diffused light. The simplest type, sometimes called the Olivette, is a metal box, open on one side, equipped with the large "mogul" lamp base and a large wattage lamp. The insides of the box are painted white to serve as a reflecting surface, and there is provision for one or two color mediums. Because of the large wattage lamp used, this type of floodlight must be constructed with good ventilation. It may be purchased equipped for hanging from a pipe batten or mounting on a stand.

Recently floodlights have been developed with scientifically designed metal reflectors. These units are slightly more compact and considerably more efficient.

Floodlights are used for lighting backdrops and cycloramas, sometimes for giving the effect of direct sunlight or moonlight, and for special effects.

Footlights. Originally used with borderlights and strip lights as the source of illumination for the acting area, the footlight passed through a period of criticism, but today is generally accepted in the theatre as a very useful toning instrument, for helping to pull together the spotlighted areas. In this capacity it is used at much lower intensities than formerly.

There are many types of footlights on the market, and many possible combinations of characteristics.

Although footlights may be either *portable* or *permanent*, most footlights are of the permanent type. These may be of the *open-trough type*, or they may be *disappearing*, hinging down into the apron of the stage when not in use, with a trap covering the opening.

The reflecting surface may be a *continuous open trough* painted white, or it may be divided to form a *compartment* for each lamp. The latest type has an *individual metal reflector* for each lamp.

Color may be secured through the use of *bare colored lamps*, by colored *gelatin* in frames, or by colored glass *roundels* for the individual metal reflectors only.

Disappearing footlights are chiefly valuable for stages which are frequently used for other purposes than the production of plays.

The use of the bare colored-lamp type of footlight can be recommended only because of the initial economy. The more expensive types are more satisfactory.

Footlights may be obtained with three, four, or five color circuits. The four-circuit footlight gives ample flexibility.

Fuses. A fuse is a strip of metal with a low melting point, usually in an insulated fireproof container. A fuse is inserted in an electric circuit to protect the wiring from destruction through an overload of current. The effect of an overload in a fused circuit is to melt the fuse metal and so break the circuit.

Fuses are of two types, the familiar household-plug type which screws into a socket, and the cartridge type which fits into two spring clips at either end. Cartridge fuses are used for most stage circuits. The ferrule and cartridge fuses come in capacities up to 60 amperes; above that cartridge fuses are fitted with knife-blade ends.

Never use a fuse of higher capacity than the rating of the conductor or dimmer in the circuit.

Gelatins. Colored gelatin for producing colored light comes in sheets 20″ by 24″, and is available in over seventy-five different colors. There are several makes on the market, each with slightly different colors. Experiments should be carried out with single sheets before ordering in quantity as the different makes differ not only in color but in fading tendency and brittleness.

Gelatins are generally used in color frames of sizes to fit the different instruments on the market. These are light metal frames which fit together,

clamping the gelatin between them. In larger sizes there are a number of cross wires to protect the gelatin from breakage. The larger sizes also come in wood.

Lamps. Incandescent lamps come in a variety of shapes and sizes. A catalog may be obtained from any large electrical supply company or stage lighting company.

Characteristics of lamps for stage lighting are:

Type. (B—vacuum. C—gas filled. A—inside frost.)
Wattage. (from 10 to 5000)
Shape. (G—globular, P or PS—pear-shaped, S—sloping side, T—Tubular.)
Style of base. (Medium screw, medium prefocus, mogul screw, mogul prefocus, mogul bipost.)
Height of light center. (From bottom of base.)
Diameter. (In eighths of an inch. A G-40 is a globular lamp, with a diameter of 40/8".)
Position in which lamp may be burned safely.
Hours of life.
Output in lumens. (Also lumens per watt for comparative efficiency.)

A modern lighting unit is designed for a particular lamp—and pioneering in lamp research has necessarily preceded instrument development. The novice should take note that certain lamps may be burned in only certain positions.

Lamp Dip. Small wattage lamps may be colored by dipping them for a moment, while lighted, into a lamp-coloring lacquer, which gives a durable transparent color tint. Impractical on lamps above 75 watts because the heat causes the color to fade quickly. Lamp dip provides a cheap method of getting color for small lamps used in open footlight troughs, strip lights, etc. A deeper color may be obtained by redipping in the solution. Dipping the lamp into a boiling solution of caustic soda will remove the coloring entirely. This should be done before re-dying faded lamps. Colors available are red, amber, pink, frost, straw, yellow, purple, blue, and dark blue.

Lenses. Spotlights are equipped with lenses for the purpose of condensing and concentrating the rays of light from the lamp source and reflector. Formerly a plano-convex lens (flat on the inside surface, and convex on the outside surface) was standard on all spotlights, and is still used for all spotlights to be used for long throws. Diameters of plano-convex lens most generally used range from 3½" to 8".

Recently the Fresnel-type of lenses has largely replaced the plano-convex type for all short throws. The Fresnel lens—named for the great French physicist who developed it—was originated over a hundred and fifty years ago for use in lighthouses, but was adapted to stage lighting only in 1936. On casual examination, the Fresnel lens appears as a more or less flat piece of glass, with concentric rings of prism-like ridges on the outside surface. Each of these ridges is really a separate lens.

The advantages of the Fresnel lenses are:

Efficiency at least twice that of plano-convex

Projection of absolutely clear even field of light at any focus, with a soft edge

Great range of focus.

In a plano-convex type of spotlight it is necessary always to keep the light source back of the focal center to prevent projection of the design of the lamp filament. In a Fresnel-type spotlight the design of the lamp filament is never projected, and thus it is possible to have the lamp much closer to the lens—resulting in a much more compact lighting unit, ideal for the crowded "first pipe" and tormentor positions. Because the Fresnel lens gives a diffuse light, however, it is unsuitable for long throws, such as from the balcony or ceiling of the auditorium. Fresnel lenses usually have some sort of mottled or broken design on the flat inside surface further to diffuse the light. Fresnel lenses are available in diameters up to 20".

Light Towers. Light towers of pipe, structural steel, or wood, from 8′ to 18′ high, and from 2′ to 3′ square, are sometimes used at the sides of the stage to mount spotlights, floods, and projectors. There is always a ladder for access, a railing or pipes for mounting the light units, and sometimes a platform for an operator about half way up. Light towers are usually on rollers. They are heavily weighted at the bottom to help stabilize them, and sometimes have some form of foot-iron or bracket to allow them to be fastened by stage screws to the floor.

Light towers are used chiefly for lighting large-scale non-realistic productions, such as musical revues but also occasionally for the lighting of realistic exterior scenes, for instance, as a powerful source of sunlight. A light tower is a nuisance on a small stage.

Linnebach Projector. A large metal box with concentrated light source, for projecting picture on a gelatin or glass slide. Used generally behind a translucent drop, at back of stage.

Lobsterscope. A spotlight-effect machine producing a flicker of light.

Louvers. (Also called "spill-rings" and "baffles.") Louvers are concentric rings of thin metal strips fitted to the front of a projector to cut off all but the straight beam of light. They are not used on non-reflector type floodlights, as these are essentially used to give diffuse light rather than a beam.

Outlet Boxes. (Also called "floor boxes," "wallboxes.") Outlets are the stage equivalent of the household base-plug. They are heavy metal fireproof boxes, containing two, three, or four female receptacles, porcelain-insulated. The boxes are permanently inset in floor or wall at convenient positions throughout the theatre, wherever lighting units may be used. They may also be mounted on fly-floor or grid, in which case they are usually not inset. They come in various capacities of amperage from 25 to 100.

Plugs. The type of connector generally used for making a connection with an outlet box is called a plug, because of its appearance. It is a male connector with insulated handle, and with two strips of spring copper along

the side to make contact with similar strips of spring copper in the outlet boxes.

Plugging Boxes. Portable outlet boxes are called plugging boxes. They may be purchased with as many as eight receptacles, for connecting as many circuits. Thus the facilities of the outlet boxes in a theatre may be expanded by plugging a number of portable plugging boxes into the outlet boxes.

Projectors. A projector may be described as a directional floodlight, using a metal parabolic reflector to project parallel light rays. The direct rays from the light source (the lamp) which would go out at divergent angles are cut out by the use of louvers mounted on the front of the projector, or by a small opaque disc just in front of the light source (called a blinder) or condensed by a small lens (called an intensifier).

Their chief use is back of the proscenium arch to simulate sunlight, or moonlight, though some lighting technicians make use of them on the balcony rail for secondary illumination and toning.

Reflectors. Reflectors (as distinguished from reflecting surfaces) are used in spotlights and projectors back of the light source, to intensify the light or to give a directional beam of light. There are three general shapes of reflectors used: spherical, ellipsoidal, and parabolic, the curves of these reflectors being the arc of a circle, an ellipse, or a parabola.

Spherical reflectors do not condense but simply reflect back, and so intensify the light that strikes them. They are used in the better types of modern spotlights for greater efficiency.

Ellipsoidal reflectors *condense* the light rays that strike them and so tend to produce a sharply defined beam of light, extremely useful for long throws.

Parabolic reflectors reflect light in parallel rays. They are used in projectors.

Reflectors are made of either mirror glass or some type of highly polished metal.

The individual reflectors used in the new-type flood, border, and footlight are compound spherical reflectors surrounding the light source, the base of the lamp being at the back. They are of a highly polished metal composition.

Roundels (or Rondel). The circular heat-resisting glass color mediums available for use with the individual reflector type of floodlight, footlight, and borderlight are called roundels. They are held in place by a metal spring ring which clips in place around the edge of both glass and light unit. They are available in half a dozen different colors only, in sizes to fit standard units.

Sciopticans (Scenic Effect Machines). The scioptican is a high-powered spotlight with special condensing lens, a holder for the effect picture, and an objective lens for magnifying and focusing the picture. The effects are usually in motion, such as clouds, flames, waves, etc. Most designers and directors avoid the use of the scioptican as distracting and difficult to key-in

with the style of either scenery or production. The effects are expensive, costing about seventy-five dollars a piece, in addition to the scioptican itself.

Shutters (Cut-offs). Shutters are used on spotlights for controlling size and shape of the light beam. The iris-type shutter is used almost exclusively on arclights. A combination shutter with the top and bottom shutters sliding and the side shutters folding is commonly used on spotlights. A simple metal cylinder, six to nine inches long, called a funnel, is sometimes used in place of a shutter when it is desired simply to concentrate the light beam. There are also available slide type shutters which are adjustable so that the light beam may be framed in any quadrilateral shape.

Side Lights (Tormentor lights). Modern lighting practice makes use of a number of spotlights mounted on a vertical pipe batten on either side of the stage just behind the tormentors. Sometimes an "inner proscenium" is constructed to mask these side lights from the audience. While interior sets frequently allow no space for side lights, there is no doubt that side lights are among the most usefully placed units on the stage.

Spotlights. (See pp. 687 ff. for general discussion. See also "Arclights," "Color Mediums," "Hangers," "Lamps," "Lenses," "Reflectors," "Shutters," and "Stands.")

Spotlights are classified according to:

Wattage of lamp
Type and material of reflector, or absence of reflector
Type and diameter of lens
Focusing or non-focusing
Type of hanger.

Thus the old-type standard spotlight ranges from 500 to 2000 watts, has a spherical reflector or none at all, has a plano-convex lens, and can be focused, and may have either a pipe-clamp hanger or stand clamp.

The two modern developments in spotlights are the ellipsoidal reflector and the Fresnel lens.

Stands (including bases). Spotlights, floodlights, and projectors are frequently mounted on pipe stands of adjustable height. These stands have heavy iron bases to give stability, in addition to holes for stage screws. They usually have an iron hook near the top over which coils of cable may be hung. Stands mounted on casters are less frequently used.

Strip Lights (Backing lights). A strip light is a metal trough containing a number of small wattage lamps, and usually having a hook at one end so that it may be hung over the edge of a backing. Its chief use is to give a diffuse low-intensity light to illuminate backings.

Switchboards. The combination of switches, dimmer plates, and fuses which make up a stage switchboard is subject to almost infinite variation. Complex electrical and mechanical problems are involved as well as practical production problems, and there is no agreement among experts as to the ideal solution of these problems. The best the non-expert can hope to do is to gain some basis of judgment which will allow him to compare the various switchboards available.

1. A switchboard should have adequate capacity to handle the maximum amperage load that any possible production may require.

2. A switchboard should allow separate dimmer control of at least a quarter of the total circuits available and individual switch control of all circuits.

3. The relation of switch handles to dimmer handles should be direct and clear, to prevent confusion during production.

4. Fuses should be readily accessible, for quick replacement.

5. An arrangement which allows any circuit to be connected with any dimmer is preferable to one which permanently connects certain dimmers to certain circuits.

6. It is desirable that there be provision for mechanically interlocking groups of dimmers together, so a number of lamps may be dimmed by manipulation of one handle. The more complete the interlocking, the better.

7. Switch and dimmer controls must be compactly grouped, so that they may be controlled during production by one or two operators at the most.

8. Proportional dimming is a desirable feature—this allows a number of dimmers, set at different intensities, to keep the same relationship of light intensity as they are moved together toward a blackout. This is difficult to achieve, and is a feature not found on most boards.

9. Pilot lights, which indicate when a switch is on, are a convenience.

10. A preset device which allows a number of unused circuits to be selected and by throwing one switch makes them all "live," is a useful feature, for quick scene shifts. This preset device is even more useful if it allows the operator to preselect for the following scene circuits in use, as well as those which are not in use. Thus the setup for a following scene may be exactly arranged during the comparative leisure of the preceding scene.

