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**ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ**  
**ИМ. Н.А.ДОБРОЛЮБОВА**



## **ТЕАТР**

**Учебно-методические материалы**  
**для студентов III курса**  
**отделения английского языка**  
**переводческого факультета**

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Настоящие учебно-методические материалы предназначены для формирования всех компонентов иноязычной коммуникативной компетенции (языковой, речевой, социокультурной) у студентов третьего курса отделения английского языка переводческого факультета.

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## Введение

Учебно-методические материалы «Театр» содержат современные аутентичные тексты, в основу которых положена информация из книги американского теоретика театра Марша Кэссэди «An Introduction to: The Art of Theatre» и публицистические статьи из британской газеты *Guardian*.

Работа состоит из 11 разделов, разнообразных по тематике. В них содержится информация, касающаяся различных типов театров, приводится описание внутреннего пространства театрального здания. Раздел IV, посвященный композиционному построению драматического произведения, знакомит студентов с такими важными элементами художественного текста, как завязка, кульминация, развязка и т.д. В разделах V и VI объясняются различия между театральными стилями и жанрами, раздел VII дает представление об основных чертах метода К.Станиславского. Кроме того, работа знакомит студентов с функциями режиссера, помощника режиссера, художников-декораторов и других специалистов, участвующих в создании спектакля. Раздел X дает обширную информацию об основных тенденциях в развитии европейского и американского театрального искусства в XIX–XX веках. И, наконец, в заключительном разделе рассматриваются основные вопросы, которые требуют освещения при написании рецензии на театральную постановку.

В качестве образца предлагается рецензия на постановку театром Ковент Гарден оперы Чайковского «Евгений Онегин», опубликованная газетой *Гардиан*. На заключительном этапе изучения темы предполагается посещение студентами одного из театров Нижнего Новгорода и написание рецензии.

Помимо учебных текстов в каждый раздел включены упражнения языкового и речевого характера. Языковой материал, содержащийся в упражнениях, призван расширить палитру лексических средств, используемых студентами третьего курса. Предлагаемые задания развивают умение перефразировать словосочетания и предложения, используя синонимические средства языка, определять грамматическую валентность слов и их лексическую сочетаемость, проводить стилистическую дифференциацию лексики, что в конечном итоге позволяет студентам точно оформлять высказывания на английском языке.

Лингвострановедческий материал содержит информацию об истории развития театра в Великобритании и США, о выдающихся режиссерах и актерах, об основных тенденциях в современном театральном искусстве этих стран.

## CONTENTS

<b>Unit I:</b>	The Art of Theatre.....	5
<b>Unit II:</b>	Theatre Architecture.....	8
<b>Unit III:</b>	Theory of Drama.....	11
<b>Unit IV:</b>	Dramatic structure.....	15
<b>Unit V:</b>	Theatrical Styles.....	23
<b>Unit VI:</b>	Dramatic Genres.....	27
<b>Unit VII:</b>	Approaches to acting.....	37
<b>Unit VIII:</b>	The Director and the Designers.....	41
<b>Unit IX:</b>	Why Audiences Attend the Theatre.....	44
<b>Unit X:</b>	Nineteenth-to Twenty-First-Century Theatre.....	47
<b>Unit XI:</b>	Standards for Criticism.....	61

# UNIT I

## THE ART OF THEATRE

Any fine art, such as theatre, painting, sculpture, dance, or music communicates a message. Being one of the oldest of the arts, theatre expands our awareness and appreciation of life.

We can distinguish theatre from many of the other art forms in that a performance exists for a limited period of time. A particular production can never be witnessed again once the final line has been delivered or the final action has been performed. In this respect, theatre differs from painting or literature or architecture. Works of these arts can be enjoyed again and again in exactly the same state.

Of course, a play can be presented time and time again. But each performance will differ from any other. The director, the designers, and the actors of one production have a different interpretation of the play than do other artists. One actor's appearance, movements, and voice vary from those of any other actor who takes the same role. Stages differ in size. Properties (objects the actors carry or use in the play) and costumes vary from production to production. The third night of the production's run will not be the same as the first night or the second. This is because the actors continue to grow in their roles. They experiment; they attempt to find out what will work best. Audiences affect the actors and their performances. As a result, they change their responses, playing differently to each specific audience.

Theatre is unique in that it directly imitates human experiences by allowing spectators to identify with the characters who are represented as real. Members of the audience can put themselves in the characters' places and feel as the characters do.

Theatre also interprets life. That is, the playwright, the actors, the director, and the designers all add their backgrounds and experiences to a production.

They judge; they overlook; they point out specific traits to the exclusion of others. They select and through this choice, add their own personalities or their perceptions of the world, interpreting events and actions of the play from different viewpoints. Each of the individuals involved contributes something personal to the total production.

Theatre encompasses many other art forms – architecture in the setting, sculpture in the three-dimensional forms and the creative use of lights and shadow, dance in the blocking (the planned movement of actors in the play), painting in the setting and makeup, literature in the words and music in songs and the flow of the language.

***I. Answer the questions:***

1. In what way is theatre similar to other art forms?
2. In what respect is it different from architecture, literature, etc?
3. What changes are introduced to the play each time it is staged?
4. What impact do audiences produce on the performance?
5. Theatre interprets life. In what way is it achieved?
6. What art forms does theatre encompass?

***II. Find the terms related to theatrical productions. Match the following definitions with the terms***

- 1) the part or words a particular actor has to learn
- 2) a piece of writing intended to be performed by actors at a theatre
- 3) a person who directs a play, introducing the actors, etc.
- 4) a person who acts in plays, usually professionally
- 5) art intended primarily for beauty rather than utility
- 6) the part of the theatre where the actors perform
- 7) articles that can be used or carried in the course of the performance

- 8) a group of people who have come to the theatre to watch the performance
- 9) a writer of plays
- 10) something built and provided with furniture, scenery to represent the scene of a play
- 11) the planned movement in a play, the stage directions for the actors
- 12) substances that actors apply on their faces to change their appearance

### ***III. Say it in Russian***

- 1) fine art
- 2) to deliver lines
- 3) to be presented time and time again
- 4) to take the same role
- 5) to vary from production to production
- 6) the third night of the production run
- 7) to add one's backgrounds and experiences
- 8) to contribute something personal to the total production
- 9) to encompass many other art forms
- 10) three-dimensional forms
- 11) designer
- 12) director

### ***IV. Find synonyms to the following words***

- 1) performance
- 2) role
- 3) actor
- 4) first night (performance)
- 5) audience

- 6) character
- 7) playwright

***V. Give detailed answers to the following questions***

1. What purposes do you think modern theatre serves? Is it purely entertaining?
2. Why do you think theatre-goers seek to watch “others” on stage, witness their struggles and conflicts? Why is theatre so personally involving?

## **UNIT II**

### **THEATRE ARCHITECTURE**

Modern theatre buildings have three basic parts: the auditorium, the stage, and the behind-the-scenes spaces.

The auditorium is the area of the building where the audience sits during the performance. In the broad sense it also includes such facilities as the box office, foyer, exhibition areas and refreshment stands.

A well-designed auditorium allows every person in the audience to see and hear without strain. It also permits the spectators to reach and leave their seats easily. The interior is decorated in a pleasing fashion that does not distract attention from the stage. Auditoriums may be large or small, and they vary in their basic characteristics. The seats are either all on the main floor, or in one or more balconies. In some older auditoriums, box seats are available on one or more levels close to the stage. The audience normally watches the action of the play from one, two, three, or from all four sides. However, in some modern theatres the audience and the performers actually share the same space.

In a number of theatres, the seating arrangement for the audience and the location of the performing space change from production to production. In some



cases, the audience is required actually to shift location during the performance, moving from one area to another as the action of the performance progress. In Britain, presentations that require the audience to shift location, or the actors to move around among the standing audience are called *promenade* productions.

There are four basic types of stage: proscenium, arena stage, thrust stage, and found space. The traditional type is the proscenium stage. Proscenium, or proscenium arch frames the stage in much the same way as a painter frames a landscape. The audience members, seated facing the opening, are asked to believe that they are viewing the action of a play through an imaginary fourth wall. It often has a curtain that may be used to conceal or reveal the stage. The curtain may be closed to permit changes in scenery, to indicate the passage of time, or to mark the act or scene divisions of a play. Today, the dimming of lights often takes the place of closing the curtain. Elaborate, three-dimensional scenery can be used effectively on a proscenium stage. Performers enter or leave the stage by way of opening in the scenery or by way of the wings at the sides of the stage.

In arena staging the audience surrounds the action It has historical precedent in arena-style theatres of ancient Greece. Although the scenery for an arena theatre cannot be as realistic as for a proscenium stage, the properties, costumes, and makeup must be more realistic since the audience is closer to the actors.

A thrust stage consists of an open playing area similar to that of an arena theatre, with a stage house or wall in the background through which performers enter or exit. Thus, more scenery can be used than in an arena theatre.

Various other types of stages are variations of the proscenium, the arena, and the thrust stages. A black box theatre is a theatre that contains a flexible staging area which allows for various staging and seating arrangements. Environmental theatre involves adapting whatever space is available to a theatrical production. Found space includes street theatres. Actors may perform

in the street to provide cultural experience, to entertain, or to express the concerns of the audience.

The behind-the-scene space in a fully equipped theatre may include workshops to make costumes and scenery; rehearsal and dressing rooms; lighting and sound booths; storage space for costumes, scenery, properties, and lighting instruments; office space for theatre staff and a greenroom (lounge) for performers.

***I. Answer the following questions***

1. What are the main elements of a modern theatre building?
2. What is the interior of a theatre usually like?
3. In what way do they arrange the seats in the auditorium?
4. What are the characteristics of the proscenium stage, the arena stage, the thrust stage, and found space?
5. Would you rather see a play in a proscenium or open stage theatre? Why?
6. What are the strong and weak points of a black box theatre?

***II. Find English words and phrases to express the following***

зрительный зал, театральная касса, ложа, занавес опускается, кулисы, костюмерная, примерная, репетиционная комната, актерская уборная

***III. Say it in Russian:***

proscenium, the dimming of light, elaborate scenery, to have historical precedent, without strain, behind-the-scene space, to shift location

## UNIT III

### A THEORY OF DRAMA

According to the Greek philosopher Aristotle in *The Poetics* (c. 335-320 BC), the earliest treatise we have on the theory of drama, a tragedy should have a beginning, a middle, and an end; that is, it should be complete in itself. It should contain everything necessary for an audience's understanding of it. Further, the incidents should exhibit a cause-and-effect relationship. In other words, a dramatic question should be asked early on, and the rest of the play should answer this question. In *Death of a Salesman*, for instance, the question might be: How far will Willy Loman go in trying to prove himself successful? The ultimate answer is that he will decide to end his own life. All the action and conflict (the struggle between the protagonist and antagonist) should relate to the dramatic question. Although Aristotle was discussing tragedy, what he says can be applied to drama as a whole. A play, then, is based in life, but is vastly different, since life has no real beginnings and endings except birth and death. Most often, these are not the stuff of drama. Most of us are born quietly and die quietly. At times we may struggle toward a goal, but after we achieve it or fail to, our lives continue mundanely and anticlimactically.

Since the sixteenth century, when Aristotle's writings on drama became widely known, his work has continued to influence dramatic theorists and playwrights. Yet there are those who disagree with his views. These critics say that if a writer too closely follows Aristotle's definition, the resulting play will be artificial. Most probably would concur, however, that an audience needs a sense of ending.

## The Elements of Drama

A playwright, like a painter, generally works within a certain structure. The painter can choose colors, brushstrokes, and composition, but has to apply pigment to a surface. No matter how big or how small a canvas, the surface still is a limiting space. The successful artist does not view the canvas as restrictive, however. Similarly, drama and, hence, theatre has a basic structure, within which exists freedom to experiment, to establish new methods, and to present new concepts.