Preset dimmers and remote-control dimmers must be classed as luxuries, more entertaining to the technician than to the audience.

A switchboard with too many complexities will fail in its attempt to get maximum flexibility by making too great demands on the switchboard operator.

XI. RIGGING AND HANDLING SCENERY ON STAGE

HISTORY.

From the Greeks on simple mechanical devices were used to solve problems of moving scenery and properties. The triangular *periaktoi* of the Greek theatre must have revolved on a pivot of some sort; the *eccyclema*, pushed forward to reveal the tableau of victim and murderer, must have been mounted on rollers; the *mechane*, or machine, which lowered a god or hero from heaven to earth, involved some sort of crane and pulley device; and the front curtain of the Roman theatre, rising from a slot in the stage floor, necessitated some rigging.

Not, however, until Inigo Jones devised his elaborate masques in 17th century England did the rigging and handling of scenery on stage assume the character of a real technique and craft. The basic method of scene changing which Jones evolved was to dominate stage construction and rigging and handling technique for the next two hundred years.

The scene as viewed by the 17th century audience was a series of wings on either side of the stage (parallel to the footlights) with a large framed drop closing in the back of the stage. A change of scene was accomplished by sliding back each wing off stage, to reveal new wings behind; at the same time, the backdrop was raised into the flies, uncovering the new backdrop immediately behind it. Grooves at top and bottom served as track for the wings to slide in. As many as a half-dozen different scenes could be quickly revealed in succession.

By the 19th century the larger theatres had replaced the grooves in the stage floor with slots, through which projected frames, which rolled back and forth on wheels, under stage. The wings were fastened to these frames. This made it possible to place new wing flats on off-stage "chariots" (as the frames were called) and thus accomplish an indefinite number of scene shifts. As these chariots were large and heavy, winches were devised to move them back and forth, and a combination of counterweights and winches was developed to lift the great framed back drops into the flies.

This type of scenery and machine allowed many rapid scene shifts, but it completely limited the designer to one basic type of setting; and with the coming of the box set, and the introduction of three-dimensional scenery, the need was apparent for a revision of stage machinery and rigging practice.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries the German theatre pioneered in the development of new machinery better adapted to

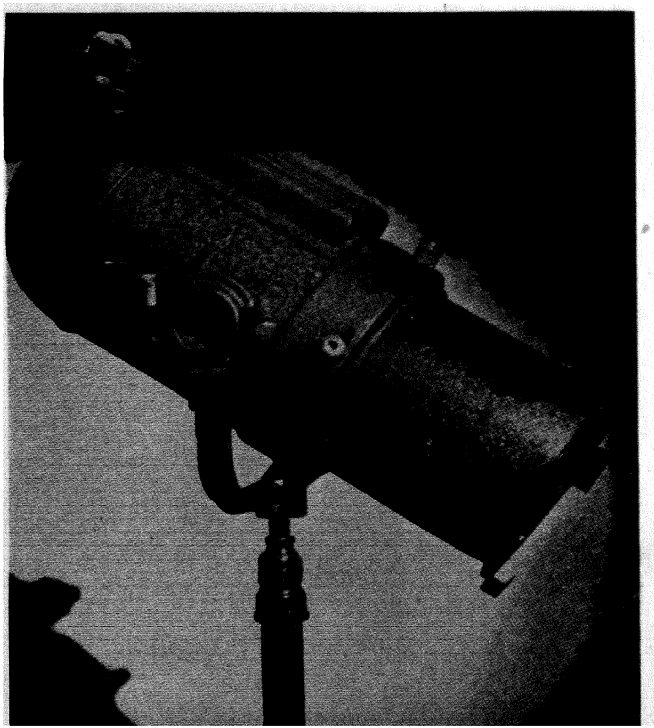
handle the new, heavy three-dimensional scenery. Simple small stage elevators had been in use for a century and a half—primarily for the appearances and disappearances of ghosts, faeries, and gods. (In fact the simplest type of stage elevator today in use still bears the name of a "Macbeth Trap," being originally designed, presumably, for the appearance of Banquo's ghost, and it is essentially an elevator rather than a trap.) With the development of the hydraulic and steam power in the 19th century, technicians began to apply this power to manipulate large stage elevators. The revolving stage, the wagon stage, and the sliding elevator stage, and various combinations of these made their appearance in the leading theatres of Europe.

THE MODERN STAGE AND ITS EQUIPMENT.

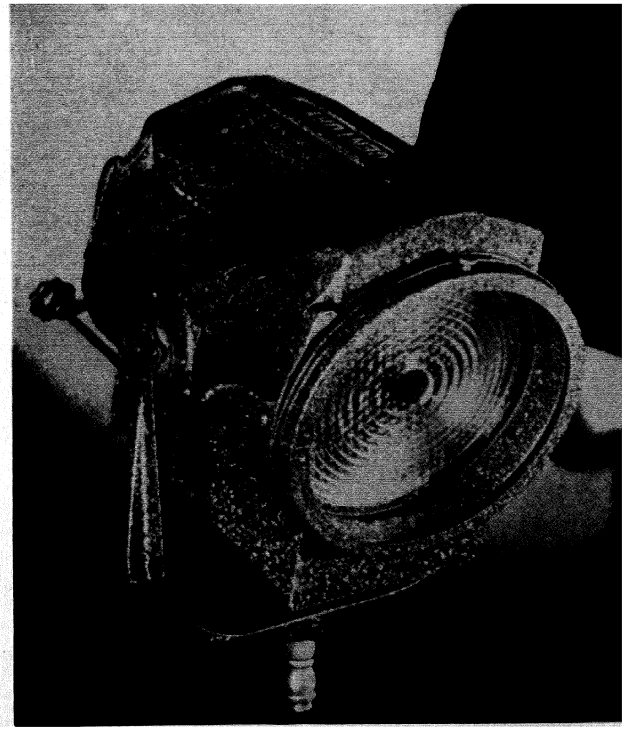
By 1910 this concept of the stage as a vast complication of elevators, turntables, and rolling platforms dominated the theatre. The only reason that all theatres were not made over in this pattern was the gigantic cost involved. The German theatres, endowed by the small German states and cities, could afford such equipment, but the theatre dependent on box-office income could not. Furthermore, the development of the moving picture and its taking away much of the legitimate theatre's income made the impracticity of large mechanical installations even more apparent.

Leaders in the theatre began to point out what should have been obvious from the beginning—that too much and too large mechanized equipment forced the designer into as rigid a design pattern as had the old wing and backdrop mechanism. For instance, all sets on a revolving stage tend to be pie-shaped, so that several of them may be fitted together on the turntable. A wagon stage is efficient only if the scenery is three-dimensional, and all sets certainly need not be three-dimensional. Furthermore, since modern plays are usually realistic, and not effective in large theatres, audience capacity has been cut down, making a tremendous increase in the cost of elaborate stage machinery calculated on a per-seat basis.

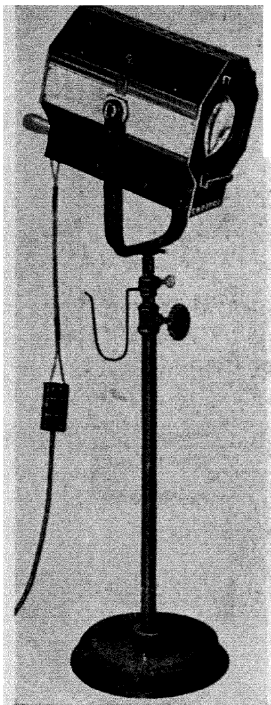
The result of these economic factors and artistic considerations is that the modern American stage is comparatively simple in design and equipment. It is relatively small in stage area—too small in most cases. Its one piece of stage machinery is apt to be an adaptation of the German type of counterweight system. Special machinery is usually devised as it is needed. While scenic effects as elaborate as those that characterized the nineteenth century are rarely even attempted any more, a good-size stage is essential for production flexibility. Minimum

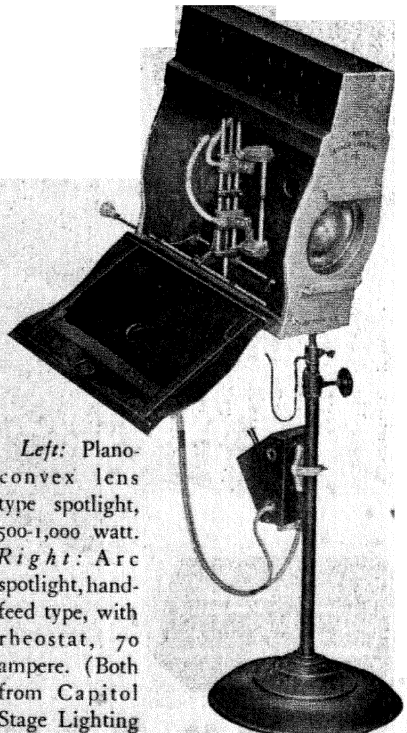


Ellipsoidal reflector spotlight—the "Lekolite."
(Century Lighting Inc.)

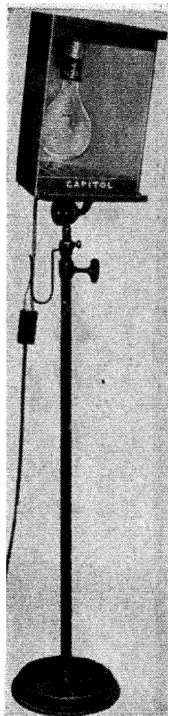


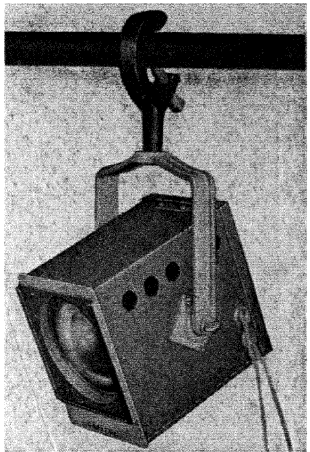
Fresnel lens type spotlight—"Fresnelite."
(Century Lighting Inc.)



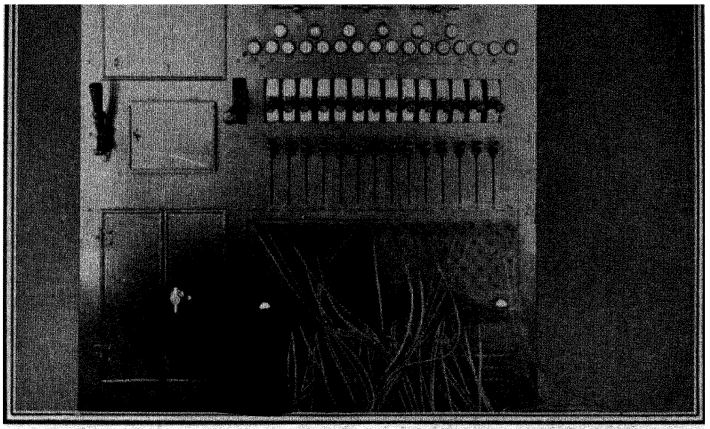


Left: Plano-convex lens type spotlight, 500-1,000 watt. *Right:* Arc spotlight, hand-feed type, with rheostat, 70 ampere. (Both from Capitol Stage Lighting Co.)

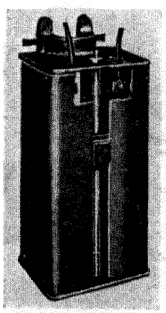




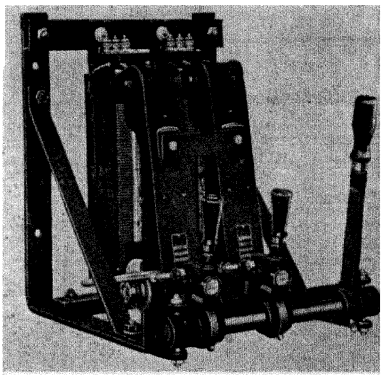
Left: Olivette type flood-light, 1,000 watt. *Above:* Baby spotlight hung with yoke and C-clamp from pipe batten, 250 watt. (Both from Capitol Stage Lighting Co.)

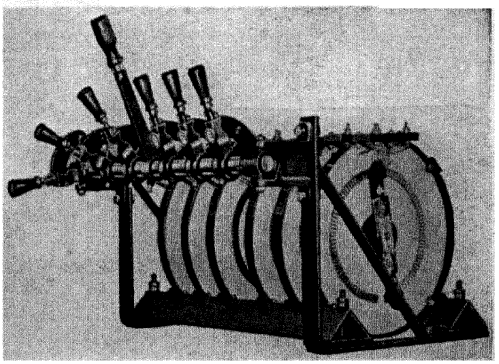


A Controlite board of unlimited flexibility as installed at Smith College. Dual rated dimmers allow the "plugging in" of any circuit to any dimmer plate. (Trumbull Electric Manufacturing Co.)

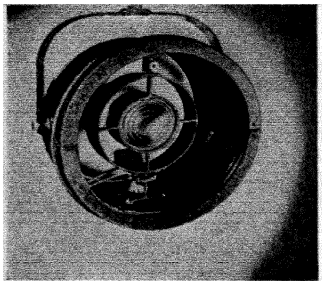


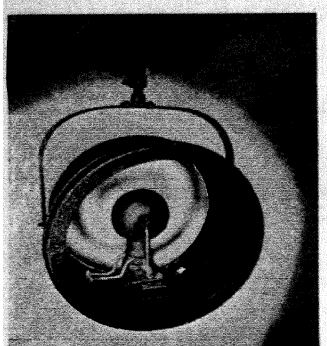
Left: Slide-type Vitrohm dimmer. *Right:* The Autrastat multi-capacity transformer-type dimmer, with two controls and plain master lever. (Both from Ward Leonard Electric Co.)



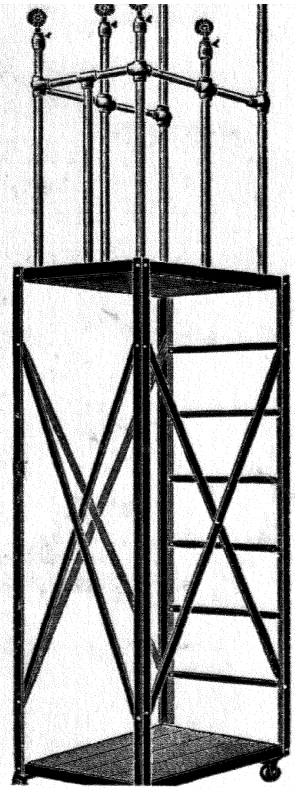


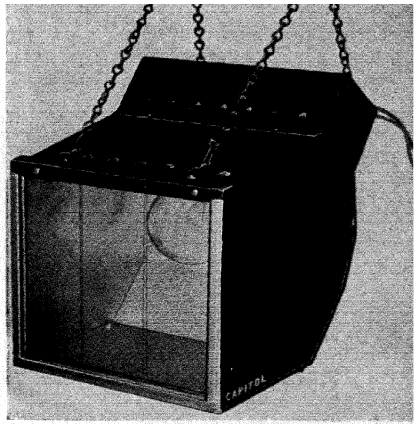
Dimmer bank of Vitrohm interlocking dimmers, with plain master control. (Ward Leonard Electric Co.)



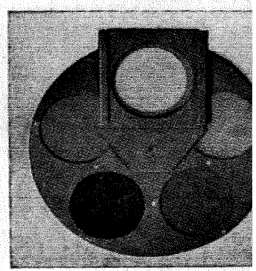


Above: Beam light projector with Fresnel lens intensifier mounted in louver. *Below:* Beam light projector with direct-emanation spherical blinder. (Both from Century Lighting Inc.)





Left: Light tower mounted on casters. *Above:* Non-reflector type floodlight, with chain hanging, 500-1,000 watt. *Right:* Five-hole color wheel. (All three from Capitol Stage Lighting Co.)



dimensions should not be less than those listed below—though they frequently are.

Proscenium width—at least half the maximum width of the auditorium.
Proscenium height—at least half the width of the proscenium opening. (Usually about two-thirds.)
Stage width—should be twice the width of the proscenium opening.
Stage depth—at least equal to the proscenium opening. (Too often the depth is only two-thirds of the opening.)
Stage height to gridiron—twice the depth of the stage, or three times the height of the proscenium opening, whichever is greater. (Too often the lesser of these dimensions is taken as the height of the grid.)

Most Broadway stages are too small and badly proportioned. Many of the new college and university stages are definitely superior.

Proper treatment of the stage floor, in relation to understage space, adds greatly to the flexibility of a stage. Back of the curtain line the stage floor should be of a soft wood, such as white or ponderosa pine, 1¾″ thick, so that stage screws can be readily inserted. The acting area —and five feet beyond on either side should either be constructed as a series of heavy but moveable traps, or at least should have the beams which support this part of the stage floor parallel to the footlights and at least three feet apart so that traps may be cut through when needed. The best possible treatment of the trapped area is to equip this area with "opera traps," actually a series of hand-operated combination traps and elevators, which may be either depressed below the stage floor or raised to any height above it, up to six or eight feet, or ramped. Such elevator traps are relatively inexpensive in first cost, involve almost no maintenance cost. They are simple to operate, and greatly reduce the cost of productions with raised levels, since platforms of almost any reasonable height may be created by a few minutes' manipulation of the elevator traps. The Metropolitan Opera House in New York City is so equipped, but the installation is appropriate for any theatre engaged in a regular production schedule.

The chief piece of stage equipment is the counterweight system, found in almost every theatre and auditorium built in this country since 1920. A series of pipe battens are suspended under the grid by three, four, or five wire cables, which pass through sheaves (pulley wheels) mounted on the grid, and then over to the stage wall where the cables pass over a headblock (three, four, five pulley wheels, mounted together on one shaft) and down to an iron frame, called a cradle, which slides up and down the wall on iron tracks (or on wire

guides). Iron weights, notched at each end, are slipped into these frames to counterweight the scenery to be hung from the batten. An "endless" rope fastened to the bottom and top of the cradle, and passing over a sheave on the grid, makes it possible for a man on the stage floor to pull the cradle up or down, thus raising or lowering the pipe batten. A pinch-type of clamp allows the pull rope to be "locked" at any point. See p. 717 ff.

It is possible to install counterweight units at intervals of only four inches, but a five or six inch interval is preferable because there is less danger of hung material catching or fouling. Most up-and-down action front curtains and asbestos fire curtains are worked on the counterweight principle.

The rope line-sandbag system generally used in the commercial theatre of thirty years ago was not so much a system as the absence of any system. It represents a primitive technique, extremely difficult to use effectively, requiring more man power, and liable to cause dangerous accidents. Its popularity with older stage carpenters was based on habit and lack of knowledge of the counterweight system.

BASIC METHODS OF HANDLING SCENERY BACKSTAGE.

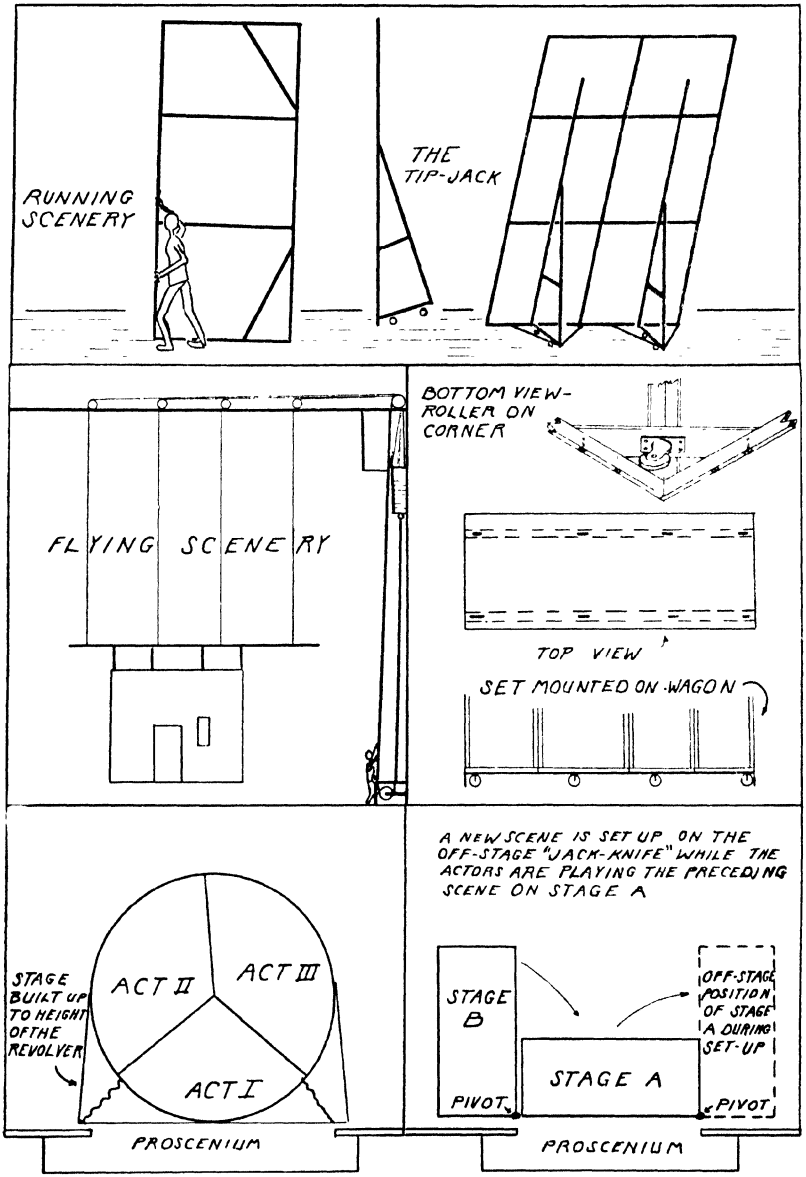
Four basic techniques exist today for handling scenery:

1. Breaking up the set into small units which are moved off and on the stage by hand, without the aid of any mechanical device.

2. Mounting scenery on rollers, and either revolving it, or sliding it from the acting area. The turntable revolving stage, the wagon stage, tip-jacks, jack-rollers, the jack-knife stage, and simple rollers are devices used in this technique.

A *portable turntable* may be placed on any stage, providing the adjacent stage area is built up to the level of the turntable. Essential elements are rollers and a central pivot. Usually there is a track surface for the rollers to run on. Sets must be specially designed for efficient use with this type of stage. Portable turntables are usually turned by hand power, applied to a lever inserted in the rim.

The *wagon stage*, as used in the American theatre, is not a complete stage. The set is built in units on low platforms, mounted on rollers. At the strike these platforms are rolled off into storage position. Frequently another set is fastened to the rear of the wagons and they are turned around to make the new set up. Occasionally a small set is placed on a single wagon, and rolled on or off stage. This requires considerable storage space off-stage. Wagons are good for particularly heavy portions of the set.



REVOLVING STAGE: PLAN

JACK-KNIFE STAGES: PLAN

METHODS OF HANDLING SCENERY

The *tip-jack*, originally devised by the author for use at the Yale theatre, is a simple device for allowing entire walls of sets to be moved easily on and off stage, by tipping it back onto triangular jacks mounted on rollers. When the wall has been moved offstage into storage position, the jacks can be folded up against the scenery, thus taking up a minimum of storage space (described in detail in Part XI). The tip-jack is economical, and can be used on many types of settings.

Jack-rollers are extensively used in the Broadway theatre. In simplest form the jack-roller is a heavy wooden lever hinged to the bottom of a piece of scenery, with a large roller near the hinge. When the lever is depressed, the scenery is raised an inch or so on the roller as fulcrum. The lever is then locked or hooked in that position. However, the jack-roller except when used on platform types of scenery is extremely unstable, in allowing the scenery to pitch forward and backward while it is being moved. Also called *liftjack*; see p. 622 ff.

The *jack-knife* stage is a type of wagon stage, pivoted at one downstage corner, so that it may be rolled back to the side of the stage when the scenery is not in use. Usually two-jack knife stages are used, one on each side of the stage, and a new set-up made (on the first jack-knife) during the playing of the scene. Disadvantages are the noises usually made by the crew while setting a new scene on the jack-knife stage, and the considerable stage space needed for its operation, if exits and entrances of actors are not to be interfered with. However, it is one of the better mechanical devices for handling large numbers of rapid scene sets.

Rollers may frequently be applied to scenery without recourse to any of the special devices listed above. Not only platforms, rocks, and other three-dimensional pieces may be mounted on rollers, but also any corner of a setpiece of interior which may firmly be braced can be mounted on rollers. If action takes place on the scene-unit so mounted, there is apt to be some shaking, even though it is firmly stage-screwed to the floor.

3. Flying scenery, that is, lifting it up above the visible stage area, by means of individual ropes and pulleys or by the counterweight system, is the most common method of handling scenery. Generally only flat pieces of scenery, such as drops or back walls, are hung, though it is possible to hang anything. There is potential danger unless the whole process is carefully carried out, and there have been a number of serious accidents backstage due to scenery falling from the flies. (See Counterweight system, Part XI, for instructions on hanging scenery and operating counterweight system.)

4. *Elevators* may be used to bring an entire scene from below stage into position, and small individual elevators may be used to create platform levels. However, equipment of this kind is rarely found in the American theatre.

ORGANIZING AND OPERATING THE SCENE SHIFT.

Scenery is usually handled by a combination of the first three methods. Small, light units are shifted by hand, three-dimensional pieces are mounted on some form of roller mechanism, and large flat pieces are hung from the flies. However, the theatre or theatres in which the production will play must be considered. If there is little side space, more scenery will be hung, and if flying space is limited but large off-stage space available, most of the scenery will be rolled or carried by hand. The time allowed for each shift will be a factor in determining the sets. In general the quickest shifts are executed when the set moved off, and the set moved on are as nearly complete as possible. For this reason entire interior sets are sometimes hung and lowered intact onto the stage, though this does make it impossible to hang much of anything else. A setup in which many joinings have to be made is invariably a slow one.

Because special construction and hardware are required for each method of handling, the technician must determine the method by which each set is to be handled, *before the set is built.* A typical rigging analysis which would precede construction is:

ACTS ONE AND THREE.
INTERIOR SET.

Ceiling-flown—on edge.
Back wall—flown as unit.
Rear backing—flattened out and flown.
Side walls—mounted on tip-jacks and rolled.
Side door backing—shifted by hand.

ACT TWO.
EXTERIOR SET.

Small log cabin—built on wagon and rolled.
Sky back-drop—flown.
Side wings and borders—flown.
Ground rows—shifted by hand.
Large tree trunk—mounted on rollers.

In order to make quick scene shifts, every scene unit must have a definite storage position, and every stage hand must be assigned definite duties. Therefore, the first step in organizing the scene shift is the preparation of a scale plan showing each set on stage, and the storage position of all other scenery, at that same time. These should be accompanied by a sectional elevation of the stage, showing the hanging position of all scenery flown, and the exact counterweight unit to which each is fastened. After this has been done, the technician should prepare a chart listing each piece of scenery and in columns to one side, the act and scene in which it is used on stage, its storage position, and the stage hand who handles it. A second chart is then to be made up listing the stage hands, and their exact duties during each set-up and strike. From this chart separate instruction sheets are prepared for each stage hand, listing his duties for each set-up and strike.