Aristotle described six elements as essential for tragedy: **plot, character, thought, dialog, melody, and spectacle.**

- 1. Plot**, the most important element of a play according to Aristotle, is the framework. Within it occurs the scope of the action.
- 2. Character** is the major ingredient for the advancement of the action. The characters most often are the controlling force in a play; through their speech and behavior, the ongoing action is revealed. In similar circumstances, each reacts individually. Each also is typical. Characters need individuality to come across as believable, yet similarity to others in order to arouse feelings of empathy or identification. A play should affect the audience personally through an appeal to the emotions. It has to provide situations, characters, and events with which audiences can identify and through which they can learn. Each of these has to be different enough to maintain interest but familiar enough to illustrate a general truth.
- 3. Thought** (or intellect) refers to the playwright's ideas. Like the characters, the play itself should be both specific and general - the story of an individual, but with universal appeal.
- 4. Dialogue** (or diction) refers to speech of each character. It should suit the characters and help establish the tone of the play, as well as the changing tempos of the scenes.

**5. Melody**, which may originally have referred to dancing, now is taken by most critics to refer to the rhythm and flow of the language, which should reflect the emotional content of the situation.

**6. Spectacle**, the least important element according to Aristotle, is the scenery and background — as well as all the other visual elements, those things over which the playwright has the least control.

Yet, according to playwright Ruth Wolff:

The greatest reality of a play doesn't reside in the plot, the words, or the description of action. The truth of the play, its highest existence, is in something outside all these. It is a construct that exists only in the audience's mind; it is the invisible thing that they build out of the air that wafts above and between what's spoken and what's acted; it is the ineffable, the puzzle, the wonder, the fragile thing that playwrights do not write but intend. The true play exists on the level of what the viewer is thinking about what is happening. This mystical airy creation, the unwritten thing, is what one is actually creating when creating a play script. One has to be constantly and uninterruptedly in tune with it, or its magic wavelength, as one writes, or it does not exist.'

#### Aesthetic Distance

There should be a balance between empathy and objectivity or **aesthetic distance** — the detachment that allows us to appreciate the beauty of a work. In some cases, of course, the performers encourage audience participation. In children's theatre, the actors may want the spectators to warn the hero of impending doom or to boo the villain. There have been experiments of bringing audience members to the stage or going into the seating area to talk with them in an attempt to break down the barriers. Sometimes this works; often, however, it fails because it disturbs the balance between involvement and detachment. No matter how affecting the characters or the situation, an

audience has to participate on two opposite levels. Otherwise, they view the action as life and try to intervene.

***I. Answer the following questions:***

1. What are the key components of a drama, according to Aristotle?
2. What is the role of incidents in the play?
3. In what way is a play different from life?
4. Comment on the impact Aristotle's theory had on playwrights
5. What are the essential elements for tragedy?
6. How is the balance between empathy and objectivity achieved?
7. Why do performers sometimes encourage the participation of the audience?
8. What are the possible negative aspects of such participation?
9. Would you like to be approached and addressed by the actors during the performance or do you think that detachment should be preserved?

***II. Explain the difference between the following clusters of words***

affecting /affected /affective/ affectionate

drama/ tragedy

rhythm/ tempo

empathy/ sympathy

***III. Find the English words and collocations to express the following***

совпадать, вызывать чувство, охват, трактат, не оправдывающий ожиданий, предупредить о надвигающейся опасности, нарушить равновесие, волнующий, ограничивающий, в попытке разрушить барьеры, эмоциональное содержание, зрелище, причинно-следственные отношения, невыразимое, быть настроенным на одну волну

**13) Paraphrase the following**

- 1 Our lives continue mundanely and anticlimactically
2. The story of an individual, but with universal appeal
3. The actors may want the spectators to warn the hero of the impending doom or to boo the villain
4. The artist does not view the canvas as restrictive

***V. Find the sentences in the texts, which contain absolute constructions with no matter how. What is their syntactic role in the sentence? What semantic relationship do they express?***

***Make up your own sentences according to this syntactic pattern***

***VI. Find the elements of the text that are employed to achieve coherence.***

***Which of them are used to contrast, to add, to compare?***

## **UNIT IV**

### **DRAMATIC STRUCTURE**

Like all art, theatre attempts to present truth as the artists see it, yet truth is elusive and subjective. The playwright, the director, the actors, and the designers collaborate in communicating their own form of reality through dramatic structure and style.<sup>1</sup> As Eric Bentley said: "Would art exist at all if men did not desire to live twice? You have your life; and on the stage you have it again."<sup>2</sup>

## The Story Play

When we think of a story, we think of being entertained. Both in theatre and in fiction, stories involve people in situations with which we can identify. The story play is an attempt to "make things right" — to re-create a balance in life.

Throughout history the story play, also called the **cause-to-effect** play, has been written and produced more than any other type.

A story play has a plot — a type of structure — that relies on conflict. Yet neither the plot nor the structure itself is the story, which is much more inclusive, encompassing everything that has happened in the world (or universe) of the play before, during, and after the events of the plot. We know, for example, that Mary, the mother in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, had a long history of drug abuse caused by a quack physician prescribing morphine and that this abuse started long before the action of the play opens. We know that her husband James, the father, is a talented actor who for years has been caught up in acting a role in a second-rate play, and that no one has been willing to cast him in any other role. These are "realities" of the story and have a direct bearing on the plot. Yet they are not a part of the action.

### Frame of Reference

A play cannot exist as an isolated entity that springs into being out of nothingness. And when a story play ends, the characters and the setting — in our imaginations, at least — don't suddenly fade into wisps of trailing fog. A **framework or frame of reference** prescribes all the conditions of the world and universe of the play. Most of these conditions are never mentioned because they don't directly affect the action. The audience assumes, however, when given certain conditions, that others are in effect. For instance, if the setting is a typical middle-class home in Pittsburgh and the time is the present, the audience can assume that everything else about the world/universe of the play is typical of



the world/universe in which we all live.

If the framework is alien so that the play is set in a different culture, a distant time, or in an entirely different world, the playwright has to make sure the audience knows everything about that "universe" that has bearing on the action.

Once a framework is established — no matter how magical or extraordinary — a playwright cannot change it and hope to keep an audience's attention. The play most often answers certain questions: What is happening? When is it happening? Where is it happening?

The answers — the **exposition** — provide background necessary to understanding the play. Most exposition is presented through the dialog. Some is conveyed through sets, lighting, costuming, and sometimes makeup. However, the exposition should not intrude upon the progress of the play. In fact, an audience should receive any necessary information without being aware that they are receiving it; it should seem a natural part of the presentation.

### Conflict and Opposition

There are four general types of conflict or opposition:

- 1) protagonist against another person
- 2) protagonist against self
- 3) protagonist against society
- 4) protagonist against the forces of nature or fate

An example of the first type of opposition is Anthony Shaffer's *Sleuth*, a two-character melodrama in which the characters constantly try to outwit each other and gain the upper hand. Shaffer's play relies a great deal on deception and one-upmanship. Although a play pitting one person against another may have a simple plot that doesn't go deeply into character, that isn't always the case.

A number of well-known plays use the theme of protagonist against self. In

Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, for example, Willy tries to live up to his own definition of success. And in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus struggles against his own sense of pride to prove that he is not his father's killer.

A protagonist against society or a particular segment of society is one of the most common types of opposition. Dramatist Henrik Ibsen, for instance, often structured his plays around such circumstances — for example, *An Enemy of the People*, in which Stockman battles an entire town when he wants to close the polluted baths — the villagers' main source of income.

Plays that pit the protagonist against a force such as nature or fate often come across as overly melodramatic. This is because it is difficult to make nature or fate a convincing antagonist since the protagonist is struggling against forces over which he can have no control. For instance, a farmer battling a drought which destroys his crops would not provide much of a plot unless the conflict between the farmer and the drought were only superficial. That is, the drought may be a way for the character to test his or her own mettle, so that the major conflict is between the character and self. Yes, the drought may defeat any such character financially. But under such circumstances, one person may become stronger or more determined to make a go of it. Another may simply give up.

### **Elements of Plot**

Plot involves an **inciting incident**, **rising action**, a **turning point**, a **climax**, and the **denouement** or **falling action**, all following a linear pattern, the Aristotelian model. A number of **minor crises** occur during the rising action. Each provides further complication which seemingly is solved through a series of **minor climaxes**, but which actually serves only to intensify the rising action. The play begins when the antagonist in some way interferes with the evenness of the protagonist's life.

Some plots have many more minor complications or crises than others. A

play with a very simple plot is *The Fantasticks*, Off-Broadway's longest-running musical ever with 17,162 performances over a run of more than forty-one years. The fathers of Matt and Luisa, want their offspring to fall in love and marry, which they do, and so a happy ending seems assured. However, at the beginning of the second (and final) act, Matt and Luisa become dissatisfied, feeling the need to experience life before settling down. The rest of the act shows that they do separate for a time, but eventually they reunite. In contrast, Shaffer's *Sleuth* has many more complications, each resulting in a minor climax in which one of the two characters seems to be winning, only to be outwitted by the other. In effect, the plot can be referred to as a fencing match in which two participants are closely matched.

Sometimes, the turning point and the climax are the same; sometimes not. The turning point is where the action can go no further without something irrevocable happening. The climax is where the irrevocable actually occurs. In Joan Schenkar's satire, *The Universal Wolf*, Grandmother decides to kill Little Red Riding Hood, which is the turning point. Before she actually kills her, which is the climax, she sings her to sleep with a lullaby. Only then does she repeatedly stab Little Red Riding Hood with knitting needles. However, if Grandmother had decided she couldn't stand to be around Little Red Riding Hood one second more and had killed her immediately, the turning point and climax would have been the same.

A play's climax begins to reveal the answer to the question asked when the problem was introduced; the denouement completes the answer by tying up the loose ends, it explains more fully how and why a thing happened, or sometimes shows the effects of the resolution on the characters. In a comedy, the audience wants to enjoy the protagonist's triumph; in a tragedy, the audience wants to come to terms with their feelings. For example, "The Requiem," the final scene of *Death of a Salesman*, shows how Willy's suicide affects the other

characters.

Plays often include scenes in which there appears to be no direct conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist. Yet if (he play is well written, the conflict is inherent; it relates to what already has been shown. For example, one character may be describing to another what is bothering her — what has caused the central problem and conflict. In so doing, she may begin to glimpse a possible solution or clarify her own thoughts about the situation, foreshadowing and thus building tension and suspense about whether she will succeed in her plan.

Everything that occurs in a story play has to be relevant to the advancement of the plot, to the protagonist's attempt to reach his other goal. This dramatic action relates to the struggle between the protagonist and the antagonist, and often results in a direct clash between the two.

### **Character**

Each character in a play has a goal, sometimes referred to as his or her superobjective. In Beth Henley's one-act play *Am I Blue?*, John and Ashbe meet for the first time in a bar, from which they *are* then evicted for being underage. Ashbe invites John to her apartment in New Orleans, where she offers him hot Kool-Aid and green marshmallows. Her father is out of town, and her mother lives in Atlanta. The superobjective seems to be for the two characters to become friends. However, each has a more fundamental goal — to be accepted socially. Both are misfits who react differently to their situations. Ashbe refuses to conform, while John will do almost anything to be accepted.