A typical scene shift chart:

Ceiling.	Acts I and III.	Flown on line #12.	Jenkins assisted by Baker.
Right Side Wall.	Act I.	Tip-jack. Rolled up-right.	Solters and Meredith.
Left-Side Wall.	Act I.	Tip-jack. Rolled left stage against pin-rail.	Smith and Cole.
Back Wall.	Act I.	Flown on line #23.	Baker assisted by Jenkins.
Left-Stage Backing.	Act I.	Run up left.	Cole.
Back-Wall Backing.	Act I.	Flown on line #28	Baker.

And so on . . .

A typical chart of stage hands' duties:

Set up Act I.

Jenkins..... Help Baker lower backwall, then lower ceiling.

Solters..... Roll in right side wall, (with Meredith) and place one brace.

Meredith..... Roll in right side wall (with Solters) and place one brace.

Smith..... Roll in left stage wall (with Cole) and place both braces.

Cole..... Roll in left stage wall (with Smith).
Place left-stage backing, and brace it.

Baker..... Lower backwall. (with Jenkins).
Lower backwall backing, then help Jenkins with ceiling

Strike at end of Act I.

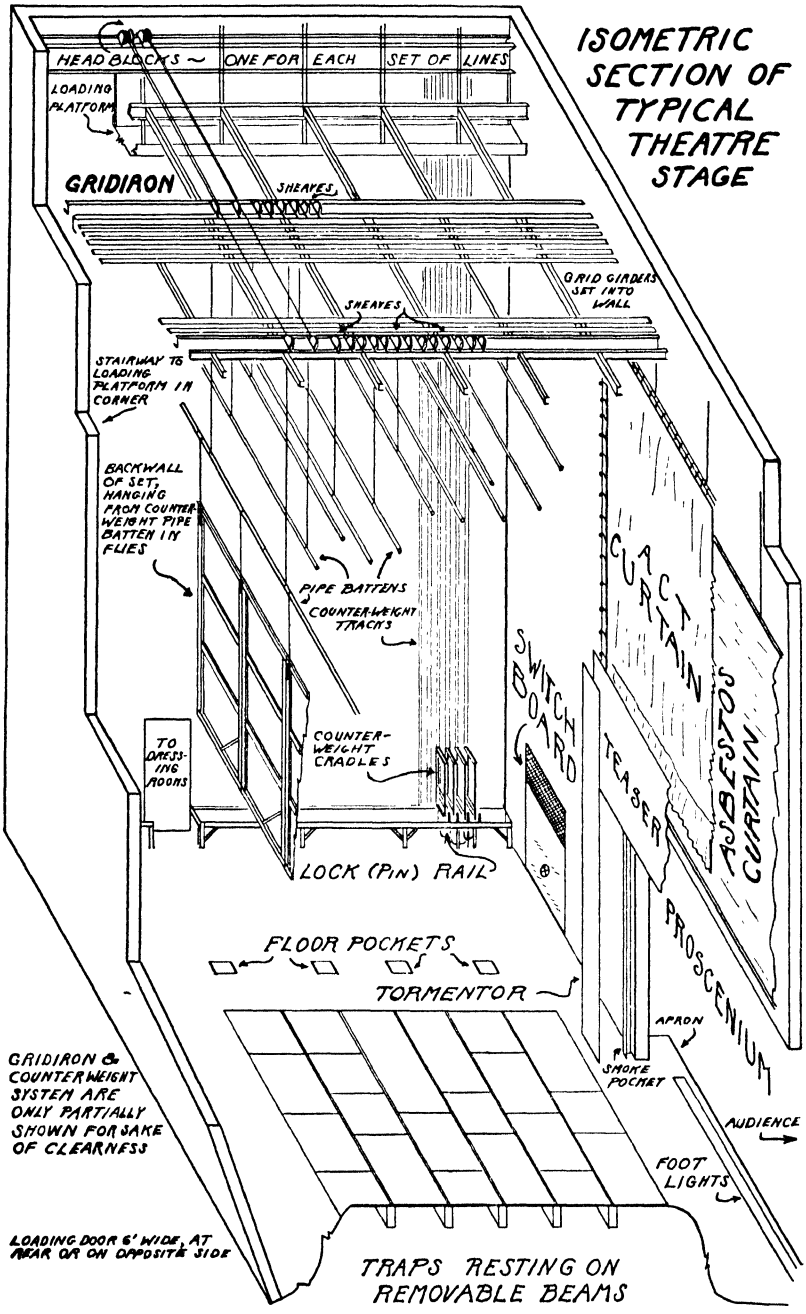
Jenkins..... Raise ceiling.
Help Baker raise backwall.

Solters..... Remove brace, and roll right side wall off down right (with Meredith).

And so on . . .

If there are more than one or two changes of scenery in a production, a scene rehearsal is necessary. This should take place as soon as all scenery is properly hung and stored in the theatre. Each set should be put on stage and checked by the designer as to visual details, and by the technician as to mechanical completeness and presence of all rigging and bracing hardware. During these check setups, the stage crew may become familiar with their duties. As soon as they are completed, all scene shifts should be run through again for speed. During this shift the technician should station himself in the auditorium, and at the first sign of confusion among the crew, or unexpected difficulty, he should stop all work at once (whistle signal) and correct the assignments, the timing, or make rigging changes—whichever may be necessary to iron out the difficulties. Never attempt to correct difficulties while part of the crew continues the shift, as this will simply increase the confusion. The shifts should be run through until all work is performed smoothly. It is not necessary to have the shifts performed with ultimate speed at this point. During the full technical, light, and dress rehearsals, this speeding up can easily be obtained as the crew becomes more certain of its duties. During the scene rehearsal, do not hesitate to change assignments, or even storage positions as the original plan must be modified in practice.

With proper planning and a properly rehearsed crew the most complex scene shifts can be executed in one minute or less though such speed is seldom necessary. Of course additional time will be required to dress the set with properties, to change lights, and get actors on and off the stage.


ISOMETRIC SECTION OF TYPICAL THEATRE STAGE
HEAD BLOCKS ~ ONE FOR EACH SET OF LINES
LOADING PLATFORM
GRIDIRON
SHEAVES
SHEAVES
GRID GIRDERS SET INTO WALL
STAIRWAY TO LOADING PLATFORM IN CORNER
BACKWALL OF SET, HANGING FROM COUNTER WEIGHT PIPE BATTEN IN FLIES
PIPE BATTENS
COUNTERWEIGHT TRACKS
TO DRESSING ROOMS
COUNTER-WEIGHT CRADLES
LOCK (PIN) RAIL
SWITCH BOARD
ACT CURTAIN
ASBESTOS CURTAIN
TEASER
PROSCENIUM
FLOOR POCKETS
TORMENTOR
APRON
SMOKE POCKET
AUDIENCE
FOOT LIGHTS
GRIDIRON & COUNTERWEIGHT SYSTEM ARE ONLY PARTIALLY SHOWN FOR SAKE OF CLEARNESS
LOADING DOOR 6' WIDE, AT REAR OR ON OPPOSITE SIDE
TRAPS RESTING ON REMOVABLE BEAMS

XII. GOOD PRACTICE IN RIGGING AND HANDLING SCENERY ON STAGE, WITH A GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acting Area. That part of the stage visible to the audience and used by the actors during the play.

Adjustable Proscenium. An inner proscenium or frame, usually of profile covered flats, built to slide so that height and width of the stage opening may be readily changed.

Act Call. The stage manager's call to actors to come on stage for the beginning of an act or scene. "On stage, Act One."

Act Warning. The stage manager's warning of the amount of time to the beginning of an act or scene. Before the beginning of a play the stage manager calls "half-hour," "fifteen minutes," and sometimes "five minutes," at the same time checking to make sure the actors are in the dressing rooms. During the run of a play warnings after the first act are usually omitted.

Act Drop or Act Curtain. The curtain used to open or close each act or scene of the play, usually the permanent house curtain, but sometimes specially designed.

Apron or Fore Stage. The part of the stage in front of the curtain. Formerly this was an important part of the acting area, but today is usually only large enough to contain the footlights.

Arm Cyclorama. A type of backdrop enclosing the acting area at the sides and back. It is hung from a batten at the back, and an arm on either side. These side arms are hinged to the rear batten. The arm cyclorama can be stored in a small area, by simply raising rear batten into the flies, which allows the arms to fold down.

Asbestos. The fireproof curtain between the stage and auditorium.

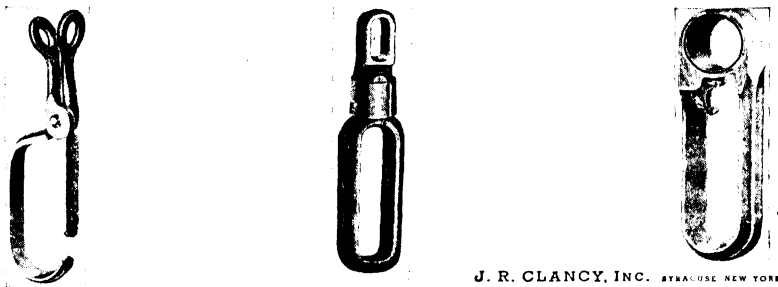
Backing. A drop, flat or series of flats used behind a window opening, door opening, or arch to mask the backstage area from the view of the audience.

Back Stage. (1) The stage, behind the curtain. (2) The stage, workshops, dressing rooms, and understage space, as distinguished from the auditorium.

Back Wall. (1) The rear wall of a set. (2) The rear wall of the stage house itself.

Batten. A long strip of lumber or pipe, as the top and bottom battens attached to a drop, the pipe battens of the counterweight system, from which scenery is hung, or the strip of 1″ by 3″ fastened on edge to the rear of a backwall, to stiffen it for flying.

Batten Clamp (Drop Holder). Any one of several types of steel clamps for gripping the batten at the top of a drop when it is to be flown. Three or four clamps are used to hold a single drop.



Book Ceiling. A ceiling which folds together in the middle when flown.

Border. A width of canvas, muslin, or other fabric hung across the stage above the scene to mask the flies from the audience. Formerly used in both exterior and interior scenes, it is now used almost entirely in exterior or non-realistic settings. Referred to as first, second, and third borders, counting from downstage position toward the rear of the stage.

Border Batten. The wooden batten to which a border is attached.

Box Set. The usual modern interior set, with side walls instead of the old-fashioned wings, and a ceiling instead of borders.

Business. Pantomimic action of the actor is called business.

Call Board. The bulletin board near the stage entrance, on which are posted all notices of rehearsals, and announcements to the company. All actors and crew members are supposed to look at the call board for possible notices on entering or leaving the theatre.

Carpet Hoist. This is a modification of the standard counterweight unit, used for flying any piece of scenery or a property (as a carpet) which must be detached from the counterweight unit for use during performance. When counterweighted scenery is lowered to the stage floor, an equivalent weight of iron counterweight is in the counterweight cradle, near the grid. Ordinarily the counterweights must be removed from the cradle before the scenery may safely be removed from the batten. If this is not done, the whole weight of the counterweights in the cradle is likely to come crashing down to—or through—the stage floor. A counterweight unit rigged with a carpet hoist has a second cradle above the usual one. It runs in the track and ordinarily rests on top of the first cradle. A rope (also called "overhaul line") is tied to the top of the second cradle, and runs over a pulley at the grid, and down to the stage floor. When scenery is to be removed from the batten, this overhaul line is tied off at the pin rail on the stage floor, thus securely holding the second cradle and its counterweight. The batten may be raised and the unit operated like any other counterweight unit, until it is desired again to fly the piece of scenery. The batten is lowered, the scenery made fast, and the overhaul line is then untied, allowing the

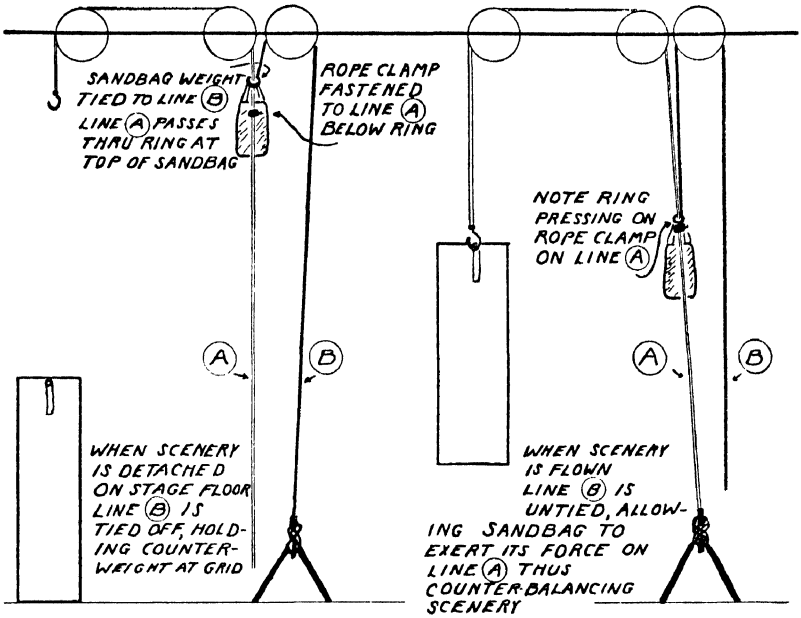
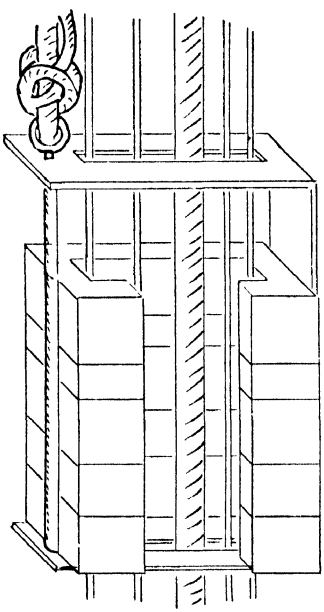


DIAGRAM SHOWING PRINCIPLE OF CARPET HOIST



THE CABLES PASSING THRU THE HOLLOW COUNTER-WEIGHTS ARE THOSE LEADING TO THE REGULAR CRADLE BELOW

SPECIAL CARPET HOIST CRADLE

INSTALLED ABOVE THE REGULAR CRADLE ~ USED AS THE SANDBAG IN THE DIAGRAM

CARPET HOIST

force of the counterweight in the second cradle again to counterbalance the weight of the scenery.

A simplified form of carpet hoist for handling smaller weights may be improvised by substituting a sandbag for the second cradle. The top of the sandbag is attached to a heavy ring which slides up and down on the "endless rope" of the counterweight system. A brass rope clamp with set screw is fastened onto the endless rope, just below the ring. Thus when the sandbag rope is tied fast to the pinrail, the counterweight unit can be raised and lowered. When the scenery—or carpet—is attached to the batten the sandbag rope is untied, and its weight is exerted on the rope clamp and the endless rope. The carpet-hoist device is extremely useful, and it is recommended that two or three counterweight units be so equipped.

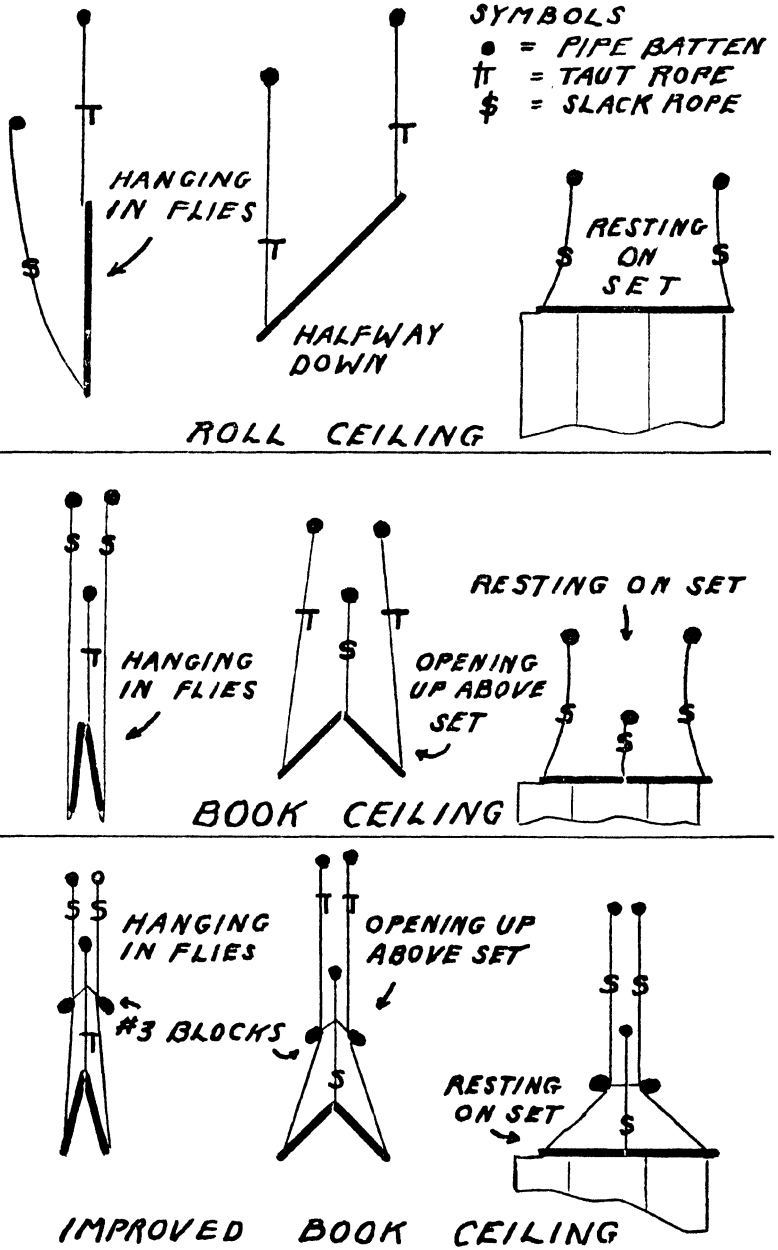
Ceiling Cloth. The canvas or muslin used to cover the ceiling frame, particularly a roll ceiling.

Ceiling Rigging—Roll Ceiling. The roll ceiling is rigged to store on edge in the flies. Two battens are used, one near the front and one near the rear of the ceiling. The ceiling is fastened permanently to the rear batten. When the stage is empty it is lowered to the floor, and the front batten fastened to the ceiling plates at the front of the ceiling. The ceiling is then raised until parallel to the stage floor, and high enough so that the set may be moved in. After the set is in place both lines are lowered until the ceiling rests on top of the set. If there is room in the flies the front line may be left attached, and the ceiling flown by raising the rear line so that it takes the weight, and then following up with the front line. Of course this will prevent the use of any counterweight units between these two battens.

Ceiling Rigging—Book Ceiling. Three battens are required to rig a book ceiling. One batten is fastened to the center points, on one side of the fold, and the other two battens to the front and rear. After the set is in place the three battens are brought down together until the folded ceiling is three or four feet above the set. The middle batten is lowered, thus opening out the book ceiling. When it is flat the three battens are lowered together until the ceiling rests on the set. Reverse this process when striking the ceiling, that is, raise all battens together until the ceiling is several feet above the set, then raise middle batten alone, forcing the ceiling to fold together. When folded raise the three battens together.

An improvement on former rigging of book ceilings, devised by the author and now generally practiced, allows the book ceiling to fly in less space, and decreases danger of fouling. The lines tying the front and rear battens to the ceiling pass through blocks (pulleys) lashed to the middle batten. Thus when the ceiling opens up the blocks keep the front and rear battens from being pulled toward the front and rear of the opened ceiling. If this device is used the three battens may be very close together.

Center Line. In the old rope-rigging system, drops or other scenery were hung from three ropes. The one nearest the pin rail or fly-gallery was



CEILING RIGGING

called the "short line," the next the "center line," and the far one the "long line."

Chandelier Rigging. When a chandelier is to be used in an interior set a line is rigged either from a free batten overhead or from a special sheave or block on the grid. The ceiling must have a cross brace at the point where the chandelier is to be hung, and a 1" by 3" slot cut in this brace so that the line may be passed through and made fast to the chandelier. The light cable usually comes from an outlet pocket on the grid, or possibly from a nearby light border, and is lashed to the spot line and the end of the cable passed through the slot with the line. This operation is done while chandelier and ceiling are at a convenient height from the stage floor. After the electrical connection has been made and the line tied to the chandelier, the ceiling is raised to allow the set to be put up, after which it is lowered into place, and the chandelier hauled up in place against the ceiling. The position of the chandelier is usually somewhat down stage.

If it is necessary to remove the chandelier for a later scene it is lowered to the floor, the chandelier disconnected from line and electric cable. A small cap is fastened to the end of the snatch line and the cable taped to the line, so that when the ceiling is used in a later set without the chandelier, the small cap conceals the cable connector and the slot in the brace.

Clear Stage. The stage manager's command immediately before the beginning of a scene or act, ordering all crew members off stage.

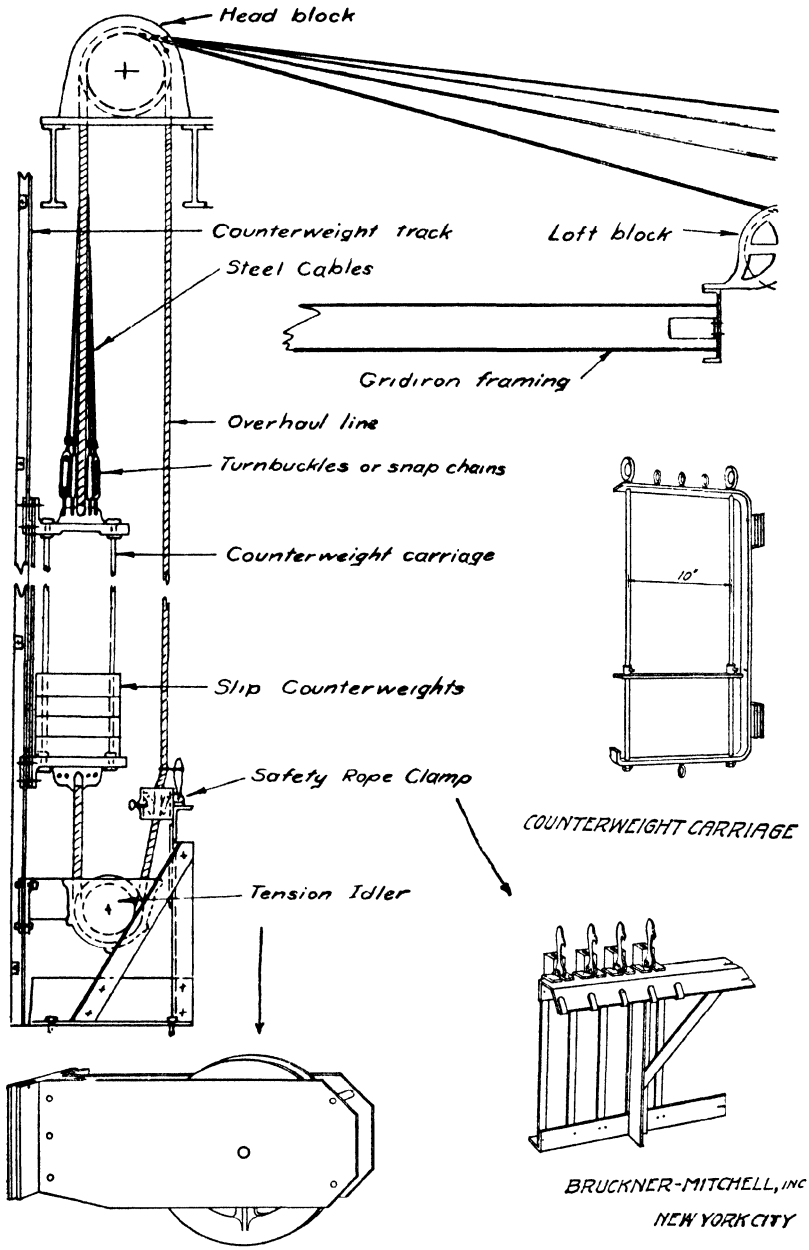
Clearer. A member of the property crew is called a clearer.

Close In. To bring together the two parts of a draw curtain, partially or entirely.

Counterweight. The notched pig-iron weights used to counter-balance scenery in a counterweight cradle, in either ten, twenty or thirty pound sizes.

Counterweight System. The counterweight system has been described in Part XI, page 703. The correct and safe technique for flying scenery with the counter-weight system, is as follows:

To fly a backwall—Sweep the stage floor, then place the backwall face down on the floor. If hanger irons have not been put on, fasten four straight hanger irons with stove bolts to the stiles of the flats, about eight inches below the top of the set. If the back wall is heavy, carrying woodwork, fireplace mantle, etc., also bolt on hook-hanger irons, hooking under the bottom rails, directly in a line with the straight hanger irons. Take two fourteen or sixteen foot 1" by 3" strips and set them on edge above door or window openings, so that they extend from one side of the wall to the other. The amount of overlap is not important. Fasten the strips to the stiles of the backwall with 2" loose-pin backflaps, alternately above and below, as the stiffener strips are not to be folded. These stiffeners will prevent the back wall from buckling while in the air, thereby insuring against fouling with adjacent scenery. The batten from which the wall is to be hung is now lowered as far as possible—probably about three feet from the stage floor. If only the straight top hanger irons are to be used, the snatch