### **Central Problems**

There are many ways in which the action in a play can progress; that is, there are various types of central problems affected by the introduction of the dramatic question<sup>3</sup> or inciting incident. These include:

- 1.The need for revenge. An example is Hamlet's wanting to get back at his uncle for killing Hamlet's father.
- 2.Being lured by money, sex, or fame. In Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*, the title character sells his soul to the devil and then tries to get out of the bargain.
- 3.The need to escape from an intolerable situation. In Schenkar's *The Universal Wolf*, Grandmother murders Little Red Riding Hood because she cannot stand the girl's "attitude" or "voice" or "smile."
- 4.Arriving at a crossroads and not knowing which choice to make. In Wendy Kesselman's *My Sister in This House*, Lea must choose between pleasing her sister Christine, with whom she works as a maid, or pleasing her mother. Lea still has feelings for the mother; Christine is certain their mother has exploited them.
- 5.Testing the limits of self or others. In William Gibson's *The Miracle Worker*, Helen Keller and her teacher Annie Sullivan push each other nearly to the breaking point.

Many plays also have one or more subplots (those of lesser importance or subordinate to the central action). Shakespeare's comedies, for instance, often have subplots that deal with love or intrigue. In *As You Like It*, the story that frames the play is that of the wicked Duke Frederick wresting power from his brother, who finds refuge in the Forest of Arden. However, the play's major focus is the love story of Rosalind and Orlando, along with two other love stories.

### **Scenes as Structure**

Usually, a play is divided arbitrarily into acts, which then may be divided into scenes. Act I, Scene 1, may occur in the afternoon, Scene 2 in the evening, and Scene 3 the following morning.

Theatre artists, however, often think of scenes as **motivational units**, in which the protagonist wants to reach a goal. A motivational unit is made up

of the minor inciting incidents and minor climaxes that comprise the rising action. Each of these slightly alters the direction the central character takes in attempting to overcome the antagonist.

***I. Answer the following questions:***

1. What is a story play?
2. What is a frame of reference? What type of framework is called alien?
3. Describe the ways expositions are presented in a play
4. What sort of clash does a story play involve?
5. Comment on the ways to present the protagonist and the antagonist
6. What are the general types of conflict?
7. Why do plays containing the conflict between the protagonist and nature often appear to be overly melodramatic?
8. What are the main elements of the plot?
9. What is understood by a superobjective?
10. What are the most typical central problems a story play contains?
11. What name is given to a storyline which is not the main one in the play? Provide some examples of plays containing more than one storyline
12. Comment on the way a story play is structured

***II. Explain the meaning of the following words. Restore the sentences in which they are used***

Ludicrous, one-upmanship, protagonist, antagonist, irrevocable, story play, inciting incident, climax

***III. Say from what verbs the following adjectives are derived***

Irrevocable, inclusive, inherent, elusive, intrusive

***What verbs correspond to the following nouns?***

Sympathy, empathy, collaboration, exposition

*IV. Insert prepositions into the following expressions. Explain their meaning*

- 1) a clash ... the protagonist and the antagonist
- 2) to have bearing ... an action
- 3) to pit one person ... another
- 4) to make a go ... it
- 5) to come ... terms ... their feeling
- 6) other conditions are ... effect

*14) Find English words and phrases to express the following*

играть роль во второсортной пьесе, дать другую роль, испытать характер, перехитрить, взять верх, излишне мелодраматический, сверхзадача, разделить произвольно, побочная сюжетная линия, принять направление

## UNIT V

### THEATRICAL STYLES

Today's theatre encompasses a variety of styles, many of them the legacy of bygone periods. **Romanticism**, for example, was a direct revolt against the rigid **neoclassicism** of the Renaissance. Then came the Industrial Revolution and a move toward presenting a more realistic view of life. Some of these styles try to present life as it is, while others are more allegorical and abstract.

#### **Representational and Presentational Styles**

Theatrical styles fall into two overall categories, **representational** and **presentational**. The former leans toward the realistic, the latter toward the nonrealistic.

In representational theatre the dialog, setting, characters, and action are represented as true to life. The action on-stage shows the audience as clearly as possible the sort of world they can see outside the theatre. Yet, because the actions occur as part of a planned production, representational theatre cannot actually depict life as it is. Actors speak memorized dialog, the director plans the movement, and the play takes place in a space specifically set up for a production. Even naturalism — the most representational style — has to be selective. Audiences at a production of Jack Kirkland's *Tobacco Road* know that the action takes place on a stage that is covered with a few inches of sawdust or dirt that only represents poor southern land and is not the land itself.

It would be fair then to say that the representational style is a closer approximation of life than the presentational. The former is **stage-centered** and the latter **audience-centered**. Actors in a representational play do not openly acknowledge the audience; in a presentational play they do, sometimes speaking directly to them. Often the stage is bare, or elements of setting suggest location rather than portraying it. Any scenery is likely to be nonrealistic. The presentational style says that theatre may come from life but should not be depicted as life.

Yet no style is pure. Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* is presentational in that it calls for no scenery, and from time to time a character speaks directly to the audience. It is representational in that occasionally the actors move into specific scenes, such as one at a soda fountain. But even in these more realistic scenes, the Stage Manager assumes another role, whereas George and Emily keep the same roles that they have throughout the play.

Musical theatre is presentational in the use of singing and dancing but often representational in the dialog.

Of course, in representational drama, actors usually play to the audience. Performers on a proscenium stage don't turn their backs on the audience, except



sometimes for effect. Furniture isn't placed across the front of the proscenium opening.

### **Specific Styles**

The other styles of theatre are offshoots of the representational and presentational.

In pure **naturalism**, an attempt is made to include everything found in life. In writing, this means including all the details of conversation and physical movement. In setting, it means placing on-stage everything that we would find in an actual location.

**Realism**, which depends on the playwright's and the designer's perception of reality, attempts to present life as it is, but selectively. Not all details that are found in real life are presented, only those essential for the audience's understanding of the play and the establishment of mood are included.

Realism in writing means that the dialog sounds lifelike, but doesn't have the hesitations, the changes in direction, the false starts, or the inconsequentiality of everyday conversation. Although they do not acknowledge an audience, actors in a realistic play consider them in projecting their voices and remaining aware of **sightlines** (the line of vision for the audience).

A style that is more audience-centered, though still it has elements of the representational, is **expressionism**, meant to show the protagonist's inner self. An expressionistic script deals with the internal reality of the mind, and the setting shows how the character views life. This means attempting to let the audience see reality as the protagonist does, to present the protagonist's inner feelings externally.

**Symbolism** tries to present truth subjectively or allegorically. Symbolic settings may contain unidentified shapes and strong contrasts in light and darkness.

With **impressionism**, the director and designer determine what they want

to stress or call attention to regarding the play's theme or message. For example, in the Broadway production of Tennessee Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Brick and Maggie's bedroom was constructed to resemble a boxing ring because the two characters quarrel so much.

**Theatricalism, formalism, and constructivism** sometimes are called styles, although they really are only treatments of other styles. With theatricalism, the designer breaks down any suggestion of a fourth wall, and viewers are constantly reminded that they are in a theatre. Lighting instruments and backstage areas may be open to view; actors may enter and exit through the audience. Formalism, which overlaps theatricalism and impressionism, uses only what is necessary to the actor and only because it is there. Drapes rather than flats may conceal backstage areas or provide the means for exits and entrances. Constructivism uses only those elements necessary to the action. Only part of the interior of a room may be built, and a ceiling light may hang directly from an overhead railing

***I. Say it in Russian***

the legacy of bygone periods, to mingle styles, soda fountain, offshoot of smth, sightline

***II. Find English words and phrases to express the following***

аллегорический, романтизм, неоклассицизм, постмодернизм, звучать как в жизни, выборочный, иметь прямое отношение к жанрам, режиссерская интерпретация пьесы

***III. Paraphrase the following expressions:***

to be specifically set up for the production  
to be stage-centered/ audience-centered  
inconsequentiality of everyday conversation  
the writing and scenic styles must match  
to lean towards the realistic style

## UNIT VI

### DRAMATIC GENRES

Genre refers to the manner in which playwrights classify their subject matter. Usually the treatment is closely related to the writer's outlook on life. Is it optimistic or pessimistic? Comic or tragic? The outlook, at least in part, determines the purpose.

There is a relationship among various genres of drama. For instance, tragedy is the direct opposite of comedy, which is the most encompassing genre.

No one views all of life in the same manner. Each may regard some matters as ludicrous, others as sacred, and some unworthy of any kind of treatment. In contemporary theatre it's often difficult to categorize plays, which many times are a mixture of genres. Some comedies have tragic elements, some tragedies have comic elements. There are serious plays that do not end in the death or defeat of the protagonist, as does traditional tragedy.

As theatre critic Walter Kerr says: "The moment we succeed in consciously patterning our theater, in making it do precisely what we think it ought to be doing, we are apt to paralyze it." All we need ask is that a play depicts the truth of the human condition as the playwright sees it. Whether this takes the form of comedy, farce, tragedy, melodrama, or a mixture of genres doesn't matter.

Basically, there are two ways of treating subject matter — serious or comic. A serious treatment of theme contributes to empathy, while a comic treatment generally increases aesthetic distance. This means that comedies are more presentational or audience-centered than tragedies. A playwright can reach an audience by making it feel what the character is feeling or by appealing to the intellect. Comedy often is funny because of aesthetic distance. In many comedies, even though we identify with the characters, usually it is to a lesser degree than in a serious play. In real life, falling and

breaking a leg would not be funny. In a comedy it might be. Yet all of this is a matter of degree. Protagonists in some tragedies seem fairly remote, while we sometimes identify closely with those in certain comedies.

As Eric Bentley explains, a good play transcends its framework:

Plays are generally about the big people, though what they say applies to the little people. And there is a converse to this proposition: that when a great playwright, such as Chekhov, presents the littleness of everyday life, he manages to suggest — as indeed he must — the largeness of everyday life, the size of those fantasies which range from the secret life of Walter Mitty to the chivalric musings of Don Quixote.

### **Tragedy**

The purest form for the serious treatment of a theme is tragedy, which presents a protagonist who struggles against overwhelming odds and is defeated by them.

According to Aristotle, tragedy "is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions."

Many theatre scholars believe that the only true form of tragedy is that which conforms to Aristotle's definition. Thus, tragedy must deal with problems that are highly serious and profound. Tragic characters battle a flaw in themselves or evil in others. They struggle against forces greater than they.

Tragedy is serious in nature. Its purpose, through our responses to the characters and their struggles, is to teach us and to make us feel. We grieve at the protagonist's defeat, which is what Aristotle means by pity. Fear is the anxiety aroused in the play, an anxiety that should carry over to our concern for all human beings.

There should be a catharsis, or purging of emotion — a release of all emotional tension. We should be left with a sense of tranquility. When the tragic protagonist pursues a goal to the end, we feel that strength and persistence in ourselves. If the character's actions are affirmative, we too feel the capacity for affirmation. If the character endures great suffering, so can we. Yet we also can feel superior to the tragic hero because we don't have to face the same sort of conflicts. Above all, tragedy maintains our faith in ourselves as a part of the human race. Even when tragic characters die, their heroism continues to live. What the playwright says about life, not death, is important. The issues, the heroic adherence to the dictates of conscience, and the reaffirmation of our belief in humanity are the vital aspects of tragedy.

### *Truth in Tragedy*

Even though we suffer with the protagonist, we find aesthetic beauty in the total conception of the drama. Tragedy is concerned with grandeur of ideas, theme, characters, and action, and grandeur is aesthetically pleasing. Through the tragic character we come to terms with our own deaths. We accept the beauty of trying actively to improve the lot of humanity, rather than passively accepting our doom.

Although the conflict concerns human welfare, universal themes, and general problems, the workings of the protagonist's mind are the most important aspect of a tragedy. It is how the character reacts deep within to exterior events that makes for tragedy. When we hear of the death of another person, we may feel pity. But the more we know about the person's character, the more compassion and sorrow we feel. We can read of a plane crash that kills a hundred people, but unless we know one of those killed, the news usually doesn't affect us strongly. A dramatist allows us to know and thus care about the tragic protagonist.

Even though they are morally good, tragic protagonists are imperfect. We see their weaknesses as well as their strengths. They appear to be human, and so

we can relate to their problem.

Tragic protagonists must face the consequences of their actions. We know they will be defeated; no fate will intervene. In this respect the genre is true to life. As the characters discover new insights into themselves, we discover new insights into ourselves. We know that there cannot always be happy endings, but we can take satisfaction in our struggles.

Just as in life, the innocent in tragedies often suffer. Ophelia goes mad and commits suicide because Hamlet, the man she loves, kills her father. Society or individuals suffer many times because of the actions of others, even though the suffering seems unjust. Tragedy points out the injustice of life and the suffering of humanity. It shows cruelty and despair; but it also shows the heights to which the human being can rise.

### *Modern Tragedy*

Few tragedies throughout history have reached the Aristotelian ideal; yet that doesn't necessarily make a play invalid. The definition of tragedy depends on a person's viewpoint. If we consider that tragedy occurs when a basically good person commits an irrevocable act because of a particular character flaw, the genre encompasses many more plays than those that follow the strict Aristotelian definition. We feel compassion for Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and for the foolish Don Quixote in *Man of LaMancha*.

Even though tragedy usually no longer deals with those of noble birth, characters like Tony in *West Side Story* fight for what they believe. They still are basically good. They still pursue the only course of action that is consistent with their own moralities. We can identify with people such as these; we can feel the grandeur of their efforts. They are noble in their motives, if not by birth.

### **Comedy**

The opposite of tragedy is comedy, which usually makes us laugh at ourselves and our institutions, taking them less seriously.

Of all dramatic forms, comedy has the most variety. It can be the subtle **comedy of manners**, which relies on the intellect, or it can be the physical shenanigans of burlesque. Comedy even has been defined at times as any play that has a happy ending, such as the sentimental comedies of the eighteenth century. Today, however, this definition is not widely accepted. Most often, comedy shows a deviation from the norm of everyday life, although it often deals with mundane problems and the pettiness of day-to-day living.

Comedy makes us laugh, though the dramatist may have another purpose, as well, for writing the play. Some writers want to teach us not to take ourselves so seriously. If we see a fault or frailty as humorous, maybe we can begin to correct it. But similarly, the playwright may want to point out a social injustice by showing how ridiculous it is, thus setting us on the path toward eliminating it.

**Derision** is mocking people and institutions. Writers often deride hypocrisy, pomposity, or ineptitude. Yet if derision becomes too bitter, it defeats its purpose. Sarcasm can make the audience feel sorry for the intended victim.

Closely related to derision is **satire**, sometimes classified as a subgenre of comedy. Satire also ridicules, but for the purpose of reform. It is gentler than sarcasm.

### *Types of Comedy*

Because there often is such a mingling of types, comedy frequently seems to defy any sort of categorizing. However, the two extremes are **high comedy** and **low comedy**. This doesn't mean that one is better than the other, but only that the appeal differs. High comedy uses verbal wit and so appeals more to intellect. Low comedy is largely physical or slapstick.

The immediate concerns of the characters in a high comedy may sometimes be trivial; their point of view must never be. Indeed, one of the endless sources of high comedy is seriousness of temperament and intensity of purpose in contrast with the triviality of the occasion.

High comedy includes **comedy of manners**, which pokes fun at the excesses and foibles of the upper class. At the other end of the spectrum is **burlesque**, which relies on beatings, accidents, and, often, vulgarity for humor.

**Romantic comedy** usually is gentle in showing the complications the hero and heroine face in their quest for living "happily ever after." **Situation comedy** places the characters in unusual circumstances, whereas **character comedy** deals with the eccentricities of the individual.

All types of comedy have common ground. First, they establish a comic framework. Second, the humorous aspects are exaggerated, both in writing and performance. Third, comedy relies on timing. Fourth, the characters tend to be more stereotyped than in tragedy. Often, the writer is concerned with plot involvement rather than with characterization.

### **Farce**

A third genre is farce, somewhat similar to melodrama (see below) in that coincidence or fate can play a large part in the outcome. Farce is more similar to comedy than to tragedy. The primary purpose is entertainment. The appeal is broad, and it takes little imagination or intellectual effort to follow the plot. Like melodrama, farce has stock characters who are one-dimensional. The plots are highly contrived and rely on physical actions and devious twists to hold the audience's attention.

The play contains no message of significance, and the progression shows only how the major characters manage to release themselves from entanglements. Throughout the years the form has changed little.

Because many farces are concerned with illicit sexual relationships and infidelity, they have been criticized for their immorality. But they neither condemn nor condone illicit sex. They are amoral in their outlook. The aim is to provide laughs for the audience by presenting a pattern of humorous actions.

The success of a farce relies heavily on the actor and director. They must



present ludicrous actions and deliver gags and absurdities of speech. A farce that is delivered well in one language probably could succeed before an audience that speaks only another, because much of the humor is visual. Farce uses many of the devices of comedy: automatism, incongruity, derision, and physical violence.

The plot often relies on misunderstanding, mistaken identity, deception, and unfamiliar surroundings. The characters are the victims of their vices, and when caught, they appear ridiculous. An example is Georges Feydeau's *The Happy Hunter*. The title has a double meaning: the protagonist wants his wife to think he is hunting game, when actually he is "hunting" illicit female companionship. The action is highly improbable and the entanglements along the way are completely divorced from reality.

### **Melodrama**

Like comedy, melodrama ends happily, at least much of the time. Like tragedy, it treats a serious subject, and the audience identifies with the protagonist. Rather than exploring a character's inner being, however, pure melodrama presents one-dimensional characters — either all good or all bad. When it deals with the painful and the serious, the subject matter is exploited only for its theatrical value. Melodrama often appears to show three-dimensional characters in conflict, but the struggle usually is only on the surface, and the audience knows that good will triumph. Action generally is much more important than characterization.

With a simple and suspenseful plot and a strong emotional appeal, melodrama became highly popular during the nineteenth century. The name "melodrama" goes back to the time when musical accompaniments were used to heighten the changes in mood and pace, a device borrowed from opera and then modified.

Melodrama offers entertainment and escapism, but it can bring the plight

of individuals and groups to the attention of the audience. Generally, rather than evoking the Aristotlean "pity and fear," it is much more likely to arouse feelings of excitement and horror. In other words, it deals most often with sensationalism and incredibility.

Melodrama deals with serious problems or actions which are presented or examined in light of conventional morality. For instance, most police or detective shows on television fall into the category of melodrama...

Within recent years, melodrama has become more realistic. The characters are less stereotyped, and sometimes the play does not end happily. There are still exaggeration and scenes of suspense and high excitement. Though the genre has changed outwardly, it has the same basic appeals: a virtuous hero or heroine, a despicable villain, and sensationalism.

### **Tragicomedy**

Throughout the history of Western theatre there has been a mingling of the comic and the tragic. There is some humor in Sophocles' *Antigone* and in several of Euripides' tragedies, all written during the fifth century BC in Greece. Many of Shakespeare's tragedies include scenes of comic relief. Probably one of the most familiar is the gravediggers' scene in *Hamlet*. There is even more mixing of comic and tragic elements in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and in his romances.

It takes a skillful playwright to mingle the serious and the comic effectively. Tragicomedy is one of the most difficult genres. The playwright must advance the plot without totally confusing the audience. The play must reflect the way life itself intermingles the tragic and the comic. Often, the writer of tragicomedy will present a situation that appears to be comic and later let the audience realize that it is serious.

Theatre of the absurd playwright Eugene Ionesco said he wants his audience at times to view the tragic as comic and the comic as tragic. Although

such plays as *The Lesson*, *The Killers*, and *Rhinoceros* present an unhappy outlook on life, they are written in such a way as to be amusing. One reason is that Ionesco often employs automatism. Examples are the repetition of nonsensical lines in *The Lesson* and the discussion about Bobby Watson in *The Bald Soprano*. To point up the comedy, Ionesco wants ludicrous situations to be played with deadly seriousness.

Often in tragicomedy the audience is jolted from comedy to horror. Whatever method the writer chooses to mingle the elements, the genre is well established.

### **Mixed Forms**

Many modern plays defy classification in any genre. Some are serious plays that have more depth than melodrama but lack the scope of tragedy. An example is Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. The protagonist, Walter Lee Younger, changes his outlook on life and thus succeeds in keeping his dignity.

In modern plays the characters frequently are three-dimensional, and we can empathize with them, but their actions are neither serious nor tragic. Often, too, modern characters are people with ordinary problems.

#### ***I. Answer the following questions***

1. What is the difference between realistic and nonrealistic styles, between representation and presentation?
2. Why is it impossible to have true naturalism on the stage?
3. What is the difference between naturalism and realism?
4. What is the difference between expressionism and impressionism?
5. How does symbolism differ from impressionism?
6. Explain the various ways of treating style.
7. How would you define genre?
8. Playwrights each present the truth of the human condition as they see it. Why is this consideration so important?

9. What are the characteristics of tragedy?
10. What devices might a playwright use to establish a comic frame of reference? Give your own examples of the different types.
11. What are the characteristics of melodrama? Of farce?
12. What is tragicomedy?

## ***II. What is the Russian for***

magnitude, catharsis, to come to terms with smth, to defy, to rely on timing, stock- character, despicable, one-dimensional character, invalid, workings of the human mind

## ***III. Say it in English***

приукрашивать, эмоциональное очищение, вызвать волнение, переносить страдания, бурлеск, разноплановый персонаж, отождествлять себя с кем-либо, попустительствовать, комедия положений

## ***IV. Paraphrase the following expressions:***

a good play transcends its framework, to struggle against overwhelming odds, to battle a flaw in oneself, to maintain our faith in ourselves, to discover new insights into themselves, to deliver gags

## ***V. Insert prepositions:***

there is a converse ... this proposition; the treatment is closely related ... the writer's outlook ... life; tragedy is the direct opposite ... comedy; to be unworthy ... any kind of treatment; to conform ... Aristotle's definition; to grieve ... the protagonist's defeat; the heroic adherence ... the dictates ... conscience; to take satisfaction ... our struggles, to examine it ... light ... conventional morality

## ***VI. What adjectives correspond to the following nouns?***

injustice, Aristotle, variety, sarcasm, deviation, suspense, comedy

## UNIT VII

### APPROACHES TO ACTING

For the actor there are many ways of achieving transformation; making the physical, emotional, even spiritual journey from one's being to that of a character, a role: another person. Quite often it is a combination of disguise and performance. But to concentrate on the physical appearance only is to miss a fundamental aspect of the actor's art of transformation. An actor can look different from his usual self because he is different "inside." Entering into the psychological, mental, emotional world of a character can result in quite startling physical changes. Sometimes a physical transformation can be literally "coloured" by inner concentration.

This experience of "possession" accounts for many different actors being able to transform themselves physically, without unusual makeup or costumes, into the grotesquely deformed John Merrick in *The Elephant Man* by Bernard Pomerance, or to age fifty years over the course of a play and to do it convincingly. In effect, this involves, at least on one level, becoming the character.

#### **The Internal Approach**

In 1906 director Konstantin Stanislavsky of the Moscow Art Theatre first brought together all the elements that make up the internal approach, later referred to as the Stanislavsky System. The approach was a reaction against declamatory and extravagant acting styles, which relied on memorized gestures and posturing to portray emotion. Stanislavsky sought to present dramatic truth through an observation of life or nature, and to make acting more

naturalistic. He taught that actors should seek truth of feeling and experience in the characters they play, finding the psychological depth of each role. To do so, the actors needed highly trained bodies and voices.