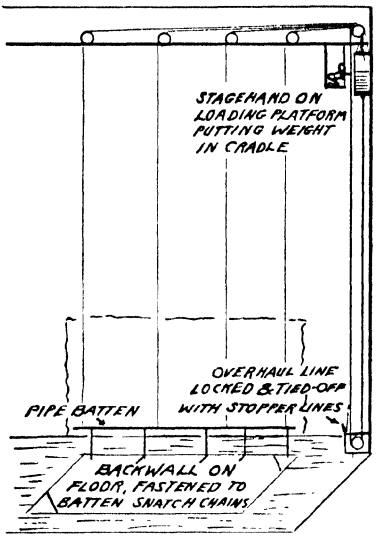


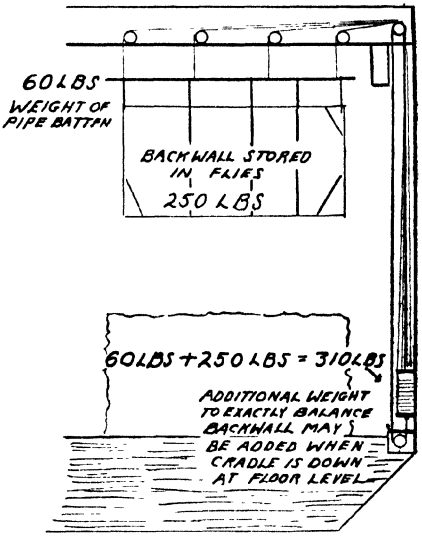
COUNTERWEIGHT SYSTEM

chains with which counterweight battens are equipped may be hooked directly into the rings of the hanger irons. If hook hanger irons are also used, the chains are not used, but instead lengths of ⅜" manilla rope, about three or four feet longer than the height of the backwall, are tied to the batten, threaded through the rings in the top hanger irons, and tied securely to the rings in the bottom hanger irons. Use 2 half-hitches for fastening these snatch lines to the batten, and a small bowline for fastening to the hanger rings. (Many riggers use several half-hitches instead.) Tape the free end of the rope fast to the standing part with electrician's tape (*see* "Knots"). When the snatch chains or snatch lines have been made fast and all fastenings and knots carefully checked, the counterweights may be loaded into the cradle. This is done at the loading platform, near the grid. It will be necessary to estimate the weight of the backwall. Forty pounds may be taken as minimum probable weight for an average-sized simple flat. Doors, windows, or other woodwork will add to this total. Thus it will be seen that the backwall will weigh at least 100 to 190 pounds—and frequently total up to 400 or 500 pounds. While weight is being added (and indeed at all times) the lock should be tightly closed, and in addition a ⅜" manilla rope tied around the downhaul line with a stopper hitch, and fastened with half-hitches to the pinrail. This should be done whenever the counterweight in the cradle exceeds the weight of scenery on the batten. Since the batten is only three feet from the stage floor while being loaded, the full weight of the backwall is not on the batten, and will not be until the wall has been raised clear of the floor. When the estimated weight has been placed in the cradle, the stopper line is untied, and the lock opened slightly, allowing the backwall to be pulled to a vertical position. At this point it will be possible to determine how closely the weight has been approximated. If too much weight has been added, the backwall will start to rise the moment the lock is opened. If two men cannot raise it fairly easily from the stage floor, there is insufficient weight, and the wall should be pulled down as far as possible, so that several more weights may be added to the cradle. When the backwall has been raised to the grid the cradle will be at floor level, and the final balancing can be made. The counterbalancing should be accurate enough so that the back wall will not move up or down of itself when the lock is open.

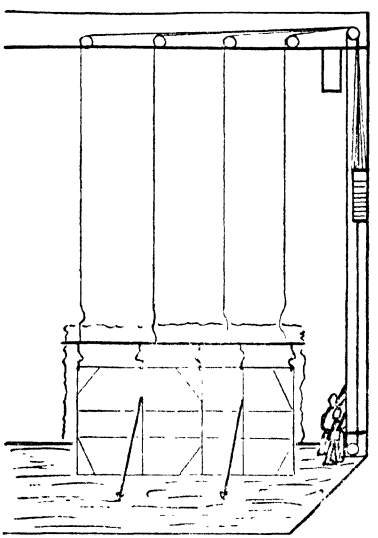
When a backwall is brought down into position during performance, it will be found that the snatch lines prevent the ceiling from overlapping in the rear. It is necessary to slack off the snatch lines by pulling several feet farther. This may require several men to accomplish it, if the weight in the cradle is great. When slacked off, fasten the downhaul line with one or more stopper lines to the pinrail, also closing the lock. Use one ⅜" manilla stopper line for each 150 lbs. of excess weight.

The process of hanging a drop is simpler. The rolled-up drop is placed beneath the batten, and three or four batten clamps are chained to the batten, and clamped to the top batten of the drop. The cradle is then counterweighted—sixty pounds will be enough for most drops—and the drop hauled up to the grid, and final balancing of weight done.

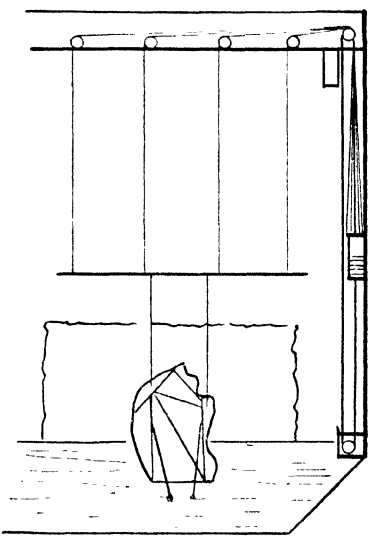




DIAGRAMS SHOWING HANGING AND FLYING OF BACKWALL



"SLACKING OFF" BACKWALL BEFORE LOWERING CEILING



SET PIECE HUNG FROM BATTEN BY PIANO WIRE

THE USE OF THE COUNTERWEIGHT SYSTEM

An entire box set may be hung with or without ceiling, by the use of two additional battens, one half-way toward the footlights and the second at the front edge of the set. Side walls are fitted with stiffeners and attached to the two battens. If a ceiling is used attached, it should be the roll type, but made to the exact size of the set, without overlap, and hinged to the top of the back and sidewalls. The ceiling, and then the sidewalls may be hung and counterweighted in the manner described above after the backwall is hanging in the flies. After the sidewalls have been correctly counterweighted the walls are all lowered to the stage floor, and the rear wall pin hinged or screwed to the edges of the sidewalls. Remember the sidewalls are always butted against the face of the backwall so that there can be no visible light spill through the joining crack. After the ceiling has been lowered onto the set and attached, it should be detached from its battens, and its counterweight distributed between backwall and sidewall cradles.

Scenery not masked at the top, such as set-pieces, or large props, cannot be hung in the same way as backwalls or drops, as the snatchlines and battens would be clearly visible to the audience. One method of overcoming this difficulty is to substitute piano wire for snatch lines or snatch chains. The 23 gauge with a diameter of .051 inches can safely support up to 100 pounds. The lengths of piano wire are made long enough so that the batten will not be seen by the audience. The piano wire itself is almost invisible, and may be painted black to conceal it further. Avoid sharp bends in the wire while fastening it to batten and hanger irons, and be extremely careful to see that there are no kinks in the wire as the set-piece is raised. A kink will cause the wire to snap the moment strain is put on it.

In some cases when the batten is high enough to be concealed from the audience, the wires will be so long that when the set-piece is raised, the batten will reach the grid while the bottom of the set-piece is in plain view. In such cases it is necessary to use the CARPET HOIST.

SAFETY RULES FOR OPERATION OF THE COUNTERWEIGHT SYSTEM

1. When work of any kind is being done up on the grid, even inspection of sheaves or cables, clear the stage area below of all persons. Even a small object such as a bolt or jacknife may cause a severe injury when dropped seventy feet. There are no exceptions to this rule.

2. All persons must be kept well away from the pinrail when counterweight is being loaded into cradles from the loading platform overhead. Counterweights—particularly the heavier sizes—are awkward to handle, and may slip from the hand while being loaded.

3. Never use a ten pound weight as topweight in the cradle. Use either a twenty or thirty pound weight. If through some mischance the cradle should go up too rapidly while scenery is com-

ing down, and hit the grid at the top the ten pound weight might be bounced out of the cradle.

4. Never stack reserve weights above the solid edge of the loading platform.

5. Never leave a lock open except when actually operating the counterweight unit—even though scenery and counterweight seem exactly balanced.

6. Check frequently to see that the lock is adjusted to clamp the rope tightly.

7. Open locks cautiously. There is always the possibility that counterweight may have been accidentally shifted so that scenery and weight in the cradle are no longer in balance, so be ready to close the lock immediately if this is the case.

8. When removing scenery or lighting equipment from a batten on or near the stage floor, *first remove counterweight from the cradle!* There are plenty of instances where failure to observe this rule has brought hundreds of pounds of counterweight crashing to—and through—the stage floor, while at the same time the empty batten flying up against the grid with tremendous force has loosened the sprinkler heads and flooded the stage with water.

9. If at any time it is necessary for a worker to climb down the wall from the loading platform, to free a fouled cradle or to add counterweight to a cradle that cannot easily be brought up to the loading platform, make sure that the worker wears a safety belt. A ¾" rope tied in a bowline under the worker's arms, and the other end firmly fastened to the loading platform, makes an adequate safety device.

10. Never rely upon the pinrail lock to hold against a weight greater than eighty pounds. If the unbalanced weight on the batten or in the cradle exceeds eighty pounds, at any time, always fasten a stopper line to the hauling rope.

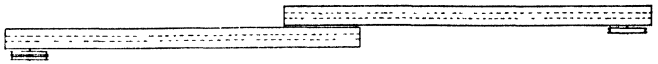
11. *No one* should be allowed to touch the counterweight controls at any time, unless specifically authorized to do so by the technician.

Cradle. The iron framework in a counterweight unit which holds the counterweights.

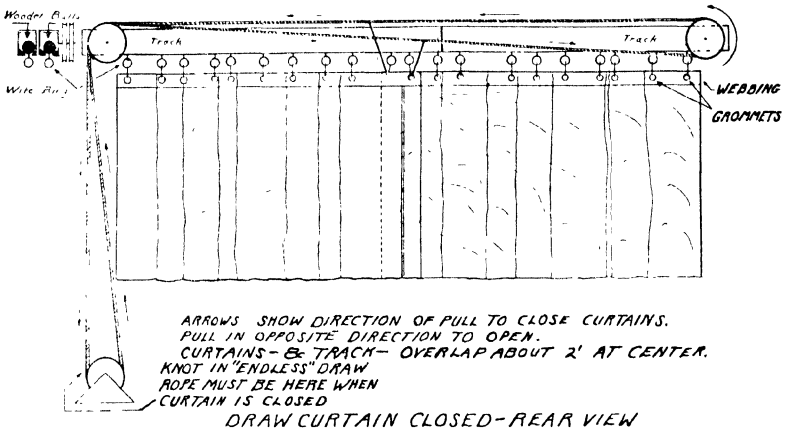
Curtain Line. (1) The imaginary line where the front curtain touches the stage floor. (2) The line operating the front curtain.

Curtain Rigging. An up-and-down or fly curtain makes use of a unit similar to a counterweight unit, but the sheaves and headblock are usually of greater diameter than in an ordinary counterweight unit, so as to reduce friction. The curtain itself is usually webbed at the top, grommeted, and lashed to the batten. A medium-light chain is sewn into the bottom of the curtain to tend to prevent its being blown about by drafts. A chain from the batten to the grid stops the curtain as it touches the stage floor.

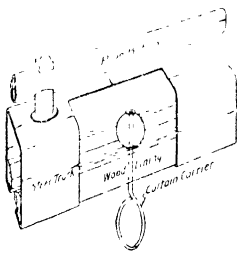
A draw curtain is made in two equal halves, and lashed at the top

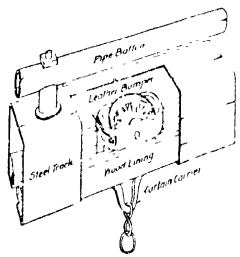


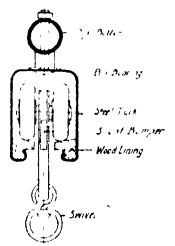
TOP VIEW OF TRACK



DRAW CURTAIN CLOSED-REAR VIEW







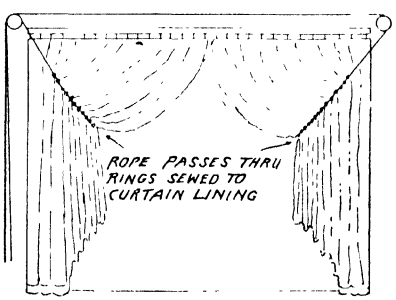
BALL TYPE

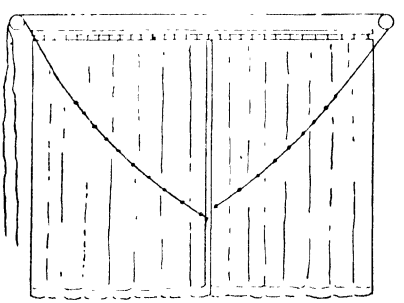
ROLLER TYPES

TYPES OF CURTAIN TRACKS

BRUCKNER MITCHELL Inc.

NEW YORK CITY





"TAB" CURTAIN OPEN & SHUT

CURTAIN RIGGING

to wooden balls or rollers which slide in two tracks, overlapping at the center of the stage. A draw curtain is controlled by an "endless" braided rope, which travels over pulleys along the top of the curtain. One curtain is lashed to one side of the endless rope, the second to the other side. Pulling the endless rope in one direction brings the curtains together, and in the opposite direction opens them. For fly action the tracks are chained to a batten of a counterweight unit. The tableau curtain, usually called a "tab" curtain, is made in two halves, like a draw curtain. Rings are sewn in a diagonal line on the back of each section of the curtain, from a point near the bottom of the onstage edge to the top of the offstage edge. Two ropes are tied at the two onstage points, and threaded through the rings. The ropes are brought together by means of pulleys at the floor on the side of the curtain. When the ropes are pulled the curtain opens to form a triangular draped opening. The tab curtain may be combined with the draw and fly curtain.

Front curtains of all kinds are usually made of silk or cotton velour, or velvet, and heavily lined.

Cut Line. The stopper line tying off the asbestos when it is raised is called a cut line. A sharp knife is hung nearby, so that in case of fire the asbestos may be quickly dropped by severing the cut line. The smoke doors in the roof of the stage house are also controlled by a similar cut line. (See "Smoke Doors.")

Cyclorama. A curved canvas background surrounding the sides and back of the acting area, usually painted with dye to resemble clear sky; or sometimes fabric hung in folds.