Stanislavsky wanted to find the true nature of creativity in the human being and subsequently discover the means for its development. He became increasingly interested in the operation of the subconscious and emotions. He formed the concept of **emotional memory** — remembering how one felt in a particular situation and relating that memory to similar circumstances of a character in a play. Yet he felt that most often emotional memory isn't necessary, but can be used if an actor is having difficulty feeling the emotion in a scene. He felt actors need to move, perceive, concentrate, and feel while on the stage — not merely pretend to do so. In fact, he advocated a balance between experiencing the role internally and paying attention to precise vocal and physical expressions, or, in other words, to the external. The System also includes the "magic if" — actors determining what they would feel if they were a specific character in a specific situation. In addition, it encourages the actor's focusing concentration on the moment to moment unfolding of the action. Thus the System offered a precise plan for portraying a character.

In the U.S., the System led to the Method or Method acting, with its emphasis on examining one's psychological and emotional depths to extract the raw material for playing a role. The Method evolved largely through applying only certain portions of Stanislavsky's teachings, the result of both Stanislavsky's many changes in the System over the years, and the fact that it was published only piece by piece in the U.S.

### **The External Approach**

Those who follow the external approach are largely concerned with technique. They think it is unnecessary to undertake the study of a role by trying to understand emotionally what a character does and says. It is necessary only to determine what the emotion is and then modify outward, observed signs

of this emotion to fit the role. Sir Laurence Olivier felt that:

Method actors are entirely preoccupied with feeling real to *themselves* instead of creating the illusion of reality. They want the absolute kernel of a character before starting to express anything. I decided, perhaps rather hurriedly, that this was wonderful training for film acting, where the camera and microphone can come right in and get your reality — the tiniest shade of your tone of voice, every little twitch of expression. But our problem on-stage is to convey an illusion fifty or more yards away. That's where the big stretch comes — that's where imagination, where know-how above and beyond inner reality comes in. But I don't see that it matters where you start, inside or out, as long as the illusion ends up the same.

Critics of the external approach say that the actors are using "tricks," because they are concerned with effect rather than feeling. They are, of course; but to some degree all portrayal of character involves "tricks" because the actors are aware of the audience and playing to them.

Often, the external can become internal. For instance, if we frown for a long enough time, we are going to be in a negative mood. If we smile, we begin to feel joy or happiness.

Those actors who play for effect are using the external method; those who seek the truth of the character are using the internal approach. Yet no matter which approach they use, actors have to be concerned with projection, the delivery of memorized lines, their spatial placement in relation to the other actors, and other technical aspects. Therefore, they perform on two levels — one concerned with analysis and technique, the other concerned with feelings and veracity and the appearance of life.

Acting is a combination of technique and "being" or feeling. It's been said that the best time for an actor to feel strong emotion is in the early stages of rehearsal. After that, he or she has to be in complete control, or else risk not being convincing.

## Other Approaches

Within the past few decades, methods of acting have begun to change. Part of the new experimentation in theatre can be credited to the Living Theatre of Julian Beck and Judith Malina, who sought to make drama fluid and poetic. They believed that new methods of acting should be discovered for new plays that were being written.

As Grotowski of the Polish Laboratory Theatre stated, "I believe there can be no true creative process within the actor if he lacks discipline or spontaneity." Grotowski believed that the best approach to theatre and acting was to strip them of all nonessentials. That meant there should be no sets, makeup, lighting, or costuming. The actor, through discipline and control, creates these things in the minds of the audience. By controlled movement the actors create whatever they wish the audience to perceive. Impulse and reaction are simultaneous. The actor does not merely desire to perform a certain action but is incapable of not performing it. The skills become involuntary. The goal is to eliminate mental, physical, and psychological blocks. The result is the totally disciplined formation of a role in which all inhibitions are nonexistent and every phase of self is revealed.

### *1. Answer the following questions*

1. What is the difference between role playing in life and acting in a theatre?
2. What sort of training do actors require to perform convincingly?
3. In what way is acting solitary? In what way is it collaborative?
4. Explain the essence of the Stanislavsky system
5. How is the external approach different from the internal one?
6. What actors do you admire? What makes them outstanding, to your way of thinking?



## ***II. Find English words and phrases to express the following***

система Станиславского, МХАТ, интересоваться тем, как работает подсознание, разработать концепцию эмоциональной памяти, внешнее и внутреннее, соответствовать роли, в противном случае актер рискует быть неубедительным, спонтанность, не может не исполнять

## ***III. Say it in Russian***

declamatory and extravagant acting styles, to advocate the balance, to undertake the study of a role, to modify outward signs, the absolute kernel of a character, veracity, to strip them of all non-essentials, inhibitions are non-existent

## ***IV. Insert prepositions***

- 1) to discover the means ... its development
- 2) if an actor is having difficulty feeling the emotion ... a scene
- 3) relating that memory ... similar circumstances
- 4) it encourages the actor's focusing concentration ... the moment ...  
moment unfolding ...the action
- 5) the System offered a precise plan ... portraying a character.
- 6) the best time ... an actor to feel strong emotion is ... the early stages  
... rehearsal

## **UNIT VIII**

### **THE DIRECTOR AND THE DESIGNERS**

The director, who usually is the first theatre artist involved in bringing a production to life before an audience, has a myriad of duties. In selecting scripts for production, directors need to be able to judge what will be acceptable to potential audiences and what sort of people are likely to attend the productions. A director needs to analyze the script to determine what the writer means and how

he or she meant to say it.

There are various types of auditions. The most common are the open audition, where the actors all appear at the same time, and the interview, which is conducted one-on-one between actor and director. Rehearsal periods generally last from four weeks in professional theatre to six weeks in educational and community theatre. There are six stages: reading rehearsals, blocking rehearsals, character and line rehearsals, finishing rehearsals, technical rehearsals, and dress rehearsals.

Many of the principles of directing are the same for arena theatre as proscenium, but there are differences, many involved with the need for detail since the audience generally is closer to the action in an arena theatre.

Dramaturgs serve as literary managers and work closely with the director in researching a play's background and in analyzing and interpreting the script, while the stage manager is second in command to the director and serves as liaison between cast/crew and management. It is this person's duty to see that the entire production continues as rehearsed. A choreographer plans and rehearses dance numbers for musicals. The preparation includes an analysis of the script similar to that done by the actor or director.

It is important for the director and designers to establish a good working relationship where there can be a free exchange of ideas.

A set helps convey a play's theme and provides information essential to its understanding. The set fulfills the director's interpretation, provides an environment for the action, remains faithful to the playwright's intent, and complements the work of the other designers. It establishes both a framework for the action and a focal point for the audience, and it is designed for easy use by the actors. The set should be balanced, either symmetrically or asymmetrically, and its element should be harmonious.

There are two categories of stage lighting, general and specific. The former provides a well-lighted performance area, while the latter provides

special effects. Light complements the other areas of design and helps convey the play's mood and message. Lighting consists of two components: a source and a system of control, and lighting designers plan control of three aspects of lighting: color, intensity, and distribution.

Costuming is the facet of design that most identifies and supports the character. In analyzing a script, the costume designer has to consider such things as place and time and the economic situation of the characters.

There are three categories of makeup: straight, character, and special. The former involves enhancing or projecting an actor's natural features. The second and third alter an actor's appearance.

The property master is responsible for determining, obtaining, and caring for all the properties of a production. During the run of a show, the property crew is responsible for ensuring that the props are where they should be for easy access and that they are in good repair.

Audio designers provide the sound effects and music for a play.

Theatre always has been a combination of forms, and in the present day is often a true mixture of forms including live presentation, video, computer graphics, and television. New technologies for the theatre are developing rapidly. They include various uses of computers and the World Wide Web. Another type is the use of projections for special effects or even to provide entire settings. Computer-aided design is becoming common for such areas as stage settings, costuming, and audio design.

### ***1. Find English words and phrases to express the following***

выбрать пьесу для постановки, один на один, репетиционный период, заведующий литературной частью, помощник режиссера, танцевальные номера, свободный обмен мнениями, звуковое оформление спектакля, звукорежиссер

## ***II. Say it in Russian***

dress rehearsal, second in command, to serve as a liaison, faithful to the playwright's intent, facet of design, computer-aided design, to enhance the actor's natural features

## ***III. Explain the meaning of the terms***

audition, blocking, dramaturg, a set, props

# **UNIT IX**

## **WHY AUDIENCES ATTEND THE THEATRE**

There are many reasons for attending the theatre, but people most often attend to be entertained. Theatre offers a chance to escape into make-believe existence and to forget everyday cares.

The theatre also offers us the opportunity to learn of resent, present, and imminent change. Theatre, like other arts, not only mirrors the society in which it is produced, but often judges the social, economic, and political climate in which it is presented. Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen stated that the artist must be a few years ahead of the average person in thinking. Artists must anticipate what changes will occur in society.

Audiences also attend theatre to confront social problems.

In past ages, the theatre presented problems about isolated individuals or groups far removed from the experiences of the audience, such as the nobility in Greek tragedy. Most of the audience members could empathize with the characters, but also could feel secure in the knowledge that the productions presented someone else's particular troubles.

In the recent past through the present, theatre has tried to come closer to its audience's problems and needs, even placing the dilemmas squarely in the

laps of the audience.

Earlier plays, such as Ibsen's social dramas, did not neglect universality or immediacy (the quality of a work of art that makes it important or relevant to the time in which it is presented to the public), but more recent theatre has tried consciously to dramatize the concerns of its audience. One group to attempt this was the Living Theatre. In its production of *Paradise Now* (1968), the group openly confronted audiences and demanded responses to such issues as war and "establishment" rules...

From the 1980s through the early part of this century came plays that honestly explored the base and basic feelings of humankind.

A fourth reason audiences go to the theatre is to learn about individuals and their personalities. Shakespeare's *Othello*, for instance, deals with jealousy — an emotion we all experience at one time or another. By contrast, the characters of Henrik Ibsen often face the immediate concerns of their own time. In *Ghosts*, for example, Mrs. Alving is a woman who, because divorce was frowned upon at the time, stayed with an unworthy husband, now dead. Written in 1881, the play shows the mental anguish a person may have to suffer in choosing the "safe" route. She continues to suffer when she learns that her son Oswald has a venereal disease, inherited from his father — something that she tries to keep hidden.

Another reason audiences are drawn to the theatre is to learn from the past. A play can acquaint us with the past in order to provide new interpretations of the present. Such is the case with Peter Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, which deals with Pizarro's conquest of the Incas of Peru. Although it presents historical events, the play also portrays a loss of faith. Pizarro has lost faith in Christianity and wants to believe in the immortality of the Indian emperor, Atahuallpa. The emperor believes that because the Sun is his father, he will be resurrected if he is put to death. Of course, when Pizarro kills him, the emperor is not resurrected.

Attending the theatre can also serve to reaffirm the audience's beliefs about an issue. A playwright has a better chance of reaching his or her audience by beginning with a common premise — something that most potential theatre-goers already believe. For example, if an audience did not feel at the beginning of a production that war is inhumane, a play with an antiwar theme would have little chance of success.

Plays sometimes are simply observations of life. The absurdist movement, which reached its height in the 1950s, stated only that life is absurd, thus reaffirming a belief many people shared.

Often an audience is willing to be led in a certain direction, but does not want a decision forced upon it. *West Side Story* pleads for understanding among individuals of different cultural backgrounds by showing how prejudice can destroy. One of its messages is that understanding, caring, and love should begin on an individual basis.

An audience attends the theatre simply to feel – to experience emotion. The playwright, the designers, and the actors all work together to try to elicit certain responses. A serious play allows empathy or identification more often than does a comedy. Yet almost any subject can be treated humorously or seriously.

***1. Answer the following questions***

1. What is the main reason why people attend the theatre?
2. In what way does the theatre shape the public opinion?
3. How does the present-day theatre portray social problems?
4. In what way is this approach different from the one advocated in the ancient Greece?
5. Why do you think the immediacy of the play has always been an important factor?
6. What does the audience seek to learn about individuals while watching the performance?

7. Why do the plays presenting historical events attract audiences?
8. Why do you think it is important for the theatergoers to reaffirm their beliefs about the problem?
9. Should the message of the production be expressed clearly or should it be vague for everyone to interpret it in their own way?
10. Which of the reasons for the audience to attend theatrical productions is the most relevant for you?

***II. Find English words and phrases to express the following***

скрыться от реальности в область вымышленного, предвосхитить изменения, как в недавнем прошлом, так и в настоящее время, никчемный, познакомить нас с прошлым, навязывать решение, наоборот (напротив)

***III. Say it in Russian***

imminent, inane, corny, to resurrect, to begin on an individual basis

***IV. Paraphrase the following***

to place the dilemmas squarely in the lap of the audience, divorce was frowned upon, to reaffirm the audience's belief about the issue, to plea for understanding among individuals, to elicit certain responses

## UNIT X

### NINETEENTH- TO TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY THEATRE

With the Industrial Revolution in full swing and a change from the country to the city as the controller of a nation's wealth, emphasis shifted gradually from romanticism and sentiment to more realistic presentations.

From sentimental comedy and bourgeois tragedy, the pendulum swung in the opposite direction, and it became a playwright's task simply to record life and report it. Yet a swing too far either way lasts for only a time before the

pendulum falls again toward moderation.

Throughout the past two hundred years, changes have come faster than at any other time in theatrical history, and innovations have often disappeared just as quickly. Never before have so many dramatic forms and styles existed within such a short period of time. Much of the rapid growth occurred due to the expansion of the railroads, which allowed theatrical companies to travel to many locations where professional theatre had never before been seen on a regular basis.

### **Romanticism**

Even before the storm and stress movement developed in Germany, many of the concepts of Romanticism had already appeared in English theatre. It was easier for Romanticism to gain a foothold in England because neoclassicism had never been so widely adopted there as in other countries. The lure of Romanticism showed that there was a growing distrust of reason and a growing conviction that one had only to follow his or her instincts to do what was right. Hence, humankind could discover truth by examining nature. The subject matter of nineteenth-century Romantic plays often dealt with humankind's need to be free from the restraining forces of society.

Yet Romanticism began to recede in both England and Germany before it gained acceptance in France through the writings of Victor Hugo, who, in the preface to his play *Cromwell*, set forth the doctrine of Romanticism that called for abandoning both the unities and the strict separation of genres.

### **Melodrama**

Melodrama, characterized by a simple and suspenseful plot and a strong emotional appeal, became highly popular during the nineteenth century. The name *melodrama* goes back to the time when musical accompaniments were used to heighten the changes in mood and pace, a device borrowed from opera and then modified.



Melodrama was related to both tragedies and sentimental comedies, which advocated virtue above all else as the solution to humankind's woes. Vice, on the other hand, would ultimately be punished. The genre also was influenced by both Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant. Rousseau offered ideas relating to the noble savage, the natural goodness of man, and the equation of evil with inequality; Kant emphasized the individual's right to freedom.

Much of melodrama's popularity was due to spectacle — drawing on new advances in staging and such diverse media as the circus and fantasy novels. Melodrama also was popular in England because it offered a way for music halls to "link songs, dances and spectacular tableaux into sequences illustrating a popular theme with a well-defined beginning, middle, and end ... These shows came to be called burlettas. All that was required to give this embryonic type of popular entertainment a shape and quality of its own was a suitable injection of moral, philosophic, and literary animation."

Throughout the century theatre increased in popularity, attracting far more spectators than ever before. Many new theatres were built so as to offer specialized types of entertainment, ranging from variety and burlesque to serious dramas. Shakespeare also drew large audiences.

Settings were now being built for individual plays, and they had to be historically accurate, following the trend begun in Germany just after the turn of the century. In England, Charles Kemble's production of Shakespeare's *King John* in 1823 was the first play in which the costuming was historically correct. It was followed in 1824 by a production of *Henry IV, Part I*, which was scenically accurate. By mid-century, nearly every production reflected the backgrounds and costumes of its period.

### **Theatre Companies**

Until the 1830s, in both Europe and America the most popular type of

acting troupe was the **repertory company**, which presented a repertoire of shows for a season. This was followed by the **star system** in which actors who had gained prominence began traveling to various communities with their own companies. Many cities found it difficult to keep a good resident troupe. In America, this system was aided by the rapid expansion of the railroads. The star system then gradually gave way to **combination companies** that traveled for a season to a "combination" of theatres along a route. Generally they presented a single play, although some had a repertoire of several plays. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, almost all actors were hired only for specific roles in specific plays.

In England, acting was becoming a socially accepted profession. Henry Irving (1838-1905), the first actor to be knighted, was renowned for his presentations of romantic plays and melodramas.

### **Realism**

New dramatic forms slowly replaced the old. Following romanticism and melodrama came their direct opposite — realism, which developed as a result of oppressive political and economic conditions. Playwrights who favored realism felt that Western society was unacceptable and must be changed, thus their task was to reveal social ills and injustices. They emphasized the importance of what could be observed through the senses, for only thus could real truth be known. Playwrights believed that if audiences didn't like the social conditions depicted on the stage, they'd be driven to change them, rather than simply attack the playwright.

### **Advances in Staging**

Perhaps the most significant change in staging in the nineteenth century was the development of gas lights. This innovation made it possible to go from general illumination, which spilled into the audience areas, to specific lighting.

Now the designer could control the amount, the intensity, and the direction of the light on-stage. By 1840, most theatres had gas lights. By 1880, electricity was in general use and lighting could be even more effectively controlled from the dimmer board. The use of gas and electricity allowed actors to move upstage and inside a setting that provided an environment.

The Industrial Revolution placed theatre within the reach of the common person, who demanded more realistic settings and the abandonment of stock or standard sets that previously had been adapted for use in any number of plays.

The development of the realistic movement, which began in France around 1850, was aided by technical advances that made for more believable settings. The box set, which was built of flats to represent an indoor location, was developed by 1840 and was in general use by the end of the century. There was a trend toward making stage floors flat, rather than raking them for purposes of perspective.

To facilitate quick changes of scene, elevator and revolving stages were used, as were wagons on which entire sets would be rolled on and off.

## **Forms of Drama**

### *The Well-Made Play*

Realistic dramas had been seen at times before the beginning of the nineteenth century, but did not gain popularity until the last third of the century. When they did, it was largely due to the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), sometimes called the father of modern drama. Although he began writing in 1850, his early plays were romantic. Not until the 1870s did he shift to a realistic vein and deal with socially significant themes. More than any other playwright of his time, he established realism as an integral part of drama. Among Ibsen's dramatic reforms was discontinuation of soliloquies and asides. In addition, his so-called thesis play provided a thorough

exposition of prior events, presented logically and interestingly. Every element of the production was to contribute to the overall effect, with each character an individual affected both by heredity (or personality) and environment (including experience). Ibsen's plays deal with a variety of social issues, including women's rights — *A Doll's House* — and conscience versus financial success — *The Pillars of Society* and *An Enemy of the People*.

### *The Slice-of-Life Drama*

Next came naturalism which carried realistic drama to its ultimate end. As developed by the novelist Emile Zola, naturalism meant that playwrights should constantly seek the truth through objectivity — that is, their own ideas must not be allowed to intrude upon the facts presented in their writings. Playwrights should be recorders of events, not interpreters. They should select the beginnings and endings of their drama at random. Any attempt to concoct a plot results in a distortion of the truth, since life itself has no real beginnings or endings. This slice-of-life technique insists that the dramatist reproduce actual life on the stage. In some naturalistic productions, actors made no attempt to project their voices and turned their backs to the audience at will.

Nineteenth-century naturalism has been criticized for depicting the seamiest sides of life. Still, Zola's ideas spread quickly over Europe and influenced writers and producers everywhere.

### **The Rise of the Director**

From theatre's beginnings, someone always has been in charge of rehearsals and staging. Much of the time, it was the playwright. Then during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, an actor-manager assumed the duties. Yet an increasing dependence on special effects, the desire for historical accuracy, and the desire for accurate and consistent interpretation of plot and character contributed to the necessity of having someone who was

responsible for all the elements of the production, with giving each play a proper direction.

The person who generally receives the credit for being the first director was George II, the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen (1826-1914), a small duchy, which now is Thuringia, Germany. In his Meiningen Court Theatre, he refined the concept of **ensemble acting**, in which no one actor is more important than any other, and the effect of the total production is more important than any of its parts. The duke believed that the director should be the dominant artist in the theatre, with complete authority over his actors. He felt that the stage picture should be worked out meticulously, that there should be accuracy in historical detail, and that crowd scenes should be meticulously staged. The company became one of the most admired in Europe.

### **The Private Theatre Movement**

Since plays were subject to censorship in much of Europe, a number of independent theatres were established. That is, they were open only to members and so were exempt from government censorship. The first, organized in Paris in 1887 by Andre Antoine (1858-1943), was the Theatre Libre, which produced various types of plays but was largely concerned with naturalism. Antoine believed that the actors' environment determined their movements. He went so far as to bring in people off the streets to act in his plays, so they would appear natural. Once he hung carcasses of beef onstage to make a butcher shop scene realistic.

Two years later, Otto Brahm (1856-1912) established the Freie Biihne (Free Theatre) in Germany and gave a hearing to new writers, thus contributing to the establishment of modern drama in Germany.

In 1891, J. T. Grein, along with William Archer and George Moore, founded the Independent Theatre Society in London. Its initial production was Ibsen's *Ghosts*. Perhaps most important, the Independent Theatre was

responsible for George Bernard Shaw's turning to playwriting.

In Russia, Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938), began to develop his system of acting. With others he founded the Moscow Art Theatre in 1897. The group was dedicated to the ensemble concept and naturalness, clarity, and simplicity.

### **The Eclectic Approach**

Recent theatre is eclectic in its combination of many forms. This approach was given impetus by the work of director Max Reinhardt (1873-1943), who believed each play required a different style of presentation and that the director must control the style. Reinhardt, perhaps more than anyone else, made various movements in the theatre acceptable to audiences. Another person who used a variety of styles was Vsevolod Meyerhold of Russia (1874-1940), who favored a return to such forms as the *commedia dell'arte*, Japanese drama, and Greek theatre. To Meyerhold, the actors were no more important than any other elements of a production.

Many new forms of staging and directing were widely accepted in Europe before they gained a foothold in America.

The new stagecraft was first presented to American audiences by little theatre groups such as the Provincetown Players, which produced many of Eugene O'Neill's plays, and the Group Theatre, responsible for developing the talents of many performers who later became America's foremost actors.

Another form that developed along with realism and naturalism was **symbolism**, which began in France and usually took its subject matter from the past. The symbolists did not believe in realistic scenery, preferring backgrounds that gave a general impression of the mood of the play.<sup>3</sup>

Adolphe Appia (1862-1928), a Swiss theorist and designer, and Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966), an English producer, actor, and stage designer, sought to create an environment that was fitting for each play. Working

independently, they laid the foundations upon which much of modern theatrical practice was built. Craig's settings were designed to capture the feeling of a work without representing an actual place. Appia emphasized the role of light in creating unity for his productions.