The sky cyclorama is usually at least two-thirds of the height of the stage house. It is lashed to a curved pipe batten at the top, and usually to a light curved pipe at the bottom, to stretch it taut. Maximum widths of canvas are sewed together with horizontal seams—18′ widths of Belgian linen canvas were available before the second world war. Occasionally the cyclorama is lashed to hooks in the stage floor, but this makes it very difficult to bring scenery on or off stage. More usually the cyclorama is hung by wire ropes which converge at a counterweight unit or at two counterweight units, the cradles of which are lashed together. Thus it can be raised to allow access for actors and scenery to the stage. In such cases the downstage edges of the cyclorama are grommeted and attached to snap hooks which slide up and down on wire cables, fastened to rings in the floor, and tied off at the grid. These downstage cables help pull wrinkles out. However, it is advisable to loosen the cyclorama from these downstage guides and the bottom pipe batten occasionally since the stretching which at first takes all the wrinkles out will later seem to pull new wrinkles in. Constant experimentation with hanging seems to be necessary to keep a fairly smooth surface. (See "Arm-cyc.")

Dead Stack. When a set is "struck," flats not used again during the production are leaned together against the stage wall in what are called "dead stacks."

Dome. Some stages are equipped with a curved plaster dome, similar to a cyclorama in shape, except that the dome curves forward at the top as well as at the sides. This plaster surface provides an ideal sky backing for exteriors, and an interesting background for unusual lighting of non-realistic productions. However, the dome makes the use of the counterweight system almost impossible, and generally complicates scene shifting. It is most useful when used with lightweight, easily set pieces for impressionistic or expressionistic settings.

Down Stage. This is a stage direction meaning toward the footlights. It was used originally when the stage actually sloped down toward the footlights. (See "Up Stage.")

Draw Curtain. See "Curtain Rigging."

Dress Parade. A rehearsal at which actors wear costumes for the first time, for the purpose of checking up on design, fit, etc., is called a dress parade.

Drop. A canvas or muslin cloth, usually of fairly large area, fastened to battens at top and bottom, and hung from the grid. (See "Framed Drop.")

Dutchman. Originally a wedge-shaped piece of wood, used on the bottom of rectangular flats to adapt them to use on the old sloping stages. Now, any piece of material used to make two pieces of scenery fit together, particularly the strip of wood inserted in a three- and four-fold flat unit; also the canvas strip used to cover the crack between two hinged flats.

Elevator Stage. Usually a sliding elevator arrangement that allows a scene to be set up either at the back of the stage or understage, and the scene shift accomplished by raising or sliding an entire section of stage into position with a set in place—while the previous setting slides back or below stage to be removed while the play continues with only a moment's interruption.

Flies. The entire area above the stage, ordinarily not visible to the audience, in which scenery may be hung for storage.

Flipper. Any narrow hinged flat fastened to the edge of a larger flat, so that it may be set at an angle.

Fly. (1) Rigging scenery so that it may be raised above the stage for storage. (2) The act of raising scenery so rigged is called flying scenery.

Fly Gallery. A gallery or projecting balcony above the stage floor usually at the side of the stage, where ropes manipulating flown scenery are controlled. Usually absent in modern theatres equipped with the counterweight system.

Flyman. A stage hand operating the ropes or counterweight units controlling the flying of scenery is called a flyman.

Foot Iron. A steel brace bolted to the bottom of a piece of scenery so that it may be fastened to the stage floor by means of a stage screw.

Foul. To cause scenery or lights hung in the flies to become entangled with each other is to foul them.

Framed Drop. A drop stiffened with vertical battens at the outer edges. Inside vertical battens are sometimes also used, in which case the framed drop closely resembles a roll ceiling.

Front of the House. (1) The auditorium lobby, box-office, and other offices, as distinguished from "back stage." (2) All activity and business pertaining to the care and operation of the auditorium lobby, box-office, etc.

Grid or Gridiron. The framework of steel or wooden beams above the stage near the top of the stage house, on which sheaves or blocks are mounted for flying scenery.

Grip. A stage hand working on the stage floor.

Ground Cloth (Floor Cloth). The canvas used to cover the stage floor. See page 592.

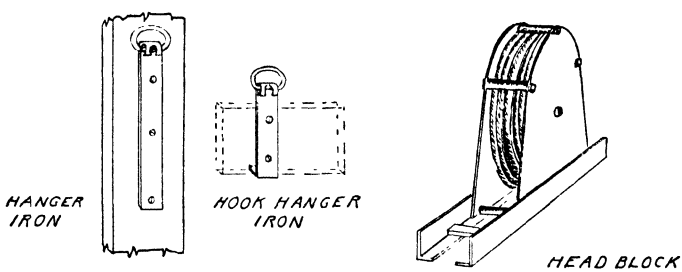
Ground Row (Cut-Out). A long low piece of scenery, usually representing mountains, hills, etc., used in exterior or non-realistic settings to mask the bottom of the cyclorama or backdrop.

Grave Trap. A trapped area, representing an open grave, as in the graveyard scene in *Hamlet.*

Green Room. The actors' lounge or retiring room, unfortunately not usually found in modern theatres.

Hand Props. Those properties carried on or off stage by the actors.

Hanger Iron. A length of strap steel drilled with holes for attaching to flats with screws or bolts, and with a ring mounted in the end, to which snatchlines may be made fast. Used for hanging all scenery other than drops.



Head Block. Several sheaves (pulley wheels) mounted together on a single axle, and mounted on the grid above the cradle of a counterweight unit. The wire lines from the batten come together at the head block, and pass down to the cradle. Sometimes called lead block.

Heads Up. A warning to look up, usually called out as a warning to someone on stage when scenery is being lowered.

In One. A very shallow acting area, as "the scene is played 'in one.'" Originally it meant the acting area downstage of the first wing.

Inner Proscenium. An inner frame, usually built especially for a production, to mask lighting equipment, to reduce the width of the stage or by means of special shape to give a particular design quality to the production.

Jack. A triangular brace, usually of 1" by 3", hinged to the back of a set wall, or set-piece. A footiron at the bottom makes it possible to screw the jack to the stage floor. It makes a much more rigid brace than the stage brace. It should always be used on either side of doors, to prevent wobbling of the set when a door is closed, and may be generally substituted for stage braces.

Jack-Knife Stage. See pp. 705, 706.

Jack-Roller (Lift Jack). See pp. 622, 623, 706.

Keep Alive. To pack or store flats or other scenery so that they are readily available.

Keeper Hook (S-hook). An S-shaped piece of strap steel. A number of these hooked over the toggle bars of adjacent flats and fitted with a long strip of 1" by 3" serve to stiffen a hinged backwall for flying.

Knots, Hitches, and Splices. The use of either rope-line rigging or counterweight system requires some knowledge of knots, hitches, and splices.

Names of Parts. A simple loop is preliminary to most knots. This is called a BIGHT. The main part of the rope is referred to as the STANDING PART. The end used in tying the knot is the FREE END, or simply the END.

Overhand Knot. Has little value by itself but is the beginning of several other knots, including the square knot.

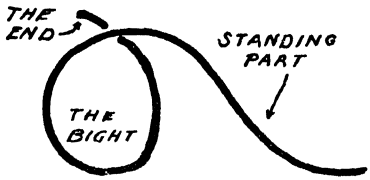
Square Knot. Study this carefully. Tied exactly according to the diagram, the square knot will not slip or jam. It is used for tying two ends of rope together.

Half Hitches. This is the simplest method of tying a rope fast to a batten, a hanger iron, or a ceiling plate. If desired, more than two half hitches may be tied. Most important, however, is to tape (with electrician's tape) or lash (with heavy cord) the free end to the standing part. If this is not done, the half hitches are likely to become undone.

Half Hitches Around a Batten (Clove Hitch). A more secure fastening to a batten or to a hanger iron may be made by tying the first two half hitches around the batten or hanger ring, and then finishing off with two half hitches around the standing part, as previously illustrated. In this case also the free end should be taped or lashed to the standing part.

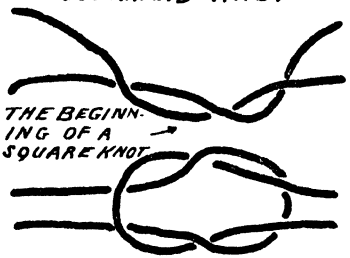
Stopper Hitch (a form of clove hitch). This is a modification of the previous hitch. It is used on stage to secure a counterweight hauling rope to the pinrail. Make the top half hitch first, then the lower half hitch, then pass the line around the large rope again, tucking the end under the lower hitch. This hitch will hold to the breaking point of the line itself. ⅜" manilla is generally used for the stopper line.

Bowline. The bowline is used to form a bight (loop) that will neither slip nor jam. It is sometimes used as being a more secure fastening than two half hitches, to fasten snatch lines to hanger irons or ceiling plates. It is frequently used for a safety line, tied around the waist of a worker who is doing work in a precarious position at some height above the stage.

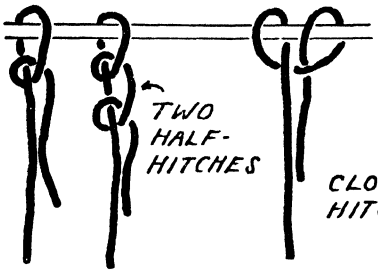


NAMES OF THE PARTS OF A ROPE

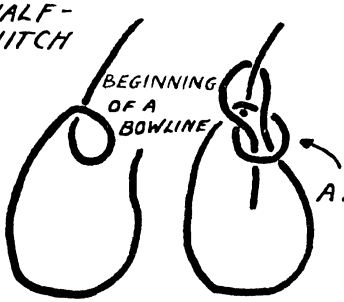
OVERHAND KNOT

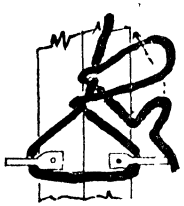


SQUARE KNOT

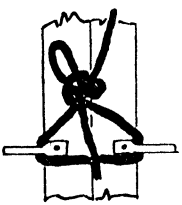


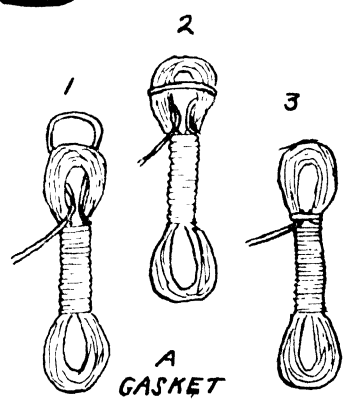
HALF-HITCH





TIE-OFF HITCH





A GASKET

A DOUBLE BLACK-WALL HITCH

KNOTS & HITCHES

The bowline may be easily untied by pushing the upper turn up on the standing part.

Blackwall Hitch. For fastening a line to hook, such as a hook on a block (pulley). The end must be taped or lashed to the standing part.

Double Blackwall Hitch. A more secure form of the Blackwall Hitch. The free end should be taped or lashed to the standing part.

Tie Off Hitch. Devised by the author as an improvement on the usual tie-off hitch. Used to tie off the lash line hooking two flats together. Advantage is that a downward pull on the end of the line completely frees the line. Note: The first bight should be as small as is convenient. Pull the bight firmly down to tighten the lash line. After the second bight has been slipped through the first, pull sharply on the second hitch to tighten.

Gasket. A method of tying up rope and ends of rope lines not in use. After the rope has been evenly coiled, wind the standing part seven or eight times around the waist of the coil. Then slip a bight through the upper curve of the coil. Slip this bight back and downward over the coil, and pull tight.

Short, Long, and Eye Splices are rarely used on stage.

Note: All ends of manilla rope should be firmly taped with electrician's tape to keep the ropes from becoming untwisted.

Lash Line. The #8, ¼" diameter sash cord used for lashing flats together.

Lash Line Cleat. A small metal cleat, screwed to the stiles of adjacent flats so that they may be lashed together.

Left Stage (Right Stage). Directions back stage are related to the actor facing the audience. Left stage is the actor's left—the audience's right.

Leg Drop. A drop with the entire center area cut out. Generally used in exterior scenes and painted to resemble foliage. The legs are usually painted as tree trunks.

Loading Platform. A narrow iron floored gallery, next to the counterweight lines, about four feet below the grid. Counterweights are loaded into the cradles from this platform.

Lock Off. To close the lock of a counterweight unit, clamping the hauling rope.

Lock Rail. The steel rail at stage-floor level on which the counterweight locks are located. More frequently though incorrectly called "pin-rail."

Long Line. See "Center Line."

Long Load. Flats over 16′ long require a special truck for transportation, and are called a "long load."

Macbeth Trap. A small understage elevator, used mostly for sudden appearances of fairies, gods, and ghosts. It was originated long ago for the appearance of Banquo's ghost, in *Macbeth*. A section of stage floor is rigged to drop slightly below the stage and slide to the side, so that the actor may be thrust up suddenly by the upward movement of the elevator. The process is reversed for disappearances.

Make Fast. To tie off, or fasten any hauling line.

Masking, (Masking Piece). Any piece of scenery, flat, drop, border, or set piece—used to prevent the audience from seeing backstage.

O.P. An abbreviation for "opposite prompter's" side of the stage. An old-fashioned term, rarely used today.

Off Stage. Any part of the stage outside the acting area, and not visible to the audience. Frequently used as a command to leave the stage.

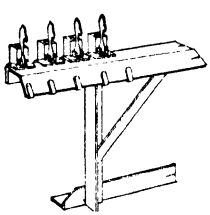
On Stage. The acting area, visible to the audience. Used as a command to come on stage.