Expressionism was another important trend in playwriting. One of the best-known expressionist playwrights was August Strindberg (1849-1912), the first important Swedish playwright. He began writing in a realistic vein, but his later plays, such as *The Ghost Sonata* (1907), were actually forerunners of the new movement. Several important American playwrights, including Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953), wrote expressionistic plays. (O'Neill, considered by many to be America's most outstanding playwright, experimented successfully with a variety of styles.) His *The Hairy Ape*, first presented by the Provincetown Players in 1922, shows what might happen if the rules of the universe are changed and our worst fears become reality.

In the play, Yank, a stoker on an ocean liner, is convinced that he and his co-workers are the only ones who count or "belong," since they run the ship. Then Mildred Douglas, daughter of the ship-owner, comes to see the men working. Meeting Yank, whom she calls a hairy ape, repulses her so that she faints. This makes him begin to doubt his humanness, a doubt reinforced when he cannot find acceptance in New York City. He goes to a zoo to claim kinship with an ape, but it crushes him to death.

Similar to the work of European expressionists, the play is highly symbolic in its subject matter and content. Yank is the symbol of man, who has emerged from an animal state but has failed to progress spiritually. Alienated from society, he makes the ultimate discovery that he does not belong in the world either as a man or as a worker. Despite the symbolism and expressionism in the play, much of the dialog is realistic.

**Surrealism** developed in the theatre at about the same time as expressionism and encompasses a number of other styles, such as theatre of

cruelty and theatre of the absurd. Actually, its roots can be traced back at least to the beginning of the twentieth century in paintings and novels. The word *surrealist*, for instance, was used to describe Alfred Jarry's *Le Surmale*, a 1902 novel. The movement involves breaking down the barriers between the inner and outer, or conscious and subconscious, worlds, as illustrated, for instance, in the dreamlike paintings of Marc Chagall.

One of the earliest dramatists to write in this style was Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) with *Right You Are - If You Think You Are* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. One of the ideas behind surrealism is that we can never define the true self — because of the many things we are and the many roles we play, which may be altogether different from the inner person.

### **Epic Theatre**

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), a German writer and director, developed his concept of "making strange," or distancing, in what is called **epic theatre** or **the theatre of alienation**. Although he agreed with the expressionists' wish to change society, he felt their methods too vague and unworkable. Influenced by Marxism, he believed that many of the world's problems occur as the result of capitalism. He wanted the audience to identify with the social and political issues of plays so they would see the need to change conditions rather than identifying with the characters.

As a result of his new approach, Brecht began using such devices as masks and asides and having the actors add "he said" or "she said" to their lines to provide distancing. He used fragmentary scenery and lighting instruments displayed in full view. Further, he felt that each element of a production should make its own statement rather than contributing to a unified whole, which he called redundant. In the plays themselves, he preferred a loose narrative for the same reasons.

At the same time Brecht wanted to distance audiences from the



characters, he wanted to engage them and draw them in before presenting a song, for instance, that again was to have the effect of distancing. This later distancing allowed audience members time to think about the social implications of what they had just witnessed

With Kurt Weill in 1928, Brecht wrote *The Threepenny Opera*, a satire on capitalism and based on John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, which was to be his biggest theatrical success. During the presentation of this opera (and others later), musicians remained on-stage, placards provide the audience with an objective view of the action, and there was a separation of dialog from song.

Two of Brecht's plays, *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939) and *The Good Woman of Setzuan* (1943), established his reputation as a serious dramatist.

Due to his opposition to Hitler, Brecht fled Germany and lived in Scandinavia and the United States before returning to East Berlin in 1948. Back in Germany, he and his wife, actress Helene Weigel, founded the Berliner Ensemble. Brecht remained a controversial figure since his "moral pessimism" was at odds with the Soviet ideal of socialist realism. He often has been called the most influential person in Western Theatre since World War II.

### **Theatre of the Absurd**

Still another important new form was absurdism, which asserts that nothing is good or bad as such — only what human beings attribute to something can make it either moral or immoral. Truth is to be found in disorder and chaos, because everything is equally illogical. Among the forerunners of absurdism were the French writers Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, the latter of whom saw a parallel between the contemporary human being and mythological king Sisyphus who was condemned to rolling a stone up a hill in Hades only to have it roll down each time he neared the top. In other words, he felt the search for meaning was futile.

Later came Romanian-born Eugene Ionesco, whose first play *The Bald Soprano* (1950) opened in Paris to rave reviews. The play consists of non sequiturs, and at the end the characters are shouting nonsense syllables at each other. The philosophy behind the work is that all human endeavors basically are absurd and thus terrifying. Equally absurd is attempting to use language to communicate.

Irish-born Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is often considered to be the archetypal absurdist drama. Produced in Paris in 1952, it helped focus the world's attention on the theatre of the absurd. In the play, the two characters seem to be expecting something to happen that will save them in some way, symbolized by their waiting for someone or something (never identified) called Godot.

Absurdism reached its peak in the 1950s but still continues to influence recent and current plays.

#### **NOTES:**

**Repertory company** – a theatrical company that alternates a series or repertoire of plays

**Combination company** – theatre companies that traveled for a season presenting a single play

**Box set** – a setting that generally presents an indoor location and is constructed of flats

**Flat** – scenery frame constructed of one-by-three boards, covered with canvas, painted, and used most often for interior or exterior walls of a building in a stage setting

**Absurdism** – a movement of the 1950s and 1960s in which playwrights dramatized the absurdity and futility of human existence. Generally, absurdist drama is non-essential and repetitive.

**Ensemble acting** – the concept that no one actor is more important than any

other and the effect of the total production is more important than any of its parts

***I. Answer the following questions:***

1. Why do you think styles and production changed so much during the past two hundred years?
2. In what way do you think electric lights and the box set helped advance theatre?
3. What was the subject matter of romantic plays?
4. What ideas influenced melodrama? What are the specific features of this genre?
5. What social factors brought about realism in drama?
6. What advances in staging did it entail?
7. In what way did H. Ibsen reform drama?
8. Comment on the essence of the slice-of-life drama.
9. Expand on symbolism, expressionism and surrealism in painting and drama.
10. Explain what you feel is the reasoning behind the eclectic approach to production.
11. Why was the epic theatre a breakthrough in modern drama?
12. Single out the key features of an absurdist drama
13. What do you think are the most important influences on theatre today?

***II. Find English words and phrases to express the following***

в полном расцвете, маятник качнулся в противоположную сторону, выдвинуть доктрину, содержать постоянную труппу, уступить место, обличать пороки общества, неотъемлемая часть драматургии, произвольно выбирать начало и концовку пьесы,

подавать голос в зрительный зал, возлагать на себя обязанности, выезжать на гастроли

### ***III. What is the Russian for***

to gain a foothold, the lure of Romanticism, to advocate virtues above all else, to be knighted, to concoct a plot, to be exempt from government censorship, the forerunner of the new movement, redundant, to rave reviews

### ***IV. Paraphrase the following expressions:***

to draw large audiences, to shift to a realistic vein, discontinuation of soliloquies and asides, seamiest sides of life, to give impetus, to be alienated from society, to think about the social implications, the search for meaning was futile, the archetypal absurdist drama

***V. Read the review of a recent British production and say in what way the director's approach to acting is innovative. What are the advantages of it? What are its weak points?***

## **A word in your ear...**

### ***Actors should forget their lines and use headphones***

#### **Observer**

It might seem a bit like cheating, but there's a new fashion in theatre that doesn't require actors to learn their lines. They simply put on headphones and have the words fed to them down a wire.

Last year, Alecky Blythe's fringe hit, *Come Out Eli*, had actors repeating verbatim eyewitness accounts of a police siege. Then there was Glen Neath's Romcom, in which comic Sean Hughes took to the stage in headphones and played a doomed love affair with an actress and the entire script was played to

them. But perhaps the most disarming use of this new idea is Tim Crouch's remarkable piece, *An Oak Tree*. Instead of simply dictating a script, Crouch offers lines and directions to an actor over headphones and also performs himself in a moving story of a man who has lost control after killing a child in a road accident and then meets the father of his victim. Taking a different actor for each show, he 'rehearses' by chatting with them for an hour. He doesn't tell them the story, but prepares them with other practicalities. This lack of knowledge enables the headphoned performer to give a particularly open, pure response. As one actor put it: 'I've never felt more in the moment. It was liberating. His voice appearing in my ear was that of a fellow actor, a director and a friend all at once. It produced an intimate feeling on stage that translated into the performance.'

*An Oak Tree* was inspired by a 1973 work of the same name by Michael Craig-Martin, Damien Hirst's mentor and the grandfather of Britart, which sits in Tate Modern where Crouch is to stage his show this week. The artwork is a glass of water which the artist insists is an oak tree. Crouch has taken this as a manifesto for art and theatre: 'If an artist says that something is something, then that's what it is. The thing exists between the person who creates the intention and the audience. That's what theatre should be making.'

## UNIT XI

### STANDARDS FOR CRITICISM

The critic/reviewer, whether a student writing a paper for a theatre class or a professional, needs a set of standards on which to base his or her criticism. This again comes from experiencing theatre — from seeing plays, both good and bad. German playwright and director Johann Wolfgang von Goethe suggested three questions by which to judge a production. These are a good starting point for the reviewer:

### 1. What is the artist or production trying to do?

If the play is a comedy, is it truly comedic? If it's a tragedy, does it fulfill these functions? In other words, do not try to judge a comedy by the standards of tragedy, or a tragedy by the standards of melodrama.

### 2. How well was it done?

How would you judge its quality? For instance, was the acting outstanding or merely adequate? Did the setting contribute to the overall effect the production seemed to be trying to achieve? Did all the elements of the production mesh?

### 3. Was it worth doing?

This is perhaps the most important and also the most subjective of the three questions. Do we view a show as accomplishing whatever purpose it set out to do? And if so, was this purpose important enough? Unique enough? Entertaining enough to hold our attention?

In reviewing a production, the critic or reviewer needs to stay focused and involved. Of course, this is hard to do if the acting is poor, the designs inappropriate, or the blocking sloppy. Most likely you will then have to step back from what is going on and view it more from the "outside." At the same time, you have a right to be demanding of a good choice of play, a well-written script, and a well-executed production. To judge this, you need to be knowledgeable and sensitive — as to what can realistically be expected of a performance, given the company and the theatre, and in regard to your openness in evaluating what you perceive.

## **What to Consider in a Review**

One of the first things to consider is that a review, unlike a news/story, both describes and judges. It is not a review if the writer expresses no opinion or evaluation. But the critique should include both the positive and negative features. At the same time, they need to avoid giving mixed signals — implying

at one point that the production is worthwhile while implying at another that it falls below par. Reviewers need to decide which outweighs the other, the positive or the negative. Implied, of course, is that the reviewer needs to look at the production as a whole and at each of its parts. Unless reviewers are seeing a premiere presentation of an original play, they generally spend much more time on the production itself than on the writing of the script. Critics, on the other hand, may spend as much or more time discussing the playwright since they often compare the present work to past works.

Besides knowledge of theatre in general, reviewers can prepare themselves specifically for a production they will see. They can, for instance, learn ahead of time as much as they can about the play, the theatre structure, and the company that will present it. Some of the questions they might consider are:

1. What is the play's genre? This is important for knowing what to expect.
2. In what time period is the play set? The reviewer then can consider if the production conveyed a proper sense of the time.
3. Is this a professional or nonprofessional organization or company? If this is a community theatre or a repertory theatre, for instance, is the play consistent with their past aims, or is this a departure?
4. Is the production being presented in an open or proscenium stage? What part does the building itself play in the productions? In what part of town is it located? Is it easily accessible? Does the location influence the sort of play that is likely to be successful? What are the positive aspects of the structure itself? Does it place any handicaps on the actors or the production?
5. What sort of audiences does the theatre draw — middle class? Those under thirty?

The more prepared reviewers are, the better able they will be to concentrate on the production. Some reviewers like to read the play ahead of time; others insist this is detrimental because a person cannot help but have certain expectations of how a play should be presented.

The emphasis of the review is almost always on the creative aspects of the offering, and probably begins with acting. The reviewer knows that in theater, the audience should feel that the actor is indeed the person he or she is playing, a good starting point, and is not walking through the part for the hundredth time.

It is hard to imagine a theatre review that does not discuss acting, directing, and writing. Acting normally occupies most of the reviewer's time, whereas the critic is more concerned with writing and direction, because in her arena the actors are usually well known, and their particular talents well documented.

#### Some Questions Asked by Reviewers

Some specific questions to answer about the actors and their performance follow. There are any numbers of others a reviewer may wish to consider.

Does the actor: Fit the role? Communicate the lines well? Relate well to the other characters? Use his or her voice effectively for the stage and the character? Pick up cues quickly and have a good sense of timing? Move, stand, and gesture expressively and in character? Interpret the character effectively? Have stage presence and a high energy level? Perform consistently?

A reviewer also considers the directing: Is stage movement motivated by the situation? Does the performance overall appear spontaneous? Is the interpretation of the script appropriate? Is the style appropriate and effectively carried throughout? Is the stage picture aesthetically pleasing, the blocking logical and natural? Is the overall pacing appropriate? Is the company a true ensemble or simply individual actors?

The reviewer also may want to include the theatre itself. Things to consider are the acoustics, the size of the stage and theatre in relation to the style or type of production, whether the stage is used effectively, and whether it presents any special problems to the action (such as support columns blocking the view of some spectators)?

Also to be considered are the various areas of design. Does the scenery provide the necessary exposition? Does it maintain the production style



consistently? Is it "actor friendly"? Are any scenery changes handled in a timely manner, and are they necessary and effective? Is the scenery interesting and aesthetically pleasing? Does the scenery help establish mood? Is any symbolism presented and carried out effectively?

Is the lighting appropriate? Does it provide good visibility? Is the lighting plan effectively executed? Does the lighting enhance the other elements of design? Does it provide necessary exposition? Is there use of lighting as symbolism? If so, is it carried out well?

Are the costumes appropriate for each character, the time period, and the circumstances? Are they easy to wear, or do they hinder movement and characterization? Is the style consistent with the rest of the production? Do the costumes help project the mood of the production?

Are sound effects appropriate? Is the sound effectively executed, and does it support the overall production? Is the makeup appropriate to the character, the period, the circumstances, the mood, the theme, the style?

Remember that all artistic elements should be subjugated to the whole. None should stand out or overwhelm but rather should be only a single part of the overall production. In effect, this involves a production's style. So the reviewer needs to consider if the overall style is appropriate to the play and consistent in the acting, the directing, and the elements of design.

Also to consider is how well the production stands up as a whole. How does it compare with other productions the critic has seen?

Even if the production involves a previously presented play, as most do, reviewers may want to touch on the writing. These are some of the things they may want to consider: When and where did the dramatist live? What were the economic and social conditions, and did they influence the subject matter and approach? What were the social influences? Is the viewpoint honest? Truthful?

What sort of structure does the play have? Is it easy to follow? What is the play's central message? What does the dramatist want the audience to think or feel after seeing a production of the play?

Did the play hold the reviewer's attention? Were the ideas, the story, the

plot, the characterization interesting? Was the critic able to suspend disbelief and put himself or herself into the world of the play? Was the writing flawed?

Were the theme, the characters, the situation universal? Was the theme worthwhile?

Many plays — particularly those that are political in nature — often do not hold up beyond a certain period. This is the case with much of the AIDS drama of today. In fact, much of it already seems dated. On the other hand, playwrights are still dealing with many of the same social issues Ibsen dealt with in his plays about women's rights or individual rights.

Is the treatment of material appropriate? How well does the play stand up as a comedy, a tragedy, a farce? If it's a comedy, is it really funny? What comic devices are used? Is the conflict logical?

What symbolism, if any, does the writer use (in contrast to that imposed by the director and designers)? Is it appropriate?

Is the background information clear and presented unobtrusively? Is there adequate foreshadowing?

Are the characters well drawn, and is there enough contrast among them to make the situation and conflict interesting? Are the protagonist's goals logical and worthwhile? Can you easily determine the purpose each character serves? Is there a balance between the main characters' individuality and typification?

Is the dialog appropriate to the situation? The mood? The characters? Does it give clues to personality and background?

The final consideration is whether or not you would recommend the production to others.

### ***I. Answer the following questions***

1. What is the difference between a play reviewer and a critic?
2. Do you think a critic or reviewer can be considered theatre professionals? Give your grounds
3. What sort of things should you consider about a production before

attending?

4. If you were to write a review of a production at local drama school, what things would you consider to be most important to include? Why?
5. What purposes does a play review serve?

*II. Read the review "Onegin in Need of a Tonic", published in the Guardian and say what aspects of the Covent Garden production were covered in it. Does the reviewer recommend watching the performance?*

### **ONEGIN IN NEED OF A TONIC**

***Despite a dream cast, Tchaikovsky's perfect opera falters at Covent Garden, says Anthony Holden***

Tchaikovsky was initially reluctant to write an opera based on Pushkin's potent novel-in-verse Eugene Onegin. It was a 'crazy' idea, the 37-year-old composer told his contralto friend, Elizaveta Lavroskaya, when first she suggested it to him in 1877.

Then he reconsidered over dinner alone at an inn, re-read the work with mounting 'rapture', and couldn't sleep for excitement at the prospect of setting his national poet's masterpiece as a series of 'lyrical scenes'. The result is one of the most exquisite, perfectly formed of all operas, a staple of every self-respecting company's repertoire.

The new Covent Garden staging by Steven Pimlott, his Royal Opera debut, tries so hard not to be like every other Onegin that it winds up being unnecessarily, at times perversely different. The lovelorn Tatyana sees a bestiary of gremlins through the window before her name-day celebrations; Lensky has a premonition of Olga laying flowers on his grave before his great pre-duel aria; his ghost returns in the final act to haunt the older" Onegin.

Antony McDonald's designs also aspire to recreate the period in an unfamiliar

way, landing us in a world that can only be defined as postmodern twee, all primary colours and elaborate technical surprises (from ponds to skating-rinks), with costumes from countless different eras rubbing shoulders uneasily, and less than convincingly.

In fact, the whole evening exudes an air of unease from stage to auditorium, often showing signs of under-rehearsal and inadequate preparation - as, for once, did the house itself, unforgivably admitting latecomers two minutes before the end of the first scene, while others in the front stalls seemed unusually free to come and go at will. The website displays an incorrect duration, different from that at the front-of-house, and the staff failed to reopen the doors in time to let us out at the end. The onstage braziers burned fiercely, while those on the interval balcony remained off on one of the coldest nights of even this year. Perhaps it is time opera tried previews to get the show in shape before the critics are let loose and the punters pay full whack.

Pimlott's production opens with a huge portrait of a naked young man dominating the stage. Head bowed, arms folded around his knees in apparent despair, who is he meant to be? The 'superfluous man'<sup>1</sup> then prevalent in late tsarist Russia, typified by the suave but feckless Onegin? Or the perfect hunk of Tatyana's dreams?

Whatever, he grows all the more irritating when he comes between Madame Larina and her daughters, as their opening duet reminds her of her own childhood and loveless marriage. Perhaps he is the doomed protagonist of the novel Tatyana is reading, as she longs for Chekhovian escape from the tedious countryside while her sister Olga eagerly joins in the peasant songs, a touching portrait of prelapsarian innocence? '

At last he disappears into the flies, to universal relief, as Olga's fiancé, Lensky, arrives with his friend Onegin. But the portrait will return in other guises, one

female, as the tale of Onegin's rejection of Tatyana's love, his fatal duel with Lensky, and his final come-uppance so poignantly unfolds, conducted with no more than beauty by Philippe Jordan.

The lack of self-confidence in the air on the first night, typified by losses of contact between pit and stage as early as the first scene, seemed to infect what is, on paper, dream casting: the Russian baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky in the title role looking strikingly youthful before removing his dark wig, to reveal his own silver hair, for the final act; the fine British soprano Amanda Roocroft as Tatyana, a role she recently sang to such effect for Welsh National; and the hot young Mexican tenor Rolando Villazyn as the smouldering poet Lensky, as dashing of stage presence as of lyric tenor eloquence.

Roocroft rises to her greatest challenge, Tatyana's celebrated 'Letter Song', with consummate confidence and vocal beauty. Elsewhere, she is inclined to shriek, and musters minimal majesty as the elderly Gremin's princess. In a nice touch, Pimlott has her throw open the windows of her stuffy bedroom before the 'Letter Song' proclaims her quest for love and freedom; but luridly puce-fingered dawn then precedes its roseate sister as the morning brings her brutal rejection.

For all his naturally smug swagger and superb vocal command of the role, Hvorostovsky is too slight a stage figure and hammy an actor to bring off the daunting authority required of a true Onegin. For once, the duel seems to promise a close call as Villazyn's Lensky cuts as much of a manly dash while emoting with much more feeling. His central aria is delivered with due intensity, but again he seems stretched elsewhere.

Pimlott's novelty-seeking surprises begin when Tatyana's bedroom is awkwardly wheeled offstage by flunkies to reveal a little pool in which she can splash girlishly, the ingénue considered unworthy of him by the haughty Onegin. In the duel, Lensky puts the pistol to his own head before spreading his arms for

Onegin to shoot, then reaching out towards his old friend as he falls dead at his feet.

Later, the pool becomes an ice-rink, compete with skaters instead of dancers, as an outdoor winter scene replaces the usual St Petersburg ballroom befitting the Grand Polonaise. The American bass Eric Halverson sings Gremin's touching aria with rotund polish, then falters on those cruelly low notes at the end. Again, this show seems jinxed.

The final scene is perhaps the only entirely satisfactory one, Gremin's library being an appropriate setting for Tatyana's agonised rejection of the penitent Onegin's advances, putting fidelity to her husband before her lingering love for this self-ruined man. We do not need Lensky's ghost to laugh at him as he comes to rue the heedless haughtiness of his younger self. His pain is all in the music.

Other such clumsiness abounds. The name-day dancing takes place on a cramped, inexplicably split-level stage. For all the snow-clad, silver-birch-bestrewn backdrop, the duel is then fought between the doors of Madame Larina's living room. When Onegin adds insult to injury by returning Tatyana's letter, it begins to rain. When he returns, to find she has married someone else, it begins to snow.

Still vivid in the memory is the stark beauty of the previous Covent Garden production, by John Cox, when a lone brazier lit the darkened stage for the pivotal duel scene. Such modest directorial simplicity, allowing music as affecting as Tchaikovsky's the space to work its momentous magic, seems to have become a thing of the operatic past.

***I. Find English words and phrases to express the following***

основа репертуара, новая постановка, дебют, именины, приторный, недоработанный, впускать опоздавших, зрители входили и выходили

когда им хотелось, обогреватель, лишний человек, самодовольный

## ***II. Say it in Russian***

to wind up, lovelorn, to aspire to recreate, to exude an air of unease, in the front stalls, at the front-of-house, a hunk, smouldering, superb vocal command of the role, to falter on low notes, a backdrop

## ***III. Find the words, corresponding to the definition***

- 1) to meet and talk to important and famous people
- 2) an opportunity to see something such as a play before it is shown to the public
- 3) an amount of something, especially money
- 4) a customer
- 5) not reliable, with no clear plans
- 6) confident and polite in a way that may not be sincere
- 7) a confident way of behaviour
- 8) a bad actor who has an artificial style of performing
- 9) to cause bad luck to somebody or something

СВЕТЛАНА ЮРЬЕВНА ПАВЛИНА

## ТЕАТР

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