Out Front. In the auditorium.

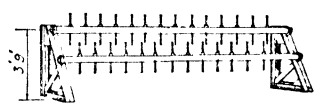
Overhaul Line. (1) Any rope passing over a block or pulley, so that by pulling down, an object is raised. (2) Frequently used to refer to the manilla hauling rope of a counterweight unit.

Parallel. The type of folding platform generally used on stage in the theatre. See pp. 628, 629.

Pinrail. (1) In the older theatres, with rope-line rigging a heavy wood or steel beam was mounted on the onstage edge of the fly gallery fitted with permanent or moveable belaying pins so that the hauling ropes could be tied off. This rail was called the pinrail. (2) The lock rail of a counterweight system on the stage floor, sometimes fitted with a few steel "pins" for tying off ropes.



LOCKING RAIL
FOR T-BAR
COUNTERWEIGHT SYSTEM



DOUBLE PIN RAIL
with Angle Iron Upright Support

BRUCKNER-MITCHELL, INC.
NEW YORK CITY

Pipe Batten. The long steel pipes hung from the flies in a counterweight system, and to which scenery and lights are fastened. Also any length of pipe used in hanging or mounting lighting units or scenery.

Practical. Any piece of scenery or property capable of being used by the actors. A practical window is one which opens. A practical rock is one that will bear weight; etc.

Prompt Book. A copy of the play in which are noted all cues for lights, sounds, and effects, and with descriptions and sometimes diagrams of the actors' business is called the prompt book. The stage manager uses it as a reference in running the show.

Prompt Side. An old-fashioned phrase meaning the side of the stage where the stage manager's desk is located. Formerly this was nearly always the right side of the stage. In modern theatres it may be either side.

Property Table. One or more tables placed off stage near an entrance to the scene, on which hand props are laid out for the actors.

Proscenium. The architectural frame separating the stage from the auditorium. The proscenium is the frame itself, the proscenium opening, the space inside the frame.

Rake. To set scenery at an angle is to rake it.

Ramp. A sloping platform, usually sloping upward or downward from the stage floor, at an angle not too great to walk on.

Revolving Stage. A large turntable in the center of the stage on which a number of sets are placed, and shown to the audience by revolving the turntable. See pp. 704, 705.

Reveal (Thickness Piece). The side of a door, a window, or an archway.

Right Stage. Directions backstage are related to the actor facing the audience. Right stage is the actor's right—the audience's left.

Ring Down. To close or drop the front curtain. More properly, to give the signal for the closing or dropping of the front curtain. Sometimes used referring to the curtain at the end of the performance, as "we rang down at eleven o'clock."

Rollers. The rollers used for jack-rollers, tip-jacks, wagon stages, and portable revolving stages are rubber-tired ball-bearing swivel casters with a roller-bearing wheel 3″ to 6″ in diameter. For larger weights the bigger-diameter wheels are used. A cheaper roller without the roller-bearing wheel is sometimes used for very light weights. These two types of rollers may be secured from the larger hardware dealers. Broadway technicians frequently use a steel tired roller—an inexcusable economy, as they make a tremendous racket on the stage floor.

Rolling Cyc. An infrequently used type of cyclorama which works like an old-fashioned panorama, suspended on a curtain track and rolling up on a vertical cylinder at one side of the stage.

Rope. The common twisted manilla rope is used in rigging in connection with the counterweight system. Rope should not be used for loads greater than 1/10 of the approximate breaking strain. This allows an ample safety factor to take care of deterioration, wear and tear, or sudden extra strains. The approximate safe working load for various sizes of new white manilla rope is as follows:

Diameter	Approximate Maximum Safe Working Load
1/4″	65 lbs.
5/16″	100 lbs.
3/8″	130 lbs.
1/2″	240 lbs.
5/8″	400 lbs.
3/4″	470 lbs.
1″	760 lbs.

Rope deteriorates with age and use. When new it has an oily texture, and

considerable resilience. Dried-out lifeless rope should be replaced to insure safety.

Runway. A bridge for actors, extending out into the auditorium.

Running a Flat. Dragging a flat across the stage floor is called running a flat—perhaps because during rapid shifts stage hands actually do run. The technique of running a flat is as follows: While standing behind the flat, grip the stile at waist level with the hand farthest from the flat and a foot or so above the head with the other hand. This allows complete control of the flat. The leading edge of the flat is raised slightly off the ground, and the stage hand moves it rapidly across the stage. If the flat tends to fall away at the top, the bottom of the flat may be checked with the foot while the flat is held back with the upper hand. One stage hand can run any flat up to twenty-feet in height. A helper, trying to lift the trailing edge, simply unbalances the flat and makes the work more difficult.

To put a flat on the stage floor, simply put the foot against the bottom rail, and let it fall away. The air will cushion its fall. The process is called "floating a flat." To raise a flat from the floor requires two men. One holds his foot against the bottom rail, and the other raises the flat and walks forward underneath it, pushing it forward and upward with the palms of his hands. This is called "walking it up." A very tall flat will require a helper to help balance the top with a long padded pole.

Sand Bag. A heavy rope-reinforced canvas bag, used to contain sand for counterbalancing flown scenery in theatres with rope rigging. Occasionally used in theatres equipped with counterweight systems for counterbalancing scenery or props hung on special rope spot lines. They are fitted at the top with a snaphook and safety catch. Sand bags come in capacities from 10 to 200 pounds.

Scene Dock. A pipe or wooden framework for racking away a number of flats in a vertical position.

Scene Pack. Any group of flats. A scene pack to be used is called a live pack; one that contains flats that have already been used, a dead pack.

Set Piece. Any piece of scenery—usually fairly small, standing by itself in the scene, as a two-dimensional cutout of a shrub.

Set-Up. The process of placing the set on stage, mounting and focusing lights, and dressing the stage with properties is called the set-up, though sometimes this is used to refer to any one of these three processes.

Sheave. The grooved wheel of a pulley. Particularly the blocks on the grid through which the individual wire cables run in the counterweight system.

Short Line. See "Center Line."

Shift. To strike one set, and erect the next.

Sight Lines. See pp. 323-325, 634-635.

Smoke Doors. Doors in the stage roof, above the grid, weighted so that they will automatically open when a rope near the stage manager's desk is cut. This is done in case of fire so that a draft will be created and

the flames will be drawn up inside the stage house, and so kept from spreading into the auditorium.

Smoke Pocket. Steel angles enclosing the two edges of the asbestos curtain. In case of fire they help prevent smoke and flames from getting through at the edges of the asbestos into the auditorium. There is usually also an automatic sprinkler device at the inside top of the smoke pockets.

Snatch Chains. The three-foot long chains which hang from a counterweight batten are called snatch chains. They are fitted with a heavy snap-hook for fastening into hanger rings and ceiling plate rings.

Snatch Lines. Rope lines dropped from the batten of a counterweight unit to fasten onto a hanger iron or ceiling plate. Usually ⅜" manilla.

Spot Line. A rope dropped from a specially mounted sheave on the grid for the purpose of flying some object such as a chandelier.

Stage Brace. A hardwood brace of adjustable length with a hook at one end for fastening to an eye (stage brace cleat) on the back of the flat and a footiron at the other end, for stage screwing to the stage floor.

Stage Screw. An iron or steel screw of sharp pitch with a handle, for use with footirons and stage braces, to brace scenery.

Stand By. The command to be ready.

Stop Chain. A chain attached to the top of a fly curtain, and to the grid to stop the curtain when it reaches the stage floor. Also used on asbestos fire curtains.

Stopper Line. The ⅜" manilla line used to secure the hauling line of counterweight unit to the lock rail. See pp. 718, 726.

Strike. The order given by the stage manager to clear properties and store the set.

Tab Backing. The backdrop, usually of velour, lowered behind a tableau curtain, to mask the back stage from the view of the audience. The tableau curtain and tab backing are used particularly for speakers, presentations, and other non-dramatic purposes.

Take-Up Block. A sheave at the bottom of counterweight unit through which the hauling rope passes. The take-up block slides in the counterweight track, so that the force of its weight constantly keeps the hauling rope reasonably taut. As rope contracts in wet weather and expands in dry weather, the take-up block is necessary to prevent alternately too tight and too slack hauling ropes. Also called tension idler.

Teaser. A curtain or covered flat running across the top of the proscenium opening and forming with the side tormentors an inner frame for the stage opening.

Tie-Off. Literally to tie fast the hauling lines to the pinrail, or to make fast the lashline joining two flats. Frequently used to mean closing the lock of a counterweight unit.

Time Sheet. One of the most important duties of the professional technician or stage manager is to keep a careful time sheet of the stage crew, property men, and electricians, to avoid overtime charges.

Tip-Jack. This is the only type of roller that can be used with flat surfaces, such as the side walls of a set. The jack itself is in the shape of a right triangle, similar to a plain jack used for bracing, except that it is mounted on the flat with its hypotenuse fastened to the side wall. Thus the bottom of the jack makes an angle with the stage floor. A strip of 1¼" by 6" is bolted to the bottom rail of the jack so as to form a mounting surface for the rollers. Two rollers are fastened to each jack, one near the set, and one at the end of the jack. The jack itself is usually pin-hinged to the frame of the flat, and frequently reinforced by strips of 1" by 3" run at an angle from the brace to the flat. Two to three jacks are used for a wall, depending on its length. When the wall is tipped back it rests at an angle on the tip-jacks, which may be rolled. To set it up, the wall is simply pushed erect and braced with stage braces. The tip-jack is the greatest labor-saving device in use back stage, simple and inexpensive to build, and speedy to shift.

Tormentors. Curtains or flats at the sides of the stage, just behind the proscenium opening, forming with the teaser an inner frame for the stage opening.

Traveler. A draw curtain. See "Curtain."

Trim. To trim a border or other hung scenery is the process of leveling it off so that it is parallel to the stage floor.

Trip. When there is insufficient grid height to allow a drop to be lifted out of the sight of the audience, a second batten just behind the first is fastened to the bottom of the drop. When the drop has been raised as far as possible, the second batten is raised to the grid, thus folding the drop in half, and taking it out of the view of the audience.

Up Stage. On the stage, the direction away from the footlights. Also that part of the acting area farthest from the footlights.

Walk It Up. See "Running a Flat."

Wing. A flat at the side of the stage parallel to the footlights. Formerly all sets were formed in this way. The phrase "in the wings" is used to mean at the sides of the stage.

Wing Nut. A nut having small "wings" so that it can be easily turned with the fingers. Generally the only type of nut used backstage.

Wagon Stage. A number of low platforms mounted on rollers make up a wagon stage. See pp. 704, 705.

Wire Rope. Used in a counterweight unit to connect the batten with the cradle. Also called wire cable.

Wood Wing. A wing with irregular edges, painted to represent a wood scene.

SOME SOURCES OF SUPPLY FOR THEATRICAL EQUIPMENT

The following list, while necessarily incomplete, is representative of the leading dealers. Catalogs are available from a number of the firms listed.

GENERAL

Abbott Scrim-Profile Company, 226 West 44th Street, New York City: retailer of stage hardware, corner blocks and keystones, and general supplies.

American Stage Equipment Company, Inc., 525 West 45th Street, New York City: *stage rigging.*

The Antipyros Company, 1175 Manhattan Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.: *covering materials, flame-proofing, flame-proofing chemical.*

Balsa Inc., 122 East 42nd Street, New York City: *Balsa wood.*

Bruckner-Mitchel, 420 West 45th Street, New York City: *revolving stages, special mechanical devices, stage rigging, curtain installations.*

J. H. Channon Corporation, Chicago: *stage rigging.*

J. R. Clancy, Inc., Syracuse, N. Y.: *stage rigging; manufacturer and retailer of stage hardware.*

Dazians Inc., 142 West 44th Street, New York City: *wide range of fabrics and draperies for stage use.*

Dykes Lumber Company, 137 West 24th Street, New York City: *scenery strips, profile board, moldings; scene-building supplies.*

Encore Studio, Inc., 410 West 47th Street, New York City: *properties, for sale and for rent.*

J. C. Hansen, 423 West 43rd Street, New York City: *cycloramas, floor cloths, curtains, drops, sandbags.*

COSTUMES

Brooks Costume Company, Inc., 1150 Sixth Avenue, New York City: *for rent and for sale.*

Eaves Costume Company, Inc., 151 West 46th Street, New York City: *for rent and for sale.*

Guttenberg's, 9 West 18th Street, N. Y. C.: *uniforms, for rent and for sale.*

MAKE-UP

M. Stein Cosmetic Company, 430 Broome Street, New York City.

Max Factor's Makeup Studios, Los Angeles.

SCENE PAINT

A. Leiser & Company, 48 Horatio Street, New York City: *paint supplies.*

Strobolite-Company, 35 West 52nd Street, N. Y. C.: *Strobolite luminous paints.*

STAGE LIGHTING

Trumbull Electric Manufacturing Company, Plainville, Conn.: *switchboards.*

Cutler Hammer Manufacturing Company, Milwaukee: *dimmers.*

Capitol Stage Lighting Company, 527 West 45th Street, N. Y. C.: *general.*

Century Lighting Inc., 419 West 55th Street, New York City: *general.*

Display Stage Lighting Company, 254 West 47th Street, N. Y. C.: *general.*

Kliegl Bros., Universal Electric Stage Lighting Company, Inc., 321 West 50th Street, New York City: *general.*

Major Equipment Company, 4603 Fullerton Avenue, Chicago: *general.*

SOUND EFFECTS

Gennett Records, 1600 Broadway, New York City: *sound-effect records*

